

education



The Education Trust

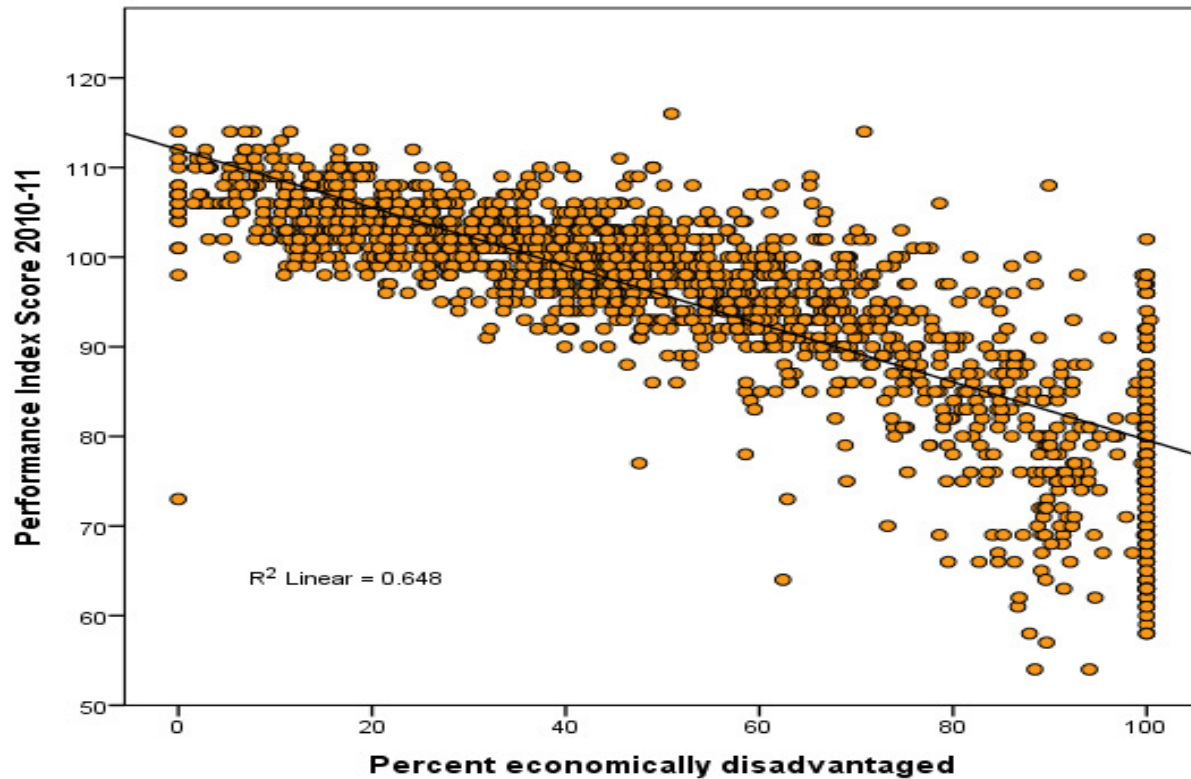
Getting it Done: Leading Academic Success in Unexpected Schools

Karin Chenoweth

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
July 17, 2014

The correlation between poverty and achievement sometimes seems so strong as to be inescapable.

This scatterplot shows the elementary schools in a state arrayed by percentage of students who receive free and reduced-price lunch on the x-axis and achievement on the y-axis. It's a pretty typical pattern.



What are some of the reasons people give to explain this strong relationship between poverty and achievement?

A lot of people locate the problem
with the students...

lack of engagement
lack of effort
lack of readiness

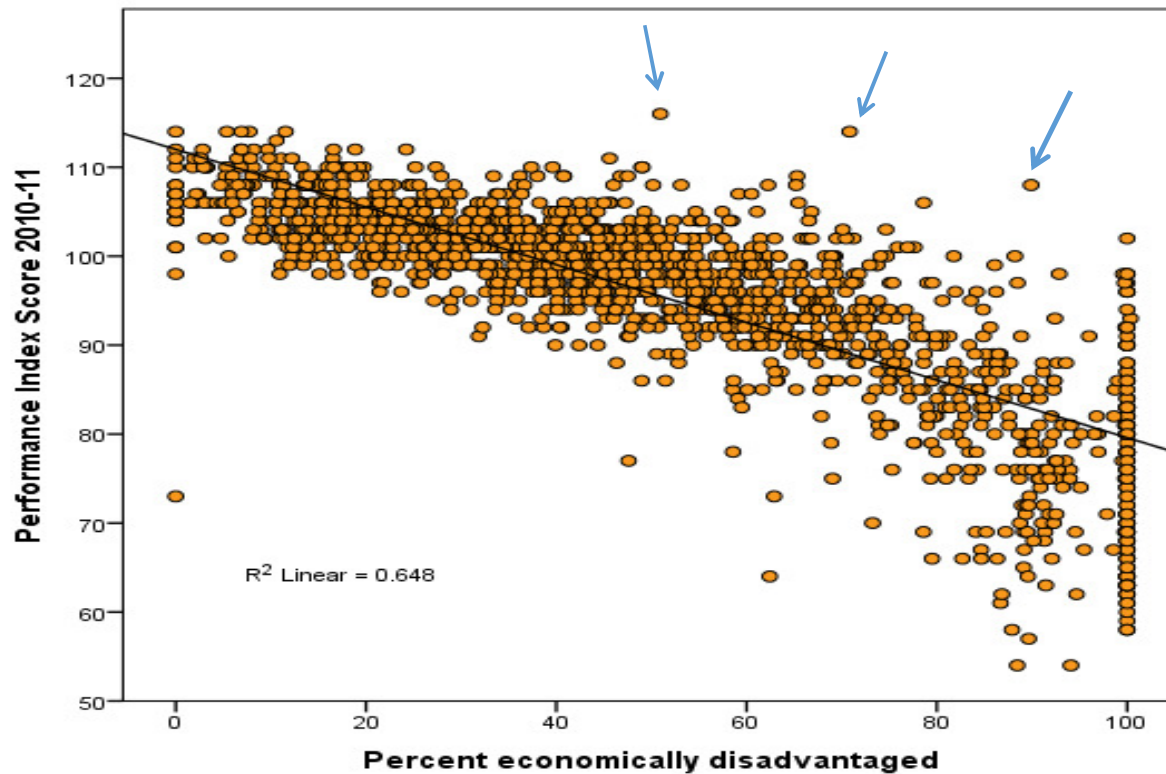
...or focus outside the
school house walls:

lack of parental engagement
single-parent families
drug use
poor pre-natal care
neighborhood crime

These are real issues.

But that line of thinking leads us to believe schools can't do much until everything in society is fixed.

But look at this graph again
—and notice something different—
it shows a few schools clearly performing above
their peers.



**Is there something we can learn
from those schools?**

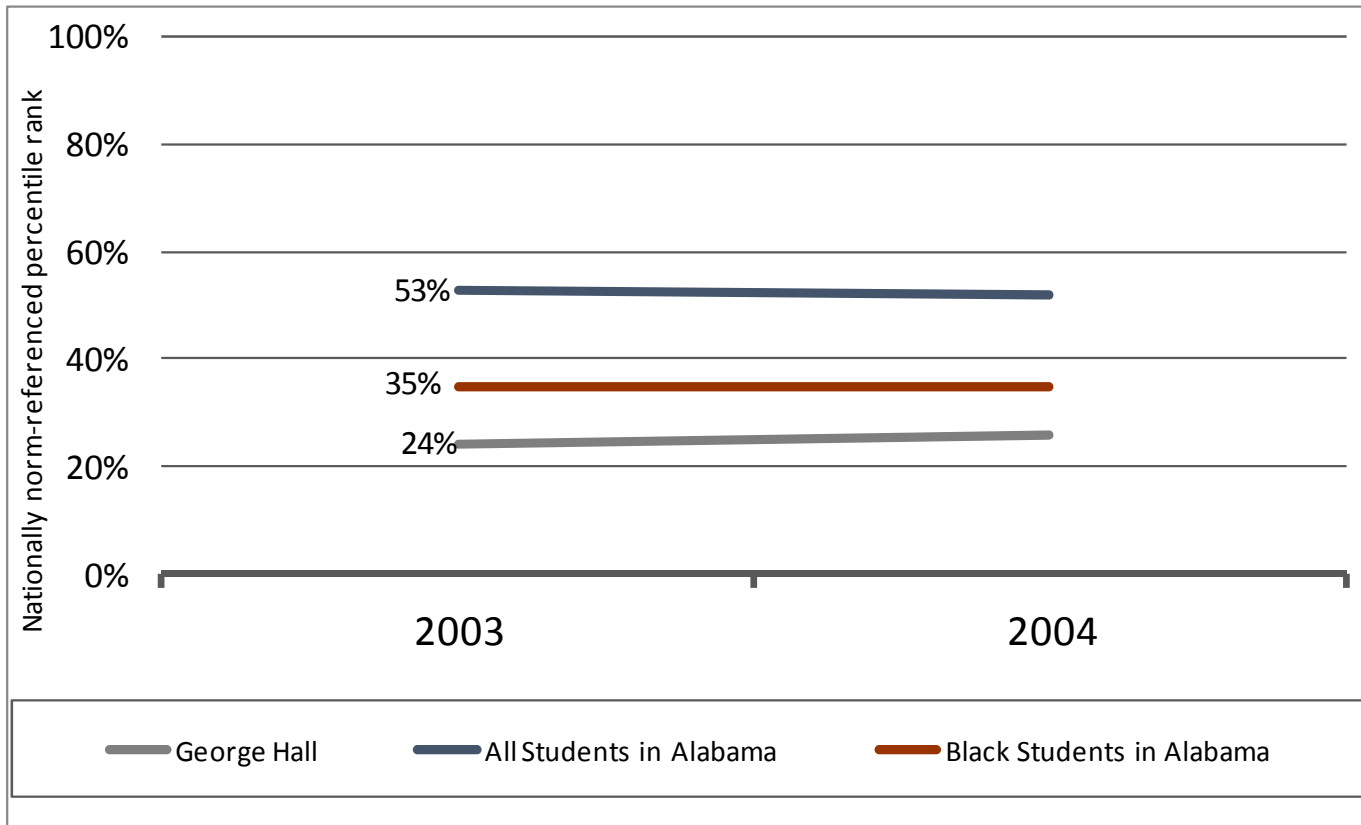
George Hall Elementary School

Mobile, Alabama
444 students in grades preK-5

- 99 % African American
- 99% Low-Income

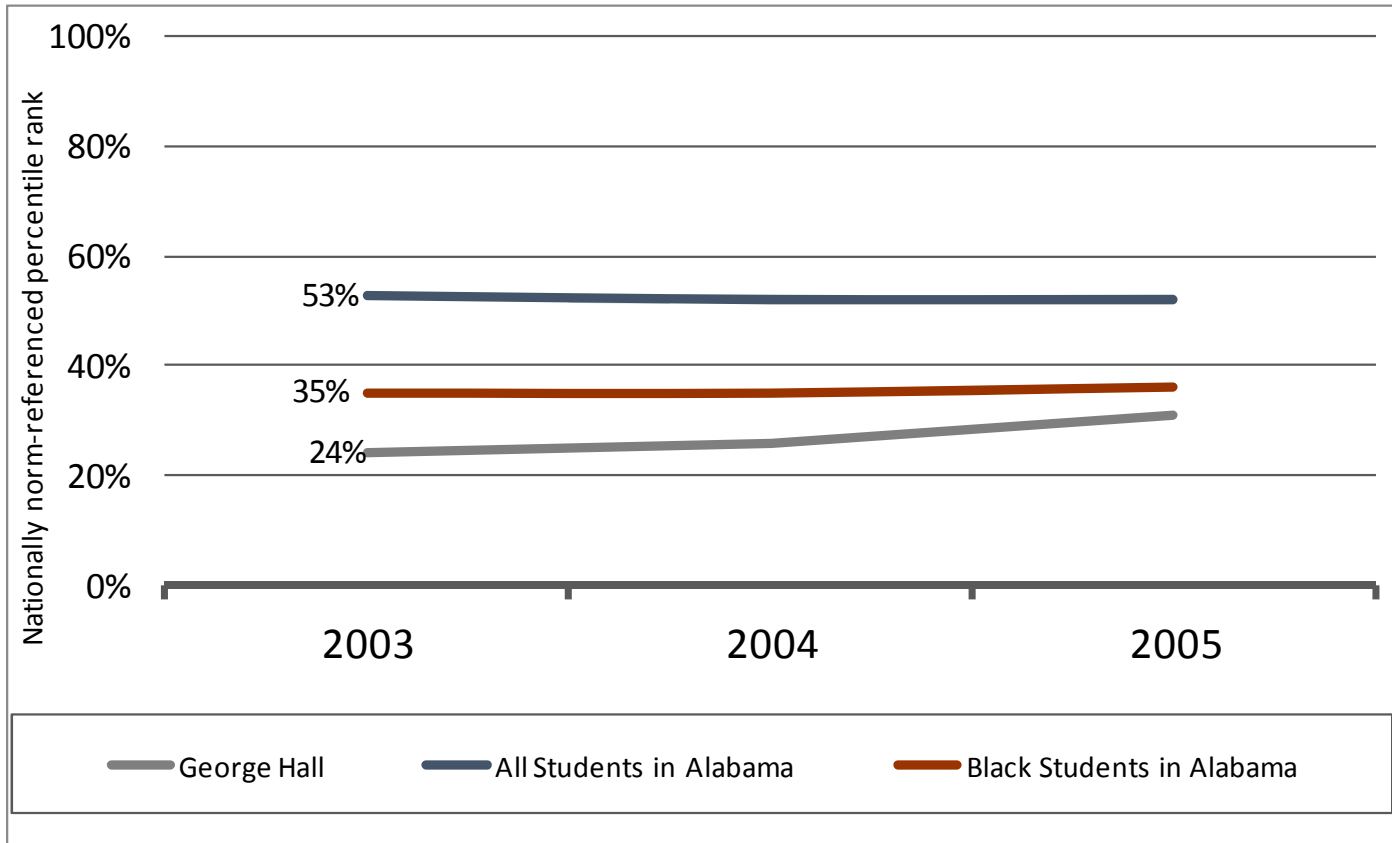


Grade 5 Reading—SAT 10 results



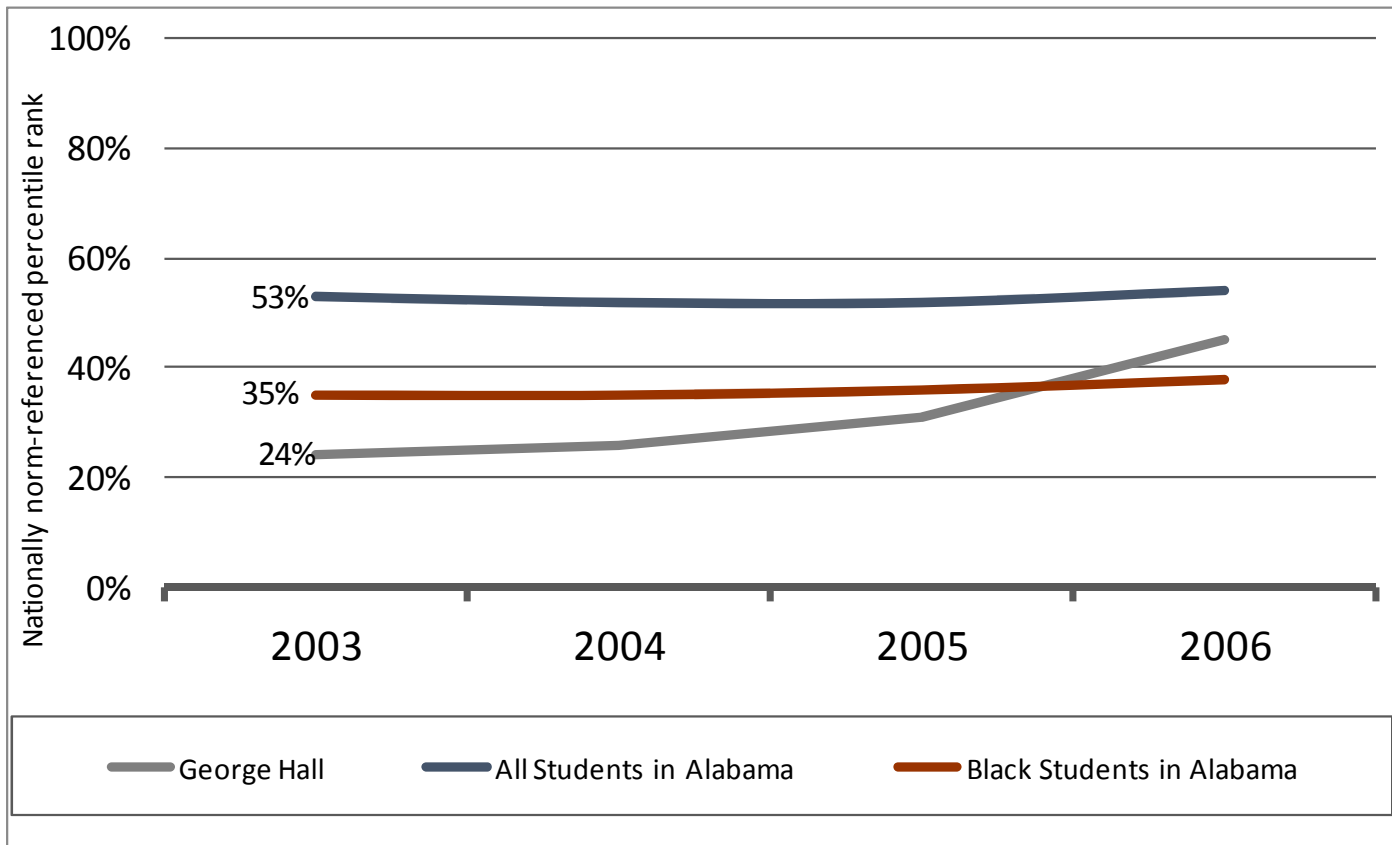
Source: Alabama Department of Education

Grade 5 Reading—SAT 10 results



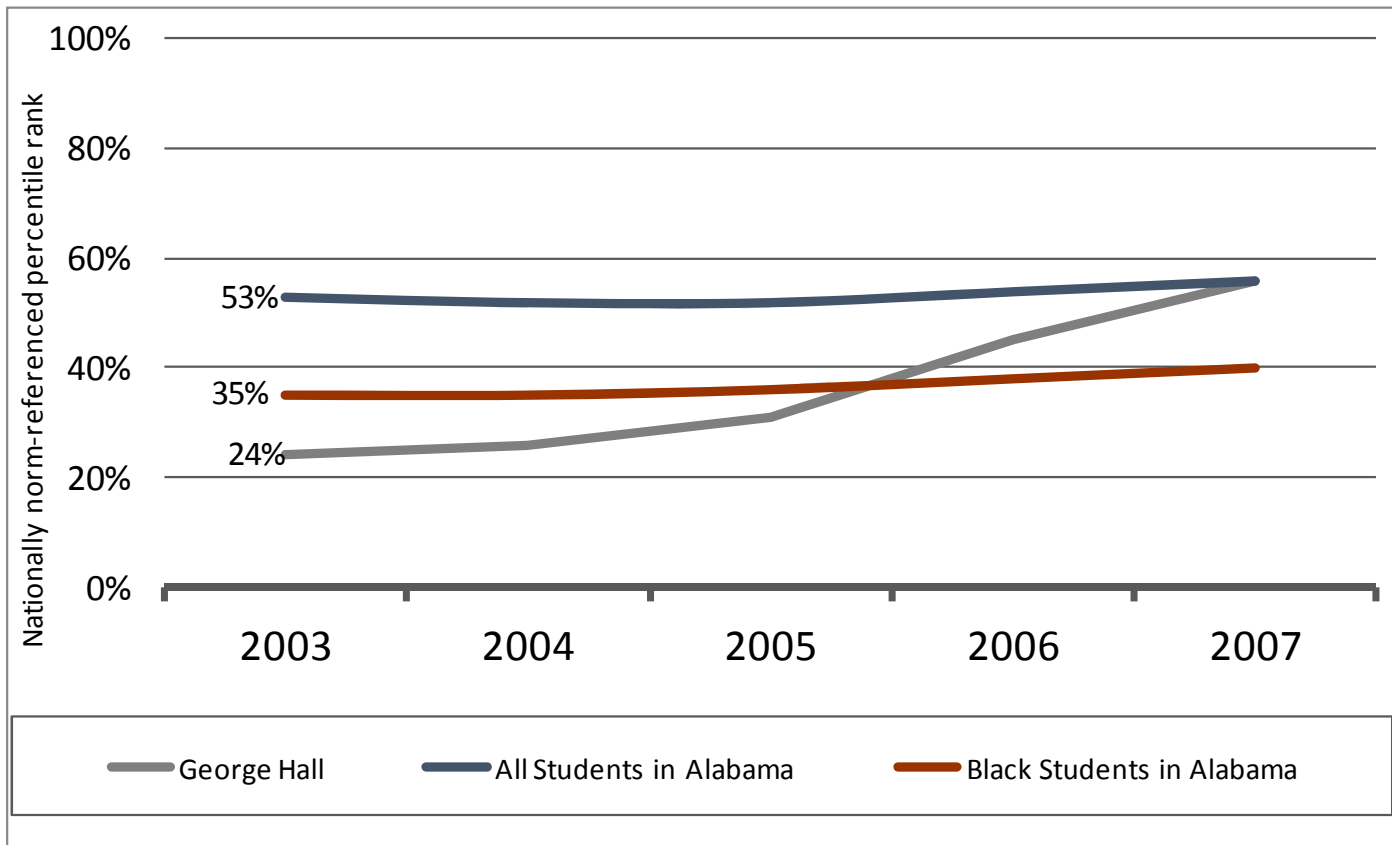
Source: Alabama Department of Education

Grade 5 Reading—SAT 10 results



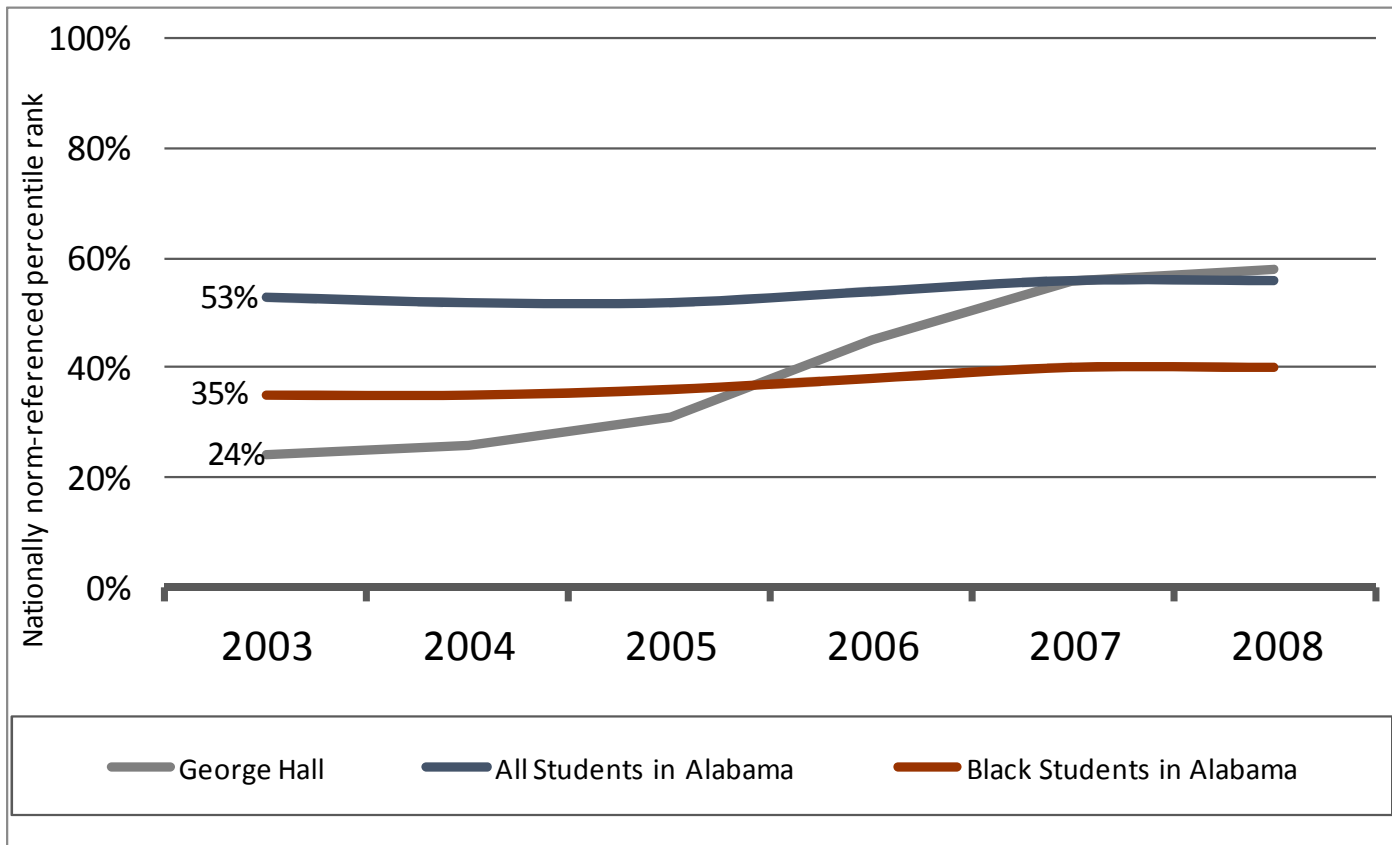
Source: Alabama Department of Education

Grade 5 Reading—SAT 10 results



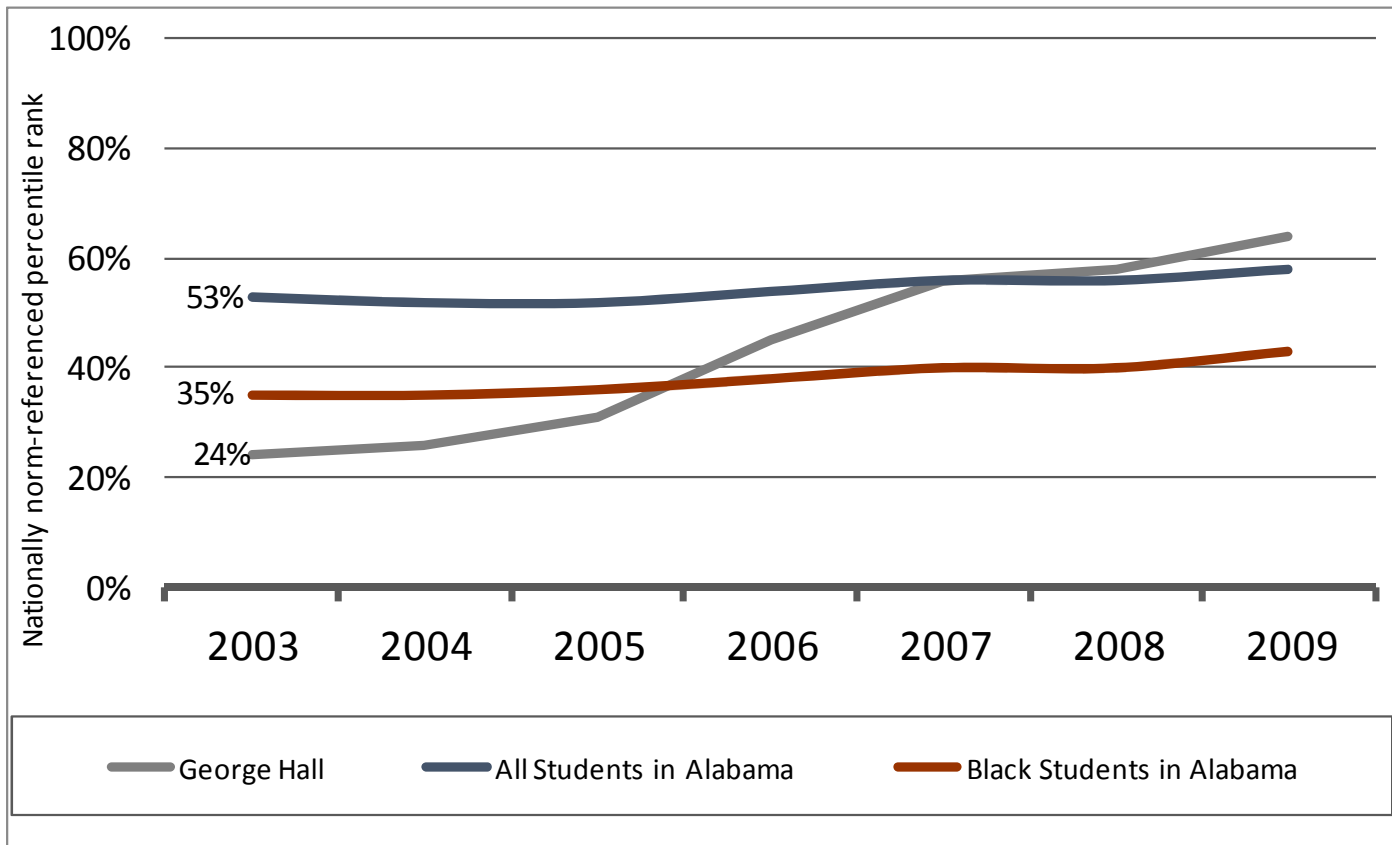
Source: Alabama Department of Education

Grade 5 Reading—SAT 10 results



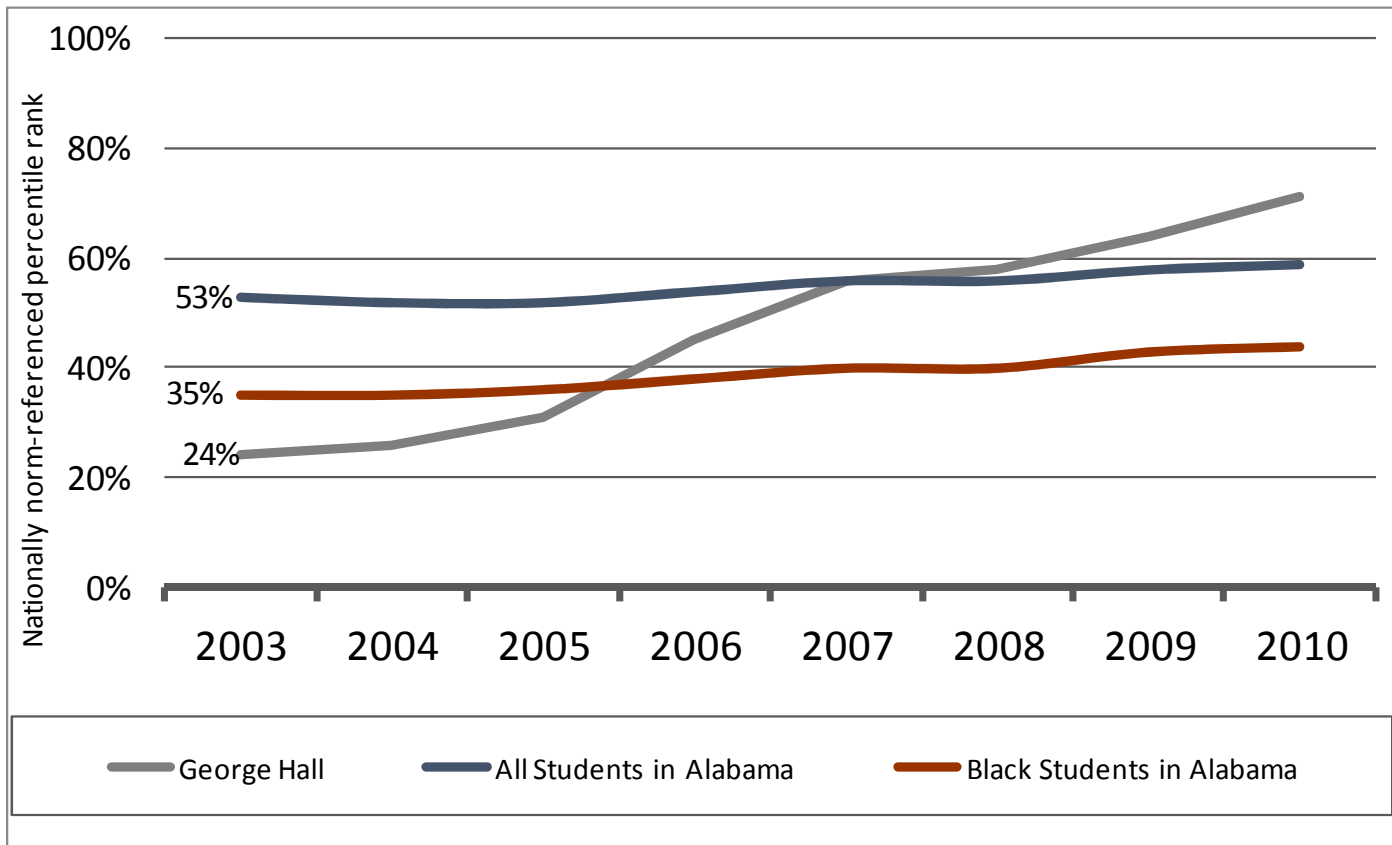
Source: Alabama Department of Education

Grade 5 Reading—SAT 10 results



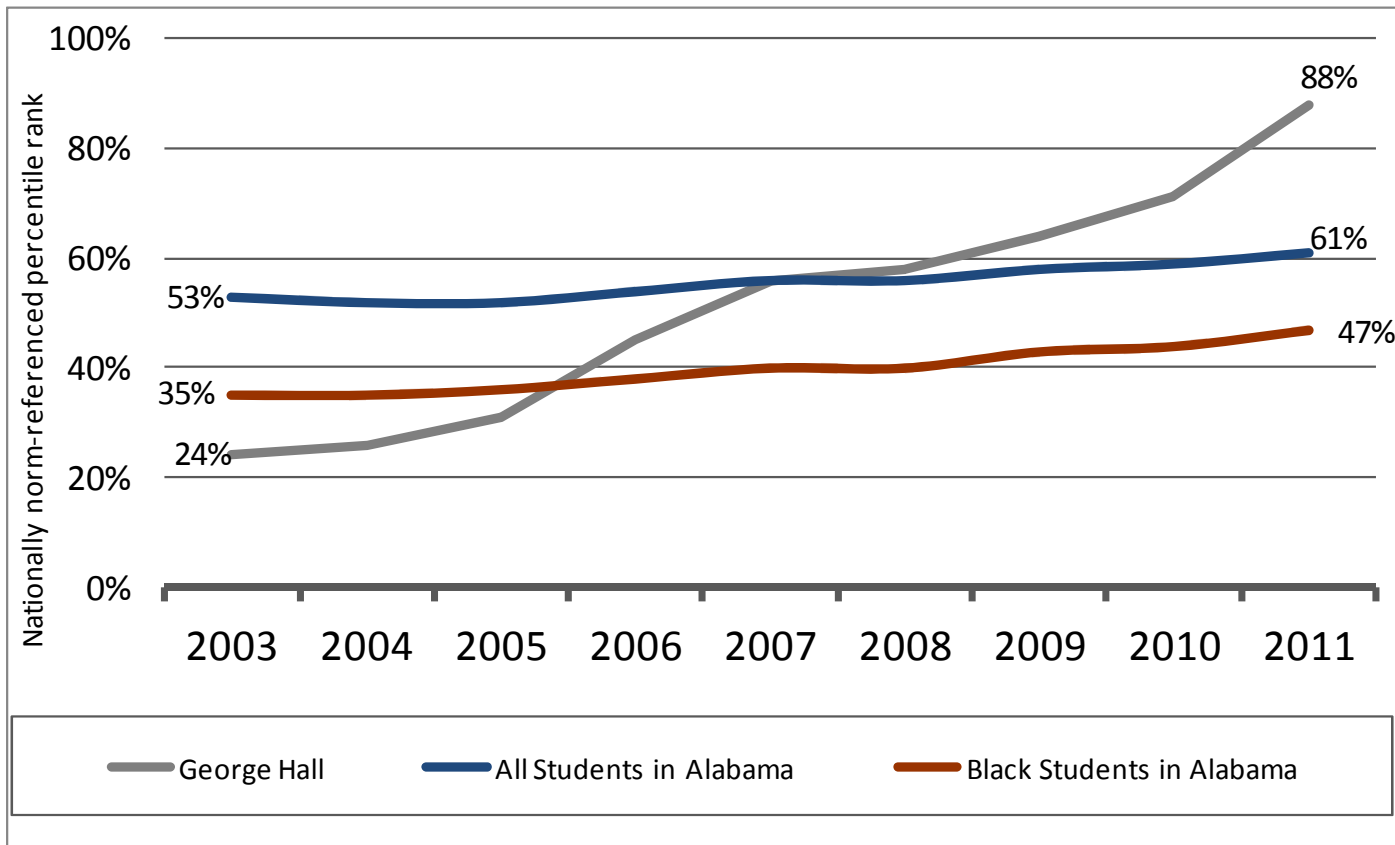
Source: Alabama Department of Education

Grade 5 Reading—SAT 10 results



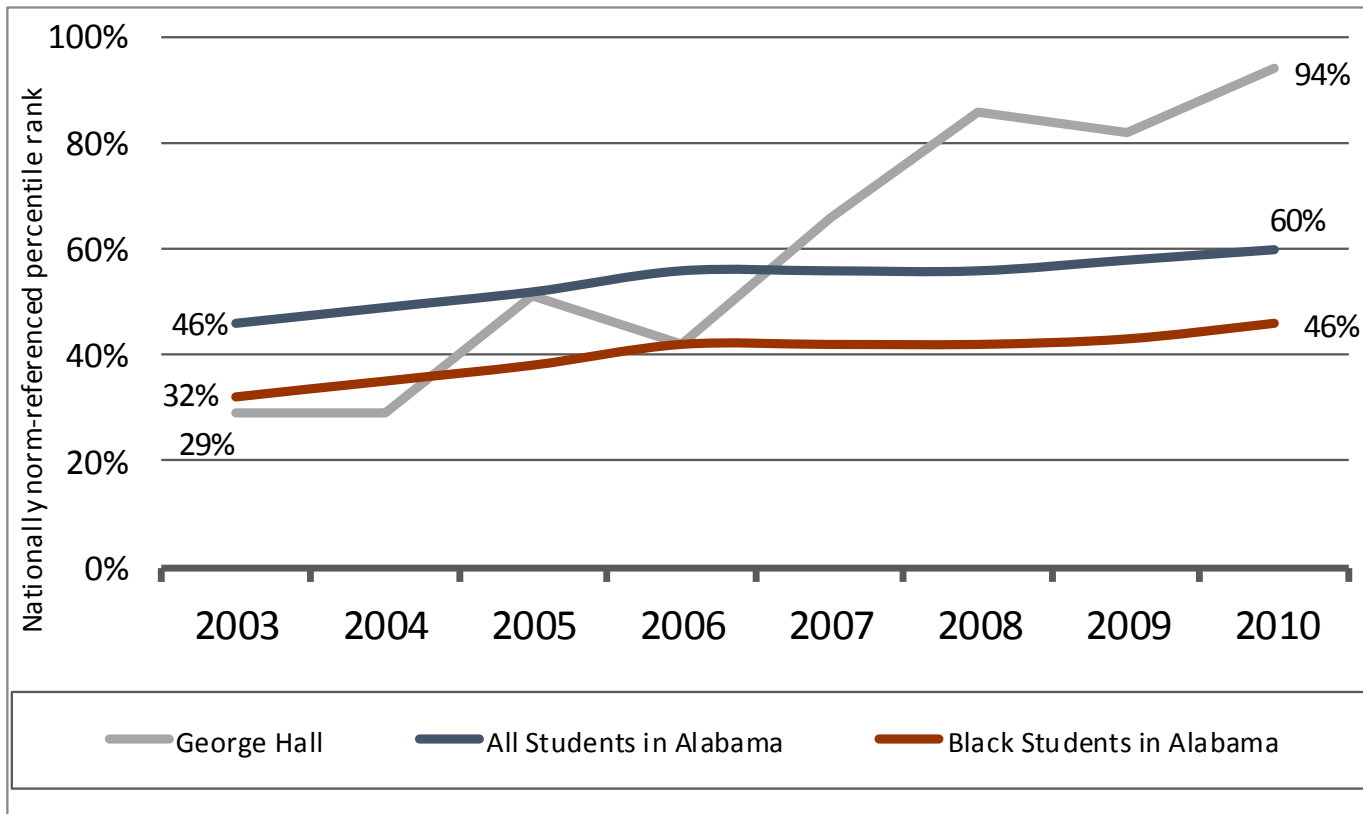
Source: Alabama Department of Education

Grade 5 Reading—SAT 10 results



Source: Alabama Department of Education

Grade 5 Math—SAT 10 results



I have spent the last ten years trying to identify and learn from schools like George Hall Elementary to find out what makes those schools—
I call them **It's Being Done schools**—
so special?



Karin Chenoweth

IT'S **BEING** DONE™

Academic
Success
in
Unexpected
Schools

Twenty-five characteristics of “It’s Being Done” schools

They teach their students

They don’t teach to the state tests

They have high expectations for their students

They know what the stakes are.

They embrace and use all the data they can get their hands on.

They use data to focus on individual students, not just groups of students.

They constantly reexamine what they do.

They embrace accountability.

They make decisions on what is good for kids, not what is good for adults.

They use school time wisely.

They leverage as many resources from the community as possible.

They expand the time students—particularly struggling students—have in school.

They do not spend a lot of time disciplining students, in the sense of punishment.

They establish an atmosphere of respect.

They like kids.

They make sure that the kids who struggle the most have the best instruction.

Principals are a constant presence.

Although the principals are important leaders, they are not the only leaders.

They pay careful attention to the quality of the teaching staff.

They provide teachers with time to meet to plan and work collaboratively.

They provide teachers time to observe each other.

They think seriously about professional development.

They assume that they will have to train new teachers more or less from scratch and carefully acculturate all newly hired teachers.

They have high-quality, dedicated, and competent office and building staff who feel themselves part of the educational mission of the school.

They are nice places to work.

Briefly

The adults in “It’s Being Done” schools expect their students to learn, and they work hard to master the skills and knowledge necessary to teach those students.

[HOW] IT'S BEING DONE

URGENT LESSONS
FROM UNEXPECTED SCHOOLS



Karin Chenoweth

Foreword by Pedro Noguera

“It’s Being Done” schools have done the educational equivalent of “inventing the wheel.” They have figured out what to do to help all children learn.

That doesn't mean they all do exactly the same thing or look exactly the same.





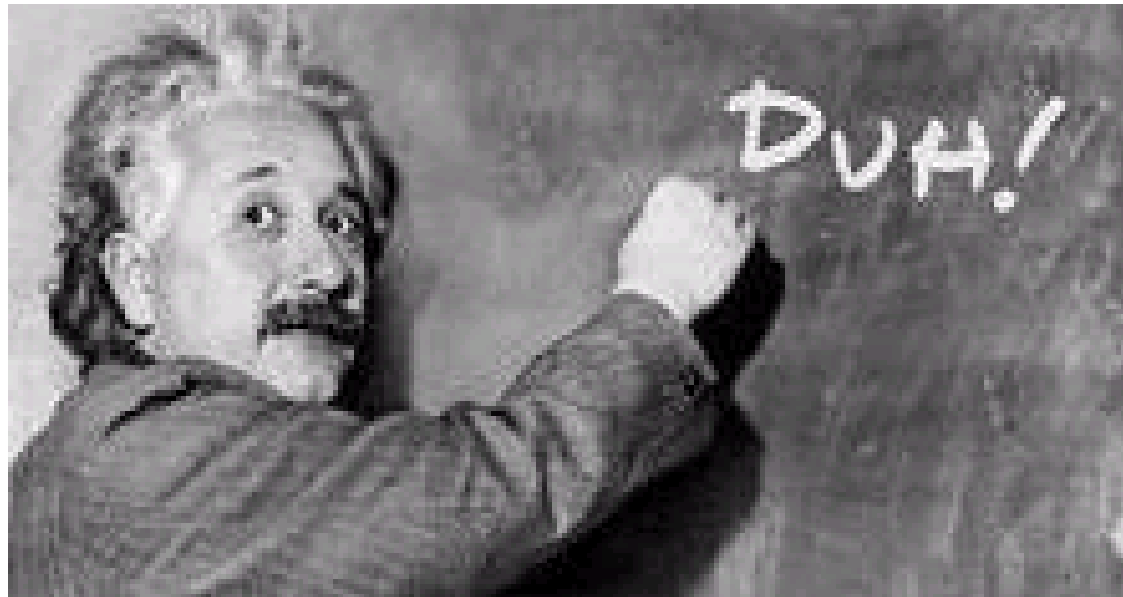
How It's Being Done schools:

(as articulated by Molly Bensinger-Lacy, former principal, Graham Road Elementary School)

- Keep a “laser-like” focus on what students need to learn;
 - Collaborate on how to teach it;
- Assess frequently to see whether students have learned it;
 - Use data to inform instruction;
 - Build personal relationships.

Let's get a quick sense of what
each of those mean.

#1 Focus on what students need to learn



That may be obvious, but American classrooms have been plagued in the past by a lack of clarity of goals and a tradition of autonomy which has led to teacher isolation and “hobby teaching.”



Barbara Nash, literacy teacher,
Norfolk Elementary School, Arkansas

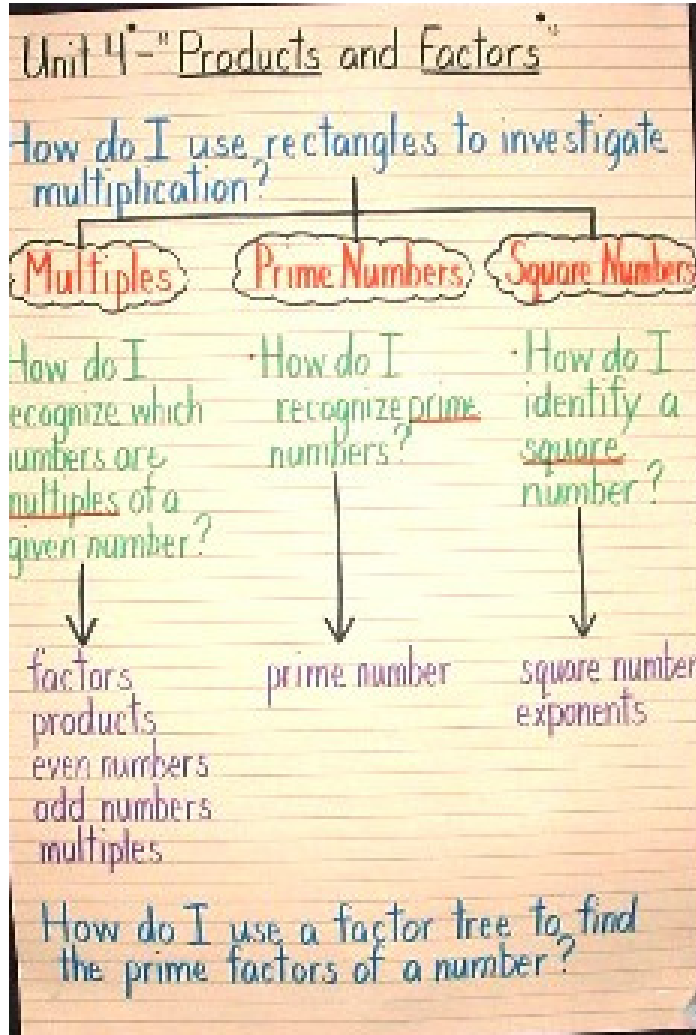


To ensure that their students learn everything needed, schools will often “map” out their instruction

Curriculum Map							
Teacher	Balback/Hall/Benz/	Bullock	Grade 5	Subject	Writing	Date	March 2004 Revised 6-04
DIARY -- Check if taught (Other Subjects: check if integrated)							Revised 6/05
	Stand/ P.I. #	End of March/April - June	Diary / Notes	SS	R/ LA	M	S
Standards/ Perf. Ind.	5.117	use dialogue to bring characters to life & advance text.	5.114 conclude in a logical, effective way.				
	5.118	experiment with appropriate modes (e.g., narration, description).					
	5.111	use a consistent organizing structure (e.g., problem/solution, circular, sequence events).					
	5.115	use lively, engaged writing, reflective of their voice.					
	5.110	provide an engaging beginning.					
Essential Questions	5.113	use appropriate transitions to move through events.					
		How can you add voice to creative writing?					
		How do you write to inform others?					
		How can we write using effective organization (beginning, transitions, and conclusion)?					
Content (Note Strand: Exam. History, Geography, Civics, Economics)	Writing:						
	Informative Writing						
	Expressive Writing						
Skills		Organize events chronologically.					
		Write an informative letter to fourth graders about fifth grade.					
		Use transitions to make paragraphs flow.					
		Apply proper grammar in writing.					
		Write a book.					
		Develop a well-organized piece of writing.					
Assessment		Provide an engaging beginning; an effective conclusion.					
		Creative writing books--narrative writing	Special Education:				
		Invention or bunny tales	"Snap, Crackle, Pop, Think" Activity				
		Autobiography with timeline	"Analyzing Perspectives"				
		D.A.R.E. essay	"Candy Bar Compare/Contrast" Activity				
Related: Technology, Field Trips, Other areas, Resources		Informative letter to fourth grade students	"Most Memorable Experience"				
		Book on East Millsboro Memories	"Top Ten Reasons for Mother's Day"				
			"D.A.R.E. Essay"				
			"Thank You Letters to Science Alliance"				
			"Father's Day Letters"				
			"Autobiography"				

Source: East Millsboro Elementary School

Standards/ Perf. Ind.	5.117	use dialogue to bring characters to life & advance text.	5.114 conclude in a logical, effective way.
	5.118	experiment with appropriate modes (e.g., narration, description).	
	5.111	use a consistent organizing structure (e.g., problem/solution, circular, sequence events).	
	5.115	use lively, engaged writing, reflective of their voice.	
	5.110	provide an engaging beginning.	
	5.113	use appropriate transitions to move through events.	



#2 Teacher collaboration



The education paradox:

Teachers are the most important in-school factor for student achievement.

BUT

No one teacher can be sufficiently expert in the content, the curriculum, pedagogy, and the students to teach all things to all children.

Only by working together to pool their knowledge and expertise can teachers be successful with all the students all the time.



#3 Assess frequently to see if students are learning



Frequent assessment is nothing new in classrooms, but these schools use frequent formative assessments—not to give a grade but to see if students are learning what they need to know.

Here's how Graham Road Elementary thinks about formative assessment:

- **A team-constructed COMMON ASSESMENT:**
 - Requires everyone to analyze & arrive at a common understanding of the objective.
 - Strengthens teacher expertise and eliminates the educational lottery.
 - Establishes ownership for student performance. There are no surprises on the common assessment.



Source: Norfolk Elementary School



Source: P.S./M.S. 124 Queens

#4 Use data to inform instruction





Source: Graham Road Elementary

#5 Build personal relationships



Source: Granger High School

This can take the form of daily advisory periods...



...“morning meetings”...



...hugging...



...teachers working individually
with students...



...groups of students...



...and each other.



Building good relationships means paying particular attention to school climate and culture and having a clear and consistent discipline policy.

But that doesn't mean it's all about punishment.



Jason Allen, social studies teacher,
Elmont Memorial High School

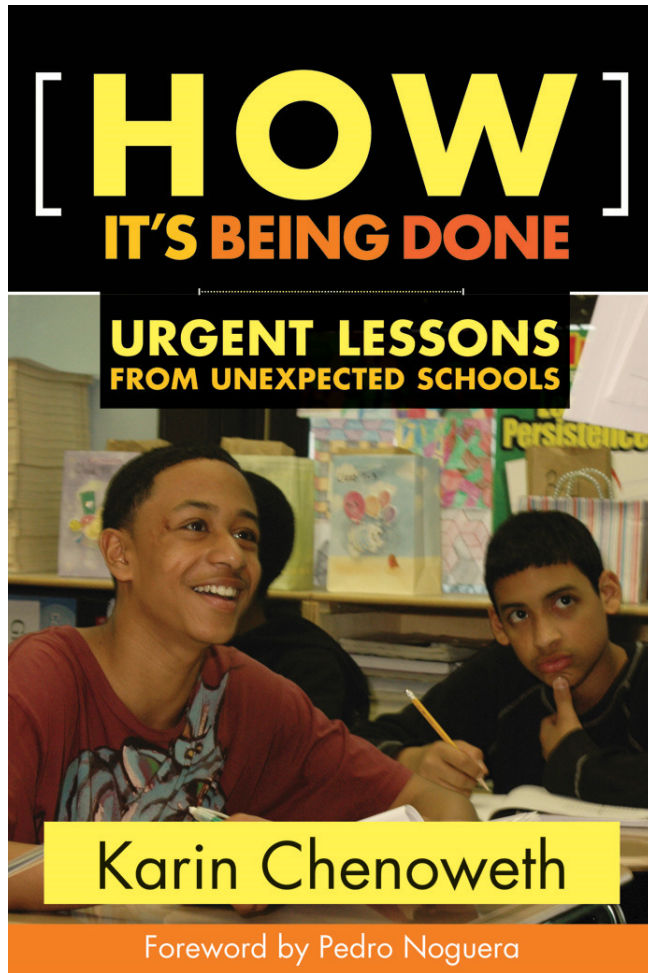


So, we've talked about how, in "It's Being Done" schools, teachers:

1. Think deeply about what students need to learn.
2. Collaborate about *how* to teach.
3. Collectively create and use formative assessments to see whether students have learned the material.
4. Look at the data to identify struggling students and see patterns in instruction in order to ensure that all students learn.
5. Deliberately build deep relationships with each other and with their students.

But how do teachers in It's Being Done schools learn to work in these ways?

That's what we'll talk about after lunch, but
to give a hint...



At the end of HOW It's Being Done I said that leadership seems to be important.

This was hardly new news.

Some Facts About School Leadership

Leadership is necessary to improve schools.

Conclusion from a 6-year study in 9 states, 45 districts and 180 schools:

“To date, we have not found a single case of a school improving its student achievement record in the absence of talented leadership.”

Source: Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom & Anderson (2010). Learning from leadership: Investigating the links to improved student learning.

There is substantial variation in the effectiveness of principals.

Highly effective principals can help raise the achievement of a typical student in their schools, while ineffective principals don't.

Source: Branch, Rivkin and Hanushek, (2012). Estimating the Effect of Leaders on Public Sector Productivity: The Case of School Principals. CALDER Working Paper No. 66

The effect of leaders is second only to teachers.

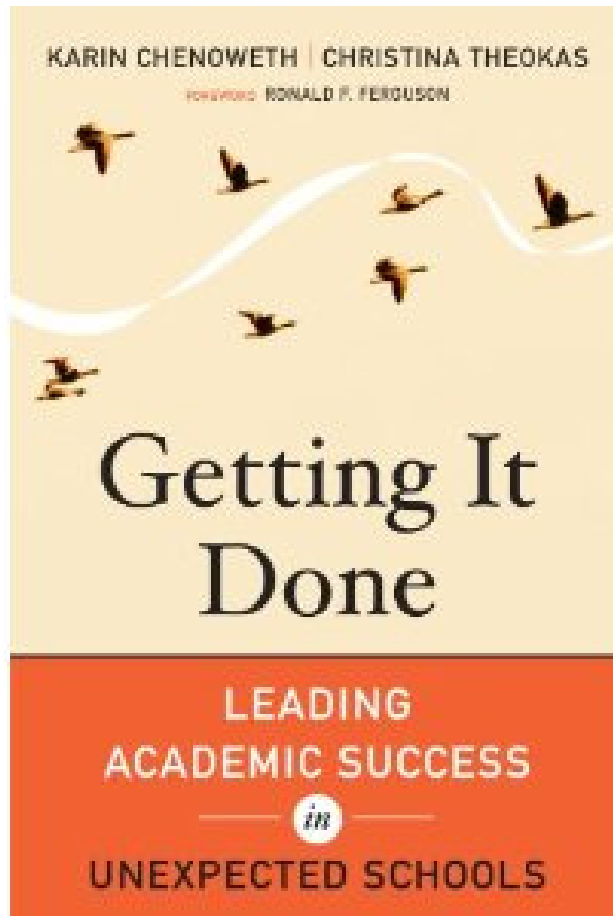
The total (direct and indirect) effects of leadership on student learning account for about a 1/4 of total school effects.

Source: Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom. (2004). How leadership influences student learning. The Wallace Foundation.

Leadership retains teachers.

Although a wide range of working conditions matter to teachers, principal leadership is most important.

Source: Almy and Tooley (2012). Building and Sustaining Talent: Creating Conditions in High-Poverty Schools That Support Effective Teaching and Learning. Washington, DC: The Education Trust.

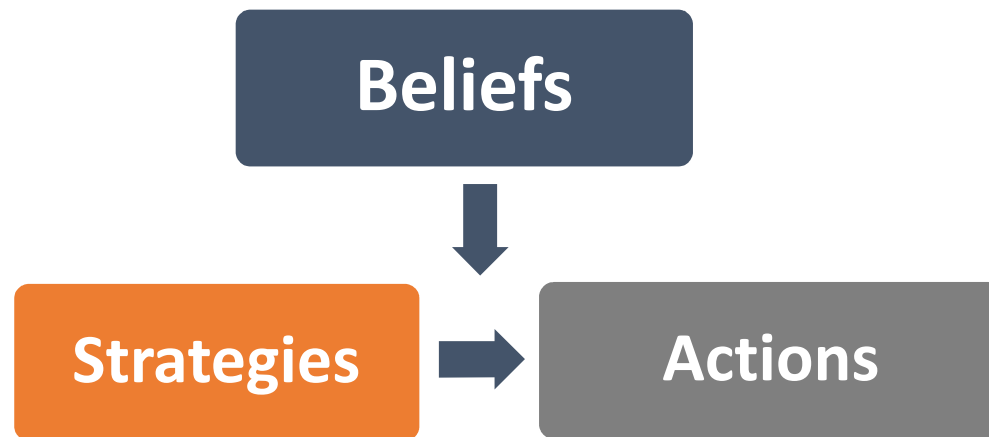


Getting It Done (2011) was the first attempt to systematically marshal the experience of “It’s Being Done” schools to better understand effective leadership.

The results both align with previous research findings and points the field in new directions with insights from proven leaders.

What Did We Find?

I will share five findings, but overall, we found a consistent pattern that they very deliberately matched their strategies and actions to their beliefs, and that played out in a number of ways that I will share.



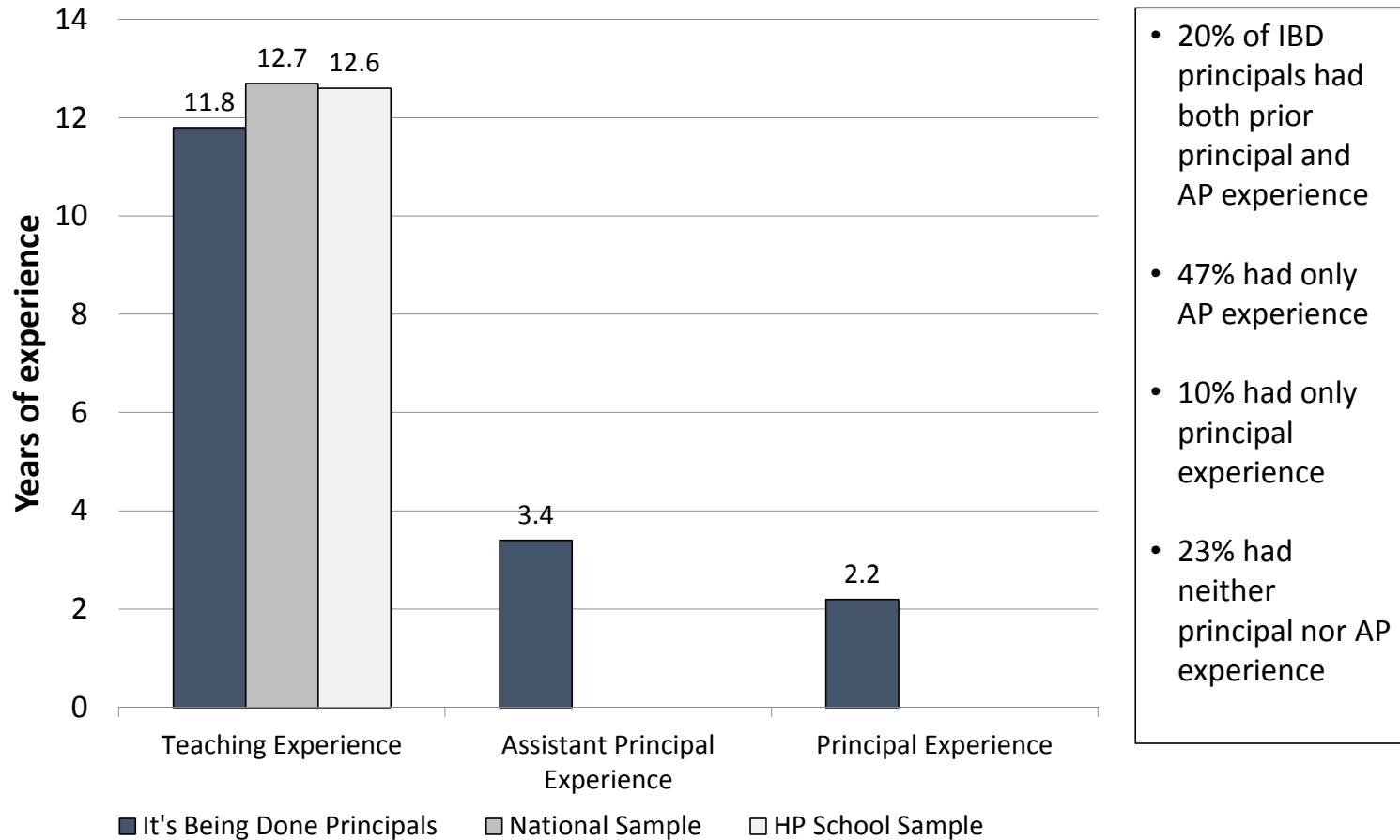
What Did We Find?

#1

These are typical school leaders with varied educational backgrounds and experiences.

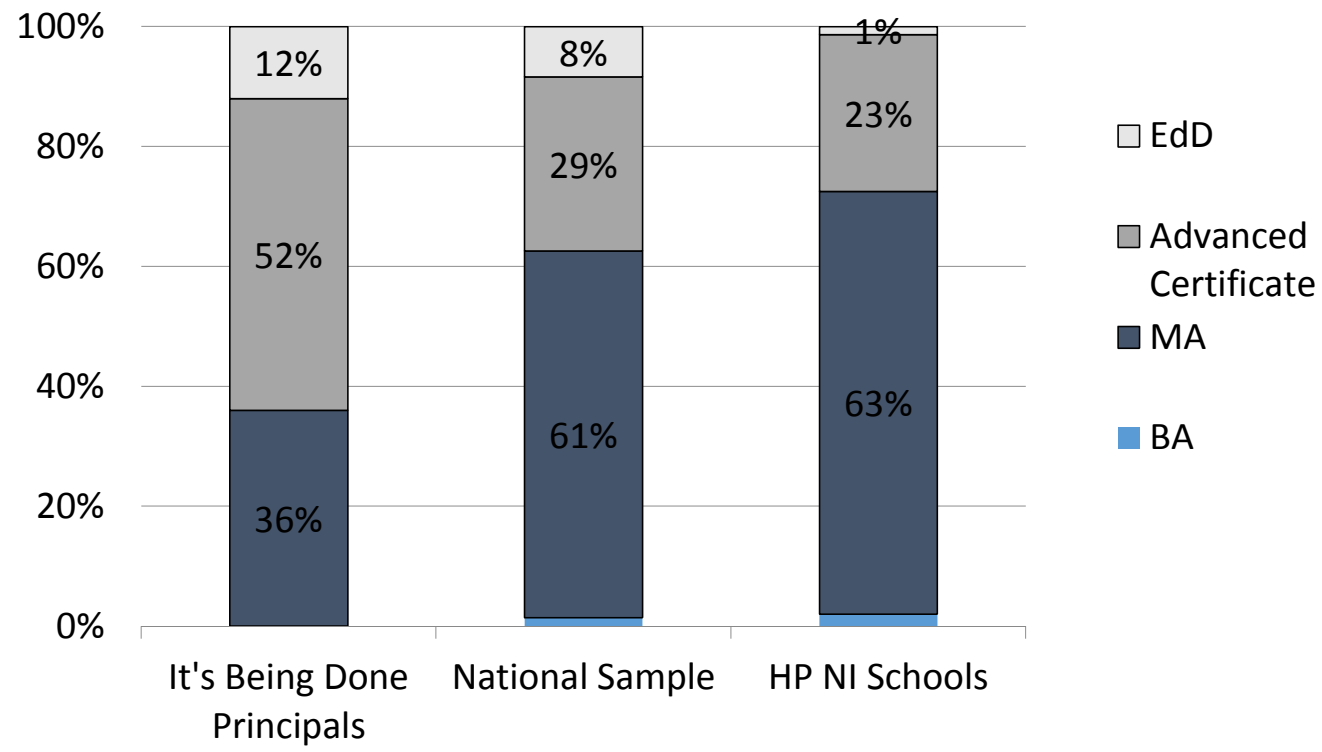
But they do share some attributes—
and a common belief and vision.

They have deep experience in classrooms



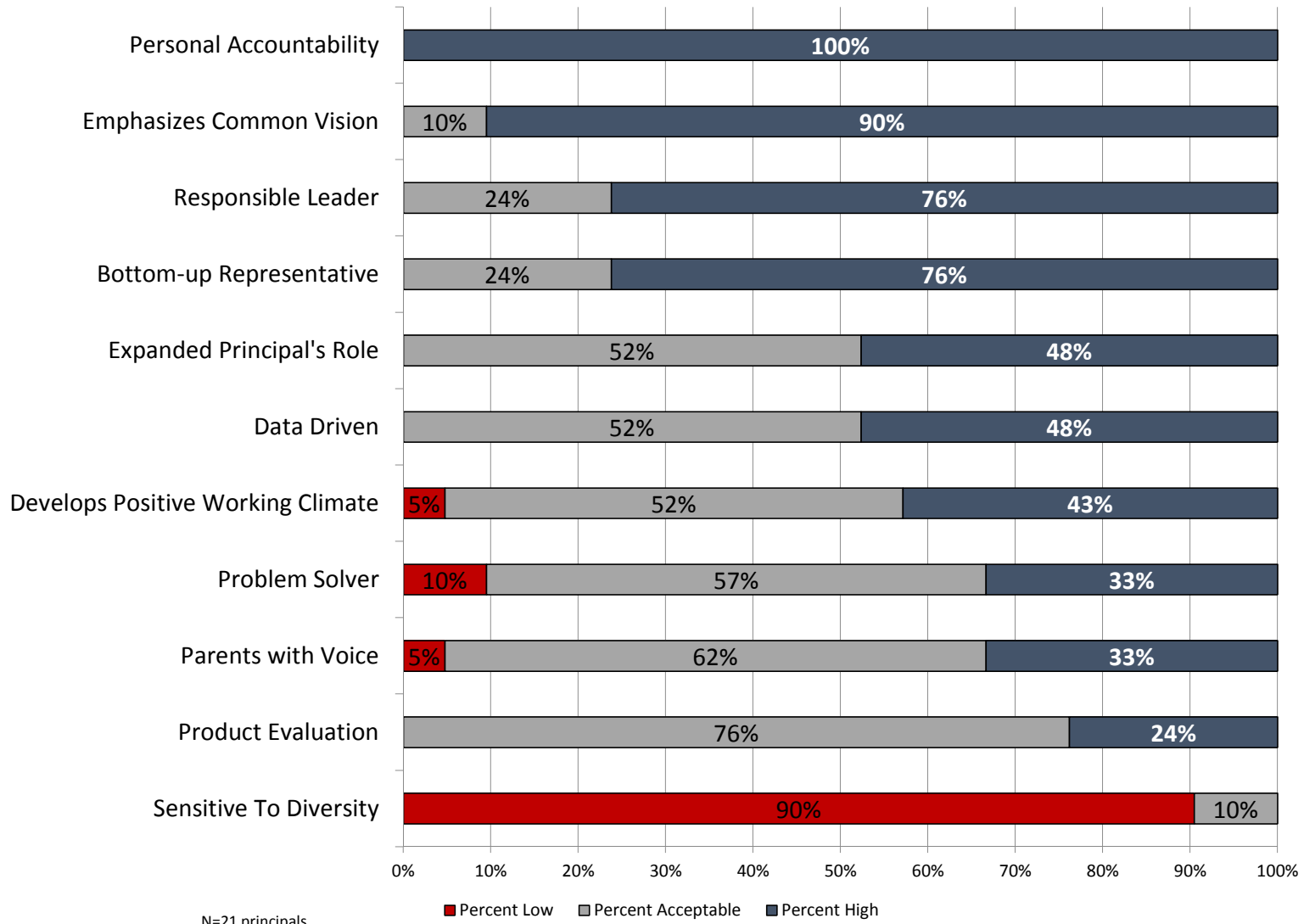
Source: Schools and Staffing Survey 2007–2008, Ed Trust Principal Survey, Pt 1

They pursue additional learning

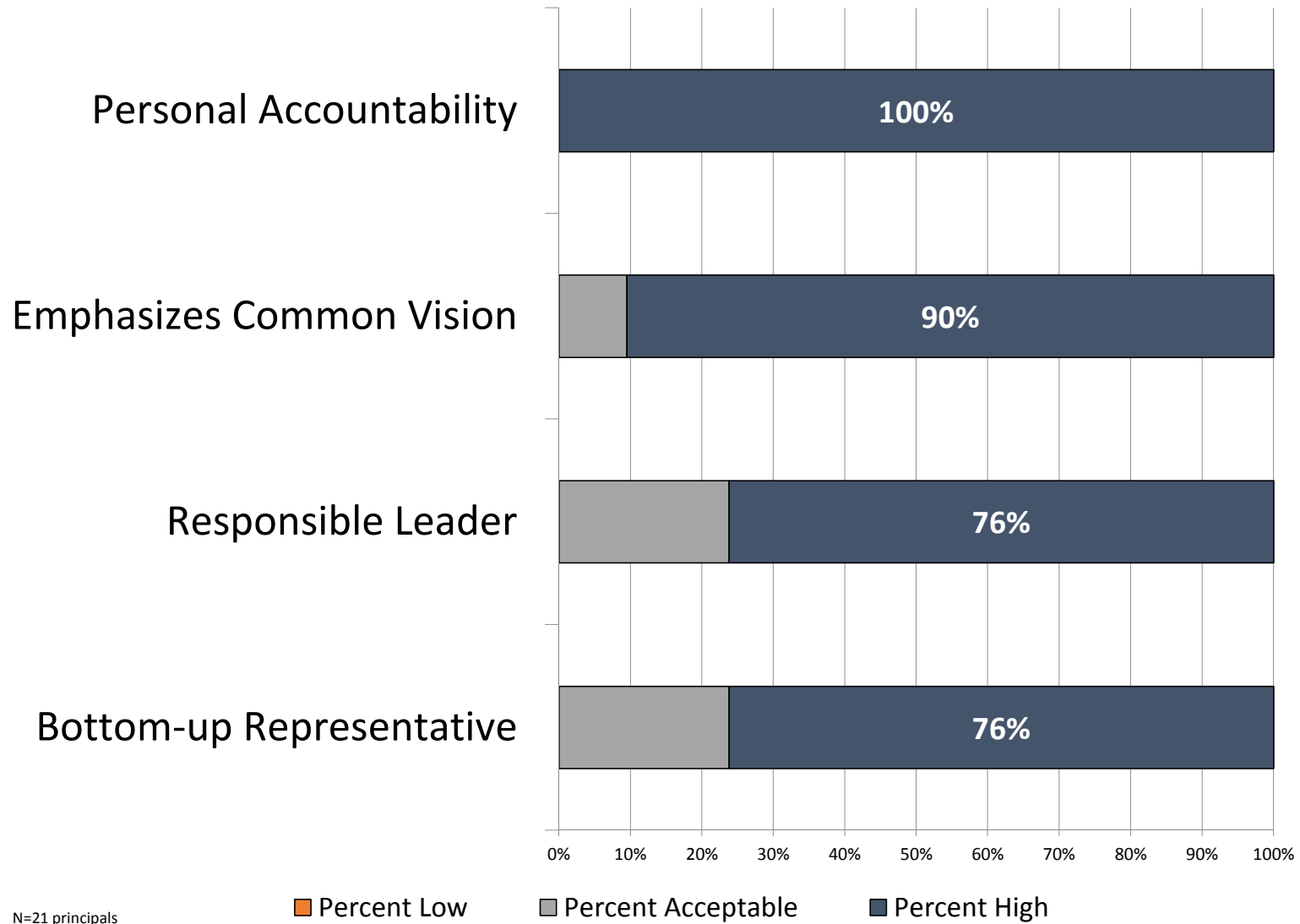


Source: Schools and Staffing Survey 2007-08, , Ed Trust Principal Survey, Pt 1

Haberman Dimensions of Effective Urban School Leadership



Haberman Dimensions of Effective Urban School Leadership



I said they all shared a common belief and a
common vision.

What is their common belief?

They believe that **all** students can learn to high levels if provided with the right instruction...



“Through my teaching experiences, I learned that my students were capable of learning just about anything I was capable of teaching.”

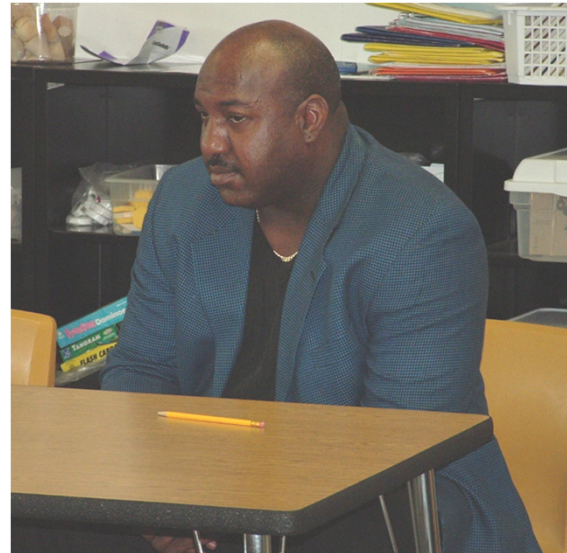
-Molly Bensinger-Lacy, principal
Graham Road Elementary School

What is their common vision?

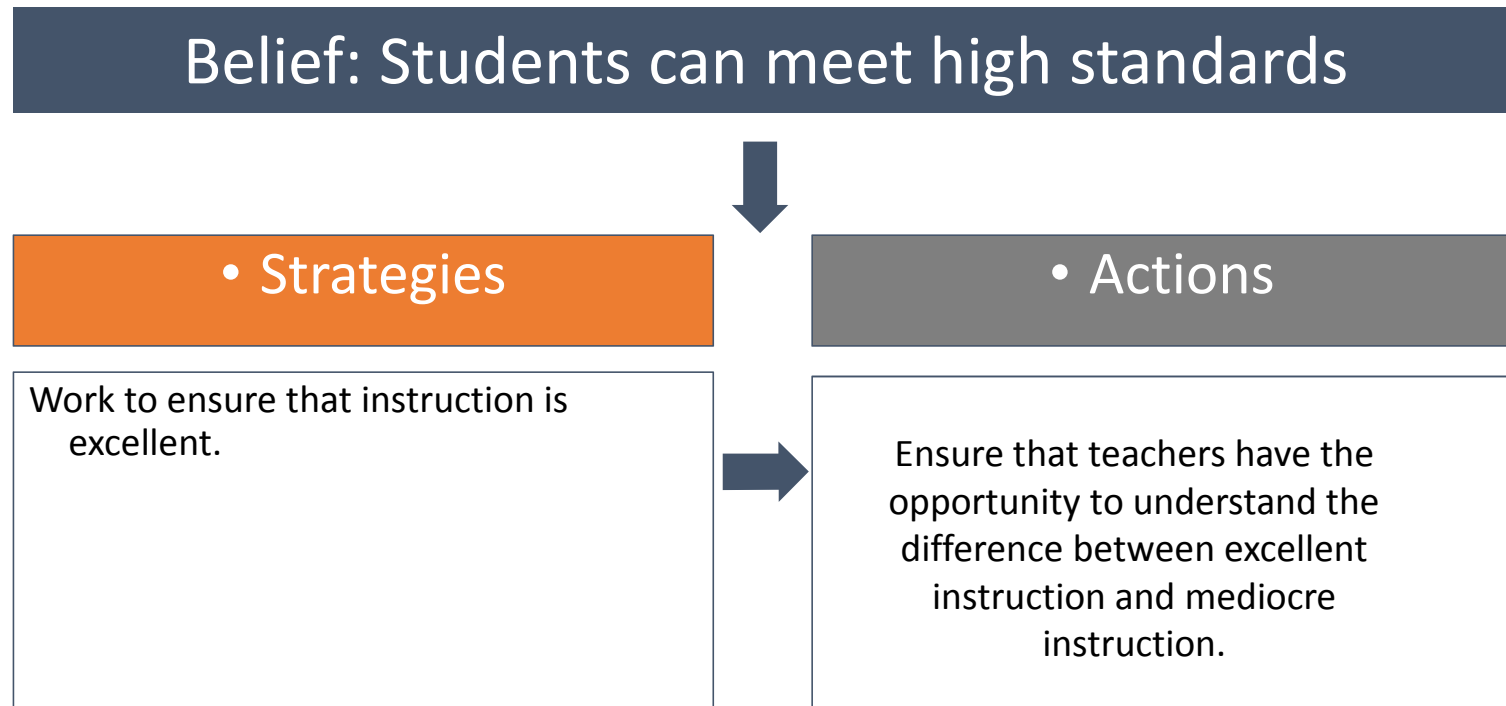
...and that it is up to schools to figure out how to *provide that instruction.*

“It is so important to dispel the myth that these children can’t learn to high standards. There’s a belief system out there that they’re not as smart as white kids. We’re on a mission to conquer every myth and every test.”

--Von Sheppard, principal, Dayton’s Bluff Achievement Plus Elementary School



One of the implications of their belief is that they are able and willing to honestly discriminate between excellence and mediocrity.



Case Example:
Distinguishing
Between Excellence
and Mediocrity



Elmont Memorial High School

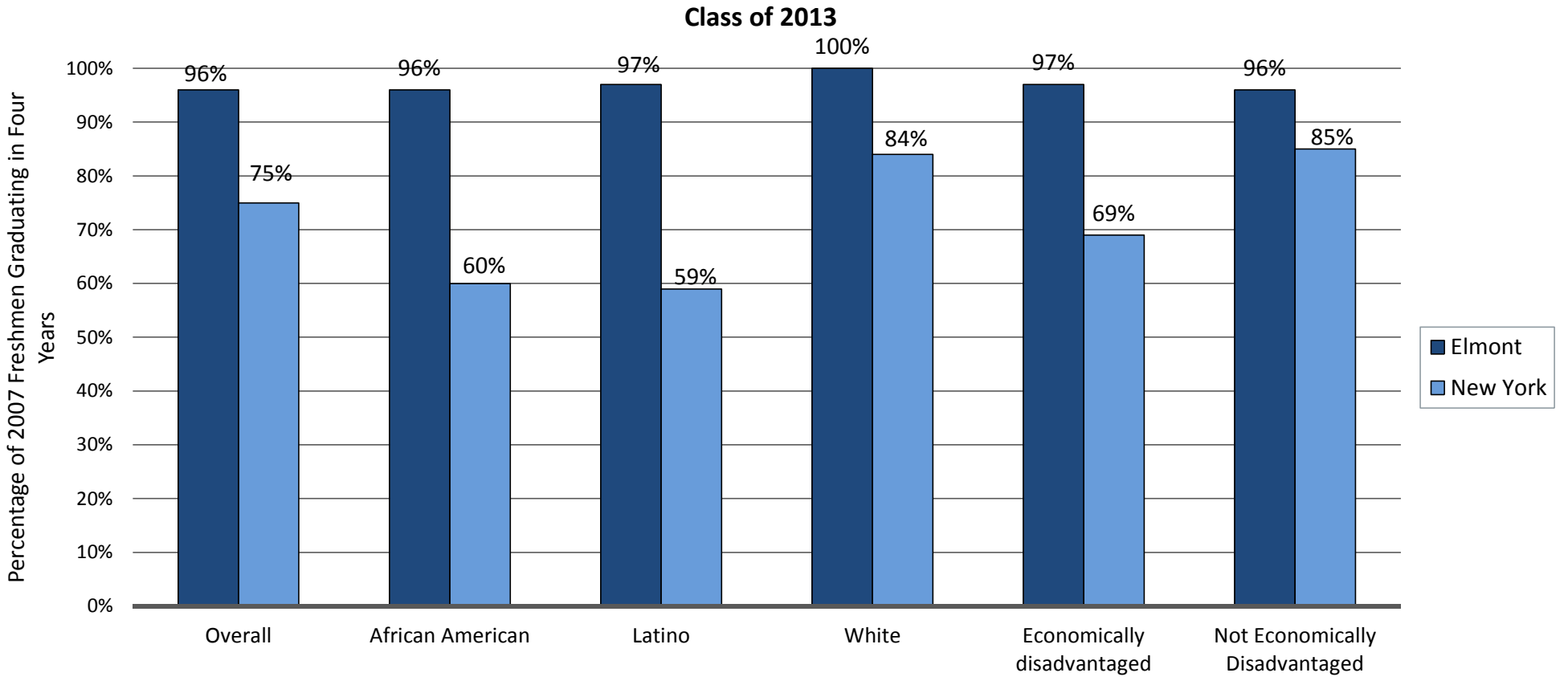
Elmont Memorial High School

Elmont, New York

- 1,928 students in grades 7-12
 - 78% African American
 - 13% Latino
- 27% Low-Income



High Graduation Rates at Elmont Memorial High School



Source: New York State Department of Education



“...at one point in the lesson you took a sub-standard response that was not elaborated on....You admitted that, in the interest of time, you took the response and moved forward with the lesson.

As we discussed, setting standards and having students meet those standards includes the proper responses..”

Discussion:

Are students in your school taught to high standards? What evidence do you regularly gather to substantiate your opinion?

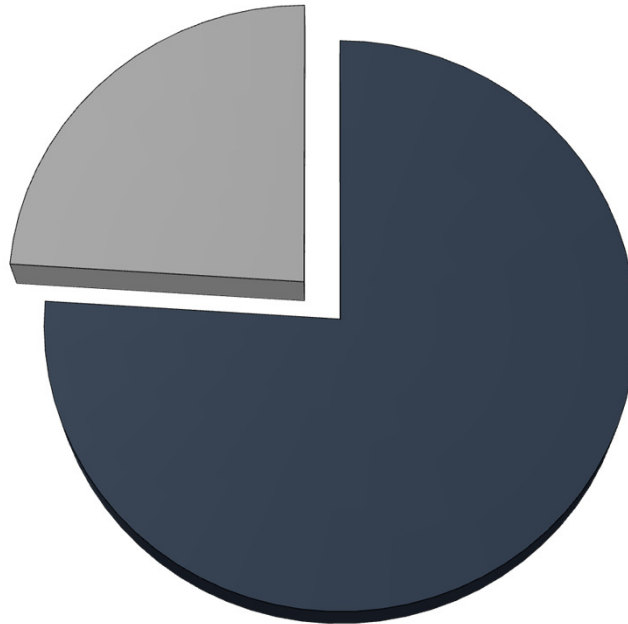
What Did We Find?

#2

They put instruction at the center of their managerial responsibilities.

We asked them:
How do you define your role as principal?

The remaining
24% of
principals
described their
role as setting a
vision that
includes equity
or excellence



76% of principals
described their role
using one of the
following terms:

- Instructional leader
- Principal teacher
- Teacher of teachers
- Lead Learner
- Educational facilitator

Belief: Time is a resource for instruction

Strategies

- School leaders establish a school-wide urgency around the use of time.
- School leaders share decision making.
- School leaders plan and schedule their own time

Actions

- Set school and classroom routines to ensure time is spent on learning not “getting ready” to learn or discipline.
- Create master schedule to maximize both instructional time and time for teachers to collaborate
- Empower individuals to make decisions relevant to their role
- Create teams to pool expertise and get the work done.
- Participate in meetings, trainings and be present in school.



Case Example:
Time Use



Graham Road Elementary School

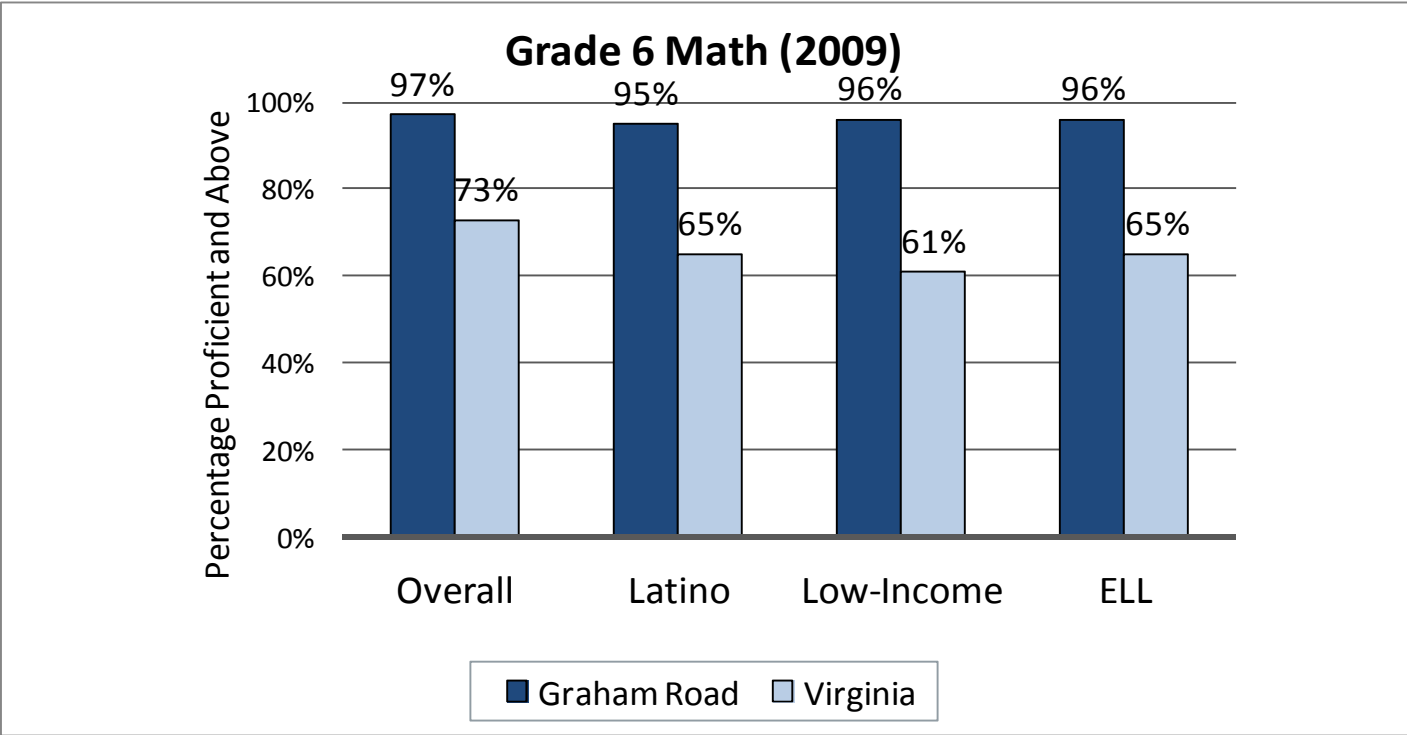
Graham Road Elementary School

Falls Church, Virginia

- 356 students in grades K-6
 - 13% Black
 - 16% Asian
 - 64% Latino
- 81% Low-Income
- 51% ELL



Graham Road Elementary School Meeting or Exceeding Standards



Source: Virginia Department of Education

Once a week, teachers from each grade level met at the beginning of the contractual day (15 minutes before school started) and continued for the first 45 minutes of the school day. Back in their classrooms, teacher aides began the day—supervising breakfast, collecting homework, and starting the students on their day's work.

At the meeting, often one teacher presented findings from significant research that illuminated a problem of practice they had identified and, sometimes, teachers would immediately be able to put that research into action.



Discussion:

- In the next three minutes, list as many ways as possible that you have seen student learning time being wasted.
- With a partner, pick one or two of these time wasters and brainstorm remedies.

- Bonus question: list as many ways as possible that you have seen teacher time being wasted.

What Did We Find?

#3

They focus on building the capacity of all the adults in the building.

Belief: Teachers have great power to change children's lives.

Strategies

Actions

- Hire carefully to shape the instructional culture of the school.

- Their hiring protocols often test candidate's willingness to commit to the school and continue improving.

- Assign carefully.

- Strong teachers are assigned to students furthest behind.
- Weak teachers are supported by coaches, mentors, etc.

- They encourage practices that yield the best results.

- They provide individualized feedback and guidance.





Diane Scricca, former principal, Elmont Memorial High School

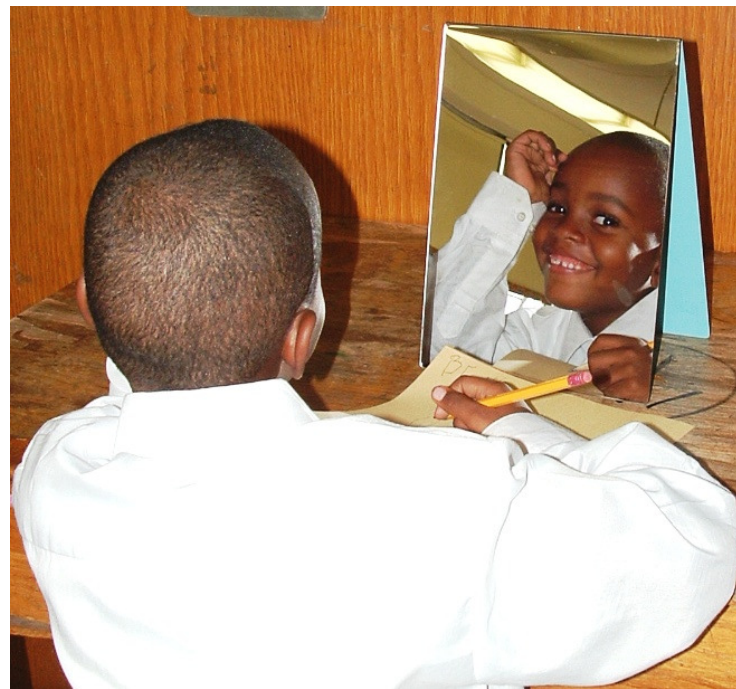
Case Example: Building Teacher Efficacy and Capacity



M. Hall Stanton Elementary School

M. Hall Stanton Elementary Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

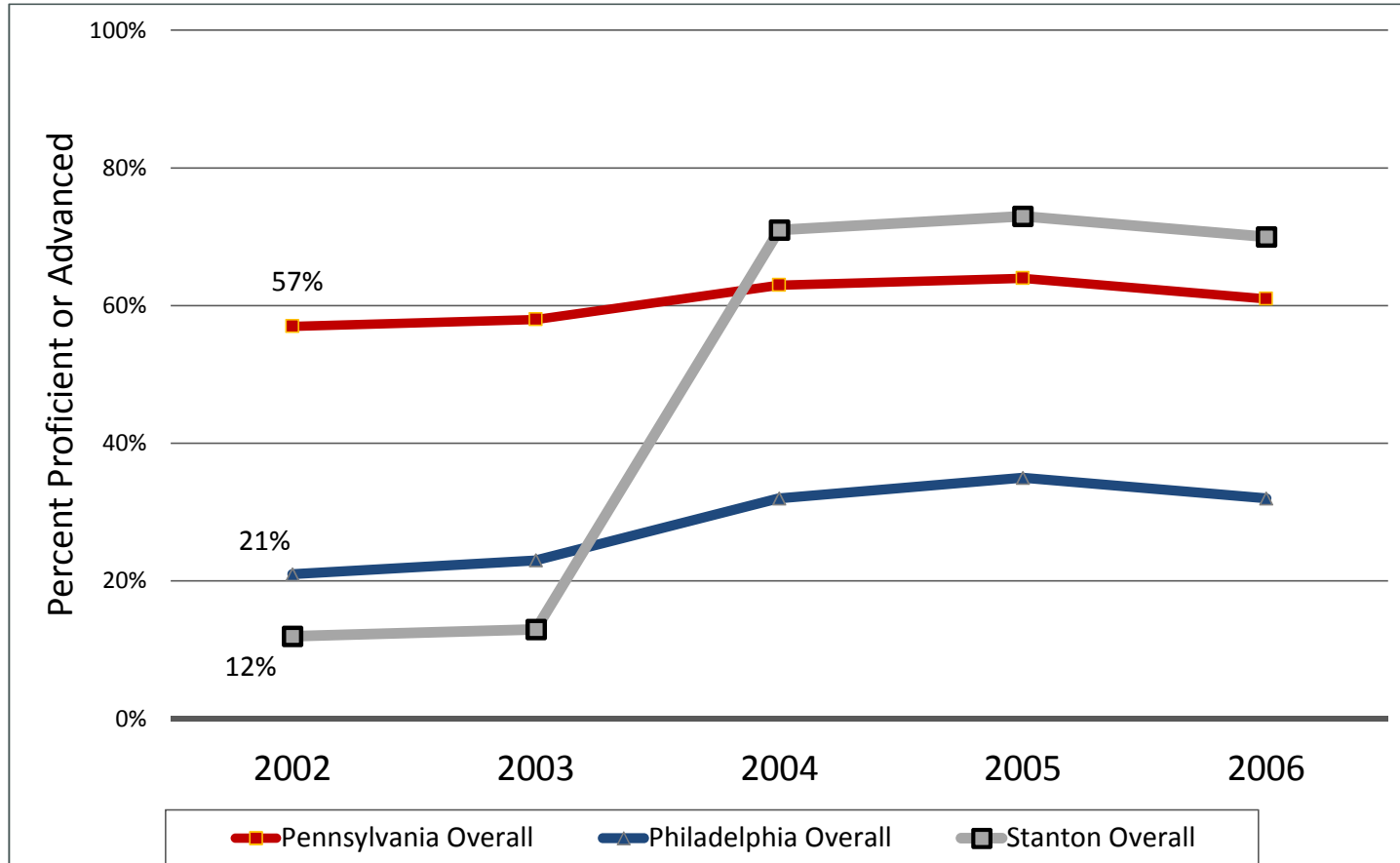
- 487 students, K-6
 - African American: 99%
 - Low Income: 99%



Source: https://sdp-webprod.phila.k12.pa.us/school_profiles/servlet/

M. Hall Stanton Grade 5 Reading

Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA),



Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2002-2009

Professional development at Stanton

- Each grade level met 1x per week with principal and coaches during planning period.
- Each academy met 7:30 -9:30 a.m. every two months in a different teacher's room for breakfast, book study, and sharing of best practices (coverage of classes and stipends were provided).
- Whole school met 1x a week for professional development (early dismissal of students).
- New teachers met every Tuesday 7:30-9 a.m. with principal and coaches to discuss pedagogy and math and literacy content (stipends provided).
- Additional staff development provided Saturday morning (stipends provided).

Initially Barbara Adderley made decisions about professional development needs of the staff based on data. Most professional development was whole-school, taught by Adderley (e.g., how to implement guided reading, how to use math games as part of the math curriculum, etc.)

Fairly quickly, the two instructional coaches became part of a team that helped Adderley determine professional development needs and they often taught specifics of math and reading instruction as well as bringing back district-level training that they received.

As they became more proficient, teacher leaders joined in making professional development decisions and in providing the professional development.

Professional development was less often school-wide and more often tailored to the needs, as determined by the data, of individual teachers or grade-levels.

Data used to determine PD:

Walk-through observations of classrooms
Reading data
Math data
State assessment data
Attendance and discipline data
Student work

“We can’t hire and fire our way out of this.”

--Barbara Adderley, former principal, M. Hall Stanton Elementary





June Eressy, former principal, University Park Campus School,
principal, Chandler Elementary School

Discussion:

How do you support teachers as they work to improve and grow as professionals? How do you know that what you are doing is helping them?

What Did We Find?

#4

They deliberately create a collaborative culture.

Belief: Respect is essential for both teachers and students to thrive.

Strategies

- “High support, high demand” approach.

Actions

- They create norms and expectations for professional conversations.
- They establish norms for how adults interact with students.
- Teachers adapt methods and interventions until students meet high performance standards.



“ I stroke them all the time, but they know that I expect them to teach all the time.... One teacher said, ‘You’re fun, but you get on us...’”

- Mary Haynes-Smith, principal, Bethune Elementary School



Case Example: Deliberately
Building a Respectful Culture



Ware Elementary School

Ware Elementary School

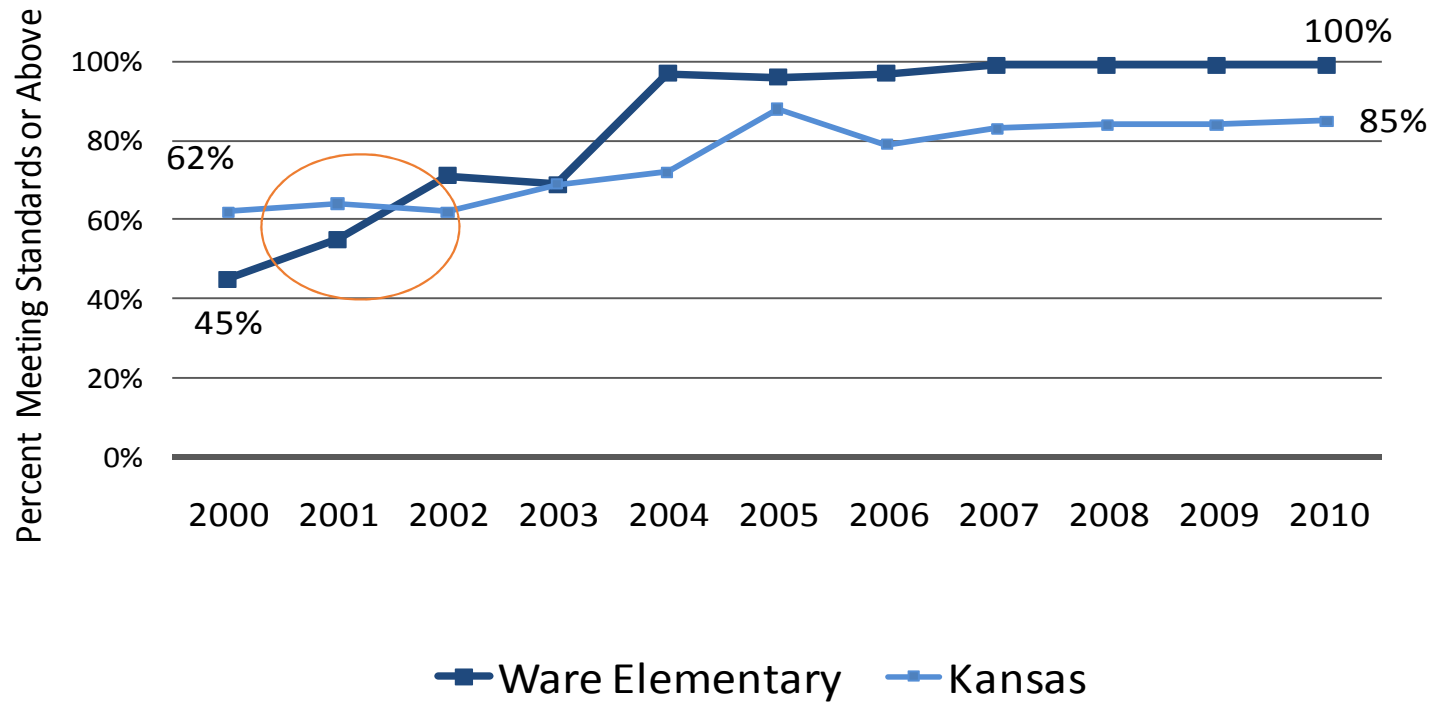
Fort Riley, Kansas

- 693 students in grades K-5
 - 17% African American
 - 21% Latino
 - 55% White
- 76% Low-Income



High Achievement Over Time at Ware Elementary

Students Overall – Grade 5 Reading



“How kids function is an absolute consequence of how adults function.”

--Deb Gustafson, principal
Ware Elementary



Discussion:

Scenario 1:

You observe a teacher and see that although she is not overtly disrespectful to students, she does not expect much more than simple recall during lessons.

The principal should...

Scenario 2:

A team of four teachers vote on a common policy of handling students' behavior issues. One of the teachers does not agree with the team's decision and does her own thing. The three teachers following a common policy complain to the principal that the fourth teacher is undermining their authority and not functioning as a cooperative team player.

The principal should...

What Did We Find?

#5

They monitor and evaluate what factors lead to success and what can be learned from failure.

Belief: Evidence trumps opinions.

Strategies

- Without losing sight of big goals, they build efficacy through interim goals
- They make data public and help teachers understand how to use it.
- They are “relentlessly respectful and respectfully relentless”

Actions

- They set concrete, measurable goals based on data and examine outcomes.
- They examine work products to assess the rigor of instruction.
- They have data meetings, create data walls, do data walks, conduct student academic reviews
- They follow up.
- They ask questions.





Source: Graham Road Elementary



Terri Tomlinson, principal
George Hall Elementary School

Case Example: Continual Improvement



University Park Campus School



Ricci Hall, University Park Campus School

Discussion:

Student achievement in your school improves from the previous year.

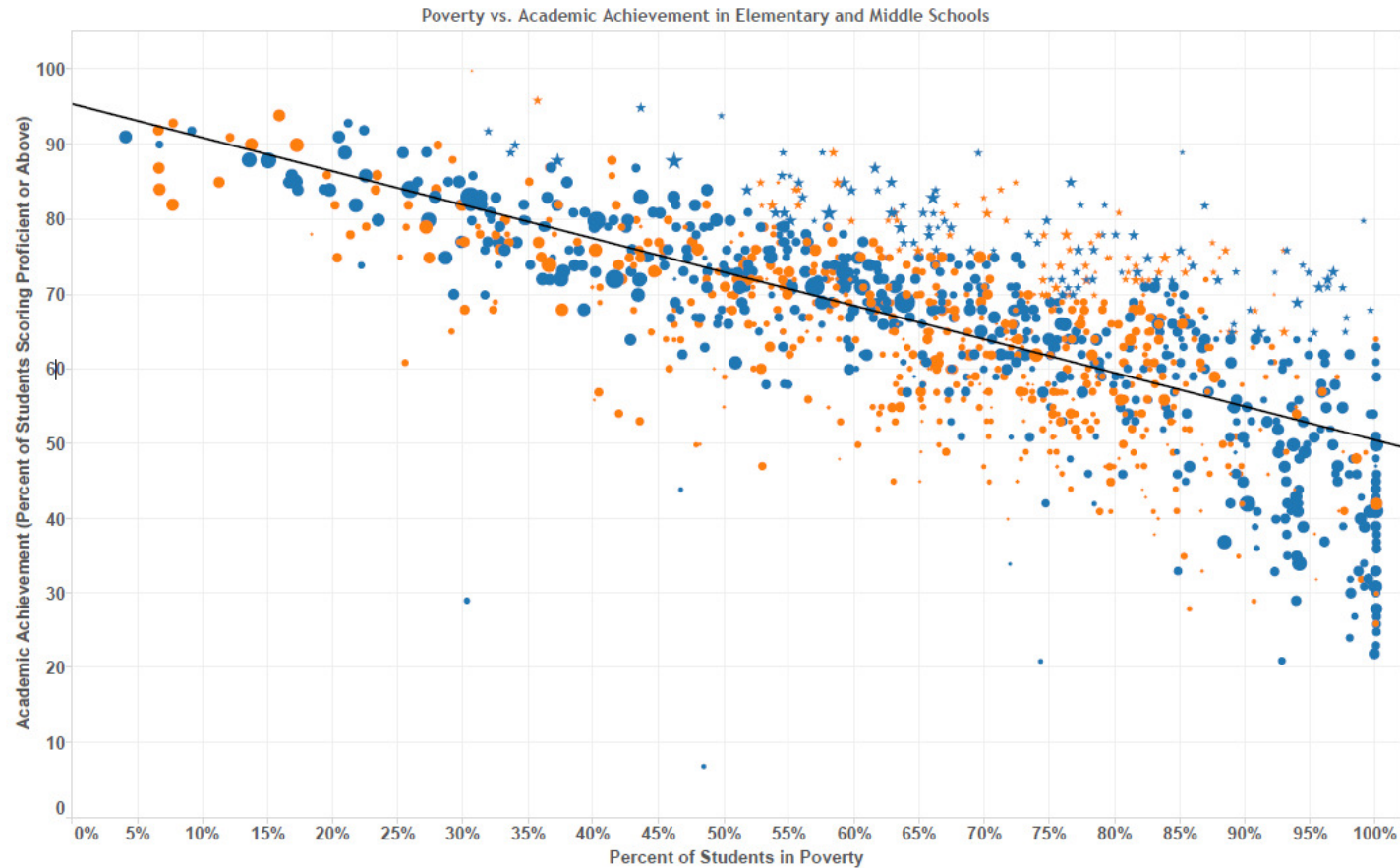
As a principal:

- What is the first thing you do?
- What is the second thing you do?

Remember that scatterplot I showed at the beginning of the presentation this morning?

What does Oklahoma look like?

Oklahoma Elementary and Middle Schools



In Conclusion...

What does it take to lead academic success in unexpected schools?



It's Being Done principals are not superheroes but experts.

The expertise they have developed can be learned by other administrators who are:

- willing to honestly discriminate between excellence and mediocrity,
- have the courage to do things differently to improve, and
- the discipline to reflect on what factors lead to success and what can be learned from failure.

But you don't have to take my
word for it.

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E-mail etevents@edtrust.org with questions.



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