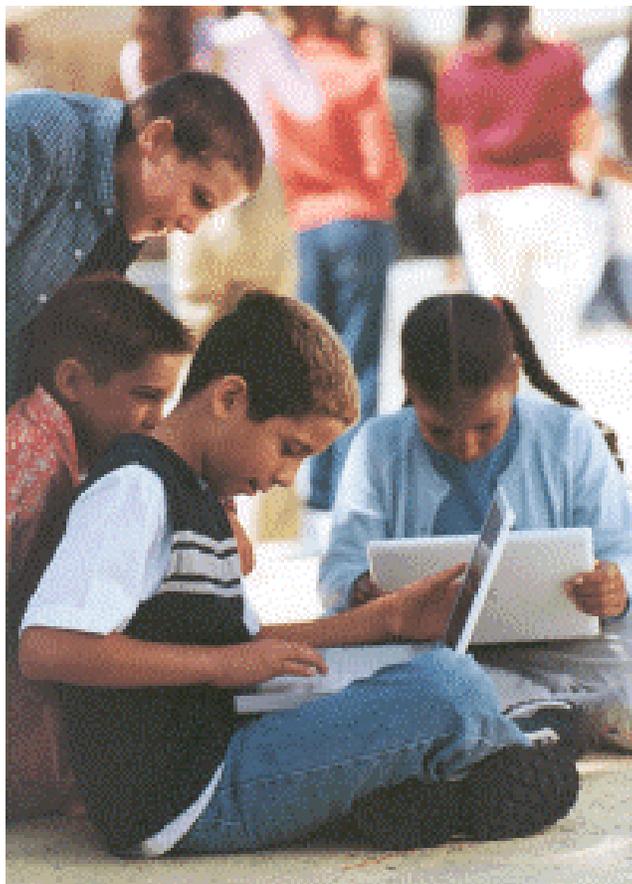


Best Practices Panel Report  
**To the  
Quality Education Commission**

**June 19, 2002**



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter I: KEY FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>3</b>
Introduction.....	3
Charge of the Panel.....	3
Quality Indicators.....	4
Best Practices.....	5
Key Findings and Recommendations.....	5
For Future Panel Consideration.....	9
<b>Chapter II: THE WORK OF THE PANEL .....</b>	<b>10</b>
Multiple Prototype Models.....	10
Small Schools.....	10
Certificate of Advanced Mastery.....	11
Technology.....	11
Student as the Customer.....	11
Role of Quality Indicators.....	12
Contributing Factors in School Success.....	16
<b>Chapter III. HIGH-PERFORMING SCHOOLS.....</b>	<b>18</b>
National Models for High-Performing Schools.....	18
Oregon’s Model for High-Performing Schools.....	19
Prototype Schools Assumptions.....	19
Model Prototype Schools.....	20
▪ Model 1: Elementary.....	21
▪ Model 2: Middle.....	24
▪ Model 3: High School.....	27
High School Prototype Illustration.....	31
Organizational Outline.....	34
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>35</b>

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **Best Practices are strategies and programs that effect high student achievement.**

The Best Practices Panel reviewed current educational research and listened to practitioners in the field to better understand what type of programs best meet the needs of Oregon students. It was clear to the Panel that successful schools and high student achievement do not happen without a clear and consistent plan. It was the goal of the Panel to present clear guidelines that will provide the greatest opportunity for schools to achieve that success.

### **The charge of the Panel was to improve the current Quality Education Model as a tool to support educational decisions.**

Specifically the Panel was charged to recommend ways to accomplish the following tasks:

- ✓ Refine and update the Quality Education Model prototype schools designed to meet high academic standards.
- ✓ Align the structure of Oregon high schools to meet the demands of the Certificate of Advanced Mastery.
- ✓ Identify Best Practices for high school level instruction.
- ✓ Improve the model's ability to reflect effective, research-based practices in the context of K-12 student performance.
- ✓ Communicate with stakeholders regarding model refinements.

### **Specific programs make a difference in student success.**

As the Panel reviewed research and listened to educational experts, it was clear that schools must implement specific programs on a regular basis in order for students to consistently demonstrate high student achievement. We identified eleven key findings ranging from personalized educational programs to cost-effective management of resources. Each focuses on making the learning specific to the need of the student, while remembering to make the learning relevant to achieving state standards and preparing the student for success beyond high school.

Significant to the findings is the restructuring of high schools to increase relevance and reduce the dropout rate through the development of personalized education programs, greater connectedness with the school and significant adults and a focus on career-related learning. While the Panel's findings and recommendations are prescriptive in nature, they allow a great deal of flexibility at the local level. Schools and school districts can personalize programs to meet student and community needs.

### **Key findings and recommendations support much of what is currently in place and reinforce the need to stay the course.**

Key Findings—Best Practices occur when:

- ✓ Each student has a personalized education program.
- ✓ Instructional programs and opportunities are focused on individual student achievement of high-quality standards.
- ✓ Curriculum and instructional activities are relevant to the lives of students.
- ✓ Each student has access to a rich and varied elective co-curricular and extra-curricular program.
- ✓ The school makes data-informed decisions about the capability of programs to foster individual student achievement.

- ✓ The school provides and encourages connections with significant adults, including parents, mentors and other advisors to ensure that each student develops a connection to the greater community, along with a strong sense of self.
- ✓ The school creates small learning environments that foster student connection.
- ✓ The school uses community-based and worksite learning as integral components of its instructional program.
- ✓ The school has a comprehensive induction program that guides recruitment and employment and provides ongoing professional development programs.
- ✓ Time is considered a variable, not a constant, in achieving high student success.
- ✓ Cost-effective management of resources allows school districts to better meet the needs of the greatest number of students.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Modify the prototype high school to allow for greater flexibility to meet growing academic and social needs of students and to allow for personalized learning and connectedness with staff and significant adults.
- ✓ Develop systems which can objectively assess quality indicators at the local school level.
- ✓ Determine recommendations for sustaining technology as an instructional tool in the classroom.
- ✓ Review the appropriateness of developing a prototype small school model.

**Prototype schools provide a model for designing schools and determining the financial resources necessary to achieve high student performance.**

The models provide examples for staffing and resources rather than templates for all state schools. The Panel recognizes the value of local input and variation designed to meet specific requirements. In this report, minor modifications are made to the elementary and middle school models. In the high school model, changes reflect modifications in the expectations of the Certificate of Advanced Mastery and the desire to reduce dropout rates through a more personalized education plan.

Changes to the Elementary Prototype Model

- ✓ Expanded resources to support technology
- ✓ Additional support to meet the needs of English Language Learners

Changes to the Middle School Prototype Model

- ✓ Expanded resources to support technology
- ✓ Additional support for media center materials
- ✓ Additional support to meet the needs of English Language Learners

Changes to High School Prototype Model

- ✓ Smaller class size focusing on core subjects and CIM/CAM/PASS standards
- ✓ Additional staff to increase student involvement in school activities
- ✓ Expanded resources to support technology and media services
- ✓ Personalized education plans and mentor teachers
- ✓ Increased expectations in the number of courses taken during four years

**The work of the Panel should be ongoing.**

It was clear to the Panel that refining and improving the strategies and models are necessary to maintain a quality educational system. Assessing Quality Indicators, creating small learning communities within large high schools, and developing a prototype small high school are some of the considerations for future panels.

# Chapter I

## KEY FINDINGS

### **Introduction**

The Best Practices Panel believes that there are clear frameworks for developing and ensuring high performing schools. The framework of successful schools goes beyond chance or the specific location of a school or community. Successful schools are created through systematic, proven strategies that become embedded in the core values and operating systems of the institution. It is the Panel's belief that these guiding frameworks can be identified as Quality Indicators and Best Practices.

The Panel's work summarizes research on educational practices. The Quality Indicators and Best Practices identified can be found in school districts throughout Oregon. They can also be replicated in a variety of settings and modified to meet local resources and needs.

### **Charge of the Panel**

The Quality Education Model is based on prototype schools designed to meet Oregon's high standards and provide a quality education for each student. The charge of the Best Practices Panel is to make recommendations for improving the model as a tool to support educational decisions.

Specifically, the Panel will recommend ways to accomplish the following tasks:

- Refine and update the Quality Education Model prototype schools designed to meet high academic standards.
- Align the structure of Oregon high schools to meet the demands of the Certificate of Advanced Mastery.
- Identify best practices for high school level instruction.
- Improve the model's ability to reflect effective, research-based practices in the context of K-12 student performance.
- Communicate with stakeholders regarding model refinements.

## **Quality Indicators**

In the current Quality Education Model, the Commission approved Quality Indicators as intangible factors necessary to understanding the relationship between educational inputs and student achievement. The Panel supports the belief that Quality Indicators continue to provide a framework for judging effectiveness and efficiency of the state's schools as organizations. The Indicators also are a necessary complement to test scores in order to determine the level of learning that would occur in prototype schools.

The following are defining attributes of Quality Indicators.

- Elements that exist so that best practices can occur
- Organizational factors that lead to a quality staff and instruction at a developmentally appropriate level
- An organizational framework which effects learning outcomes, both those that are measurable and those that can not yet be quantified
- Ways to describe and judge the effectiveness and efficiency of Oregon's public schools
- Logically linked to student achievement
- Necessary components within the state assessment program

Examples of Quality Indicators include:

- Teacher quality
- Demonstrably effective instructional programs and methods
- Leadership that facilitates student learning
- Parent/community involvement
- Students entering kindergarten and each subsequent benchmark level ready to learn academic curriculum appropriate to that level
- Teacher efficacy
- Professional development programs focused on improving student learning
- Safe and orderly learning environment
- School-based data collection and analysis as the basis for instructional programs
- Student connectedness to school and engagement in academic and extracurricular programs
- Organizational adaptability
- School district policies that support high expectations, accountability, curriculum alignment, and maximum allocation of resources to teaching/learning

## **Best Practices**

Best Practices are those strategies and programs that have been demonstrated in research and experience to be successful in effecting high student achievement. They are the specific programs that accompany the components of a Quality Education Model (QEM). The prototype school is one example of how a school could be organized to implement Best Practices programs.

Best practices are strategies that successfully effect high student achievement.

Key to the successful school is to establish what staff are doing instructionally within the components of the prototype school. Best Practice programs increase the likelihood that students will achieve academic success. High-performance schools have the ability to identify and replicate proven instructional strategies throughout the system. Maintaining high student performance requires a multitude of factors ranging from qualified and well-trained staff to an effective, articulated curriculum. It takes many well-coordinated parts to design and implement quality education.

Individual student success and achievement are best and most easily attained when the student feels a sense of connectedness with other students, staff, and significant adults, as well as the instruction and activities of the school. As students move through the grades, they report a loss of individual personal connectedness to their learning and to significant adults. The more schools can establish and retain this connectedness, the more students feel a part of the educational system and the greater the chance for student success. Personalizing the learning and connecting students to significant adults and specific activities are key to academic success and high-performing school systems.

To guide schools in this pursuit, the Best Practices Panel reviewed a variety of programs that research has determined to be best in the field. These Best Practices provided an educational guide without inhibiting local creativity and control.

## **Key Findings and Recommendations**

### **Findings**

Best Practices are achieved when:

- 1. Each student has a personalized educational program.*

Personalized, active, and meaningful learning through integrated coursework and actively engaged students provides meaning and purpose to the educational program. Holding students accountable for educational planning provides a unique opportunity for collaboration, accountability, and commitment. School staff shares the same responsibility to plan cooperatively and to provide meaning and focus to the instruction.

Technology is changing the landscape of teaching and learning. Effective use of technology is a significant strategy to improving learning for students at all levels and in all content areas. Children and youth who do not have access to technology for learning will be at a significant disadvantage to their peers who do have access to technology. Schools have a responsibility to decrease the “digital divide” by providing access to computers and other technologies during and after school hours.

*2. Instructional programs and opportunities are focused on individual student achievement of high-quality standards.*

In a standards-based environment, the measurement of individual student achievement should include a variety of valid and objective methods to document both achievement of and progress toward meeting the achievement standards. The CIM/CAM standards developed by the State Board reflect Best Practice. Local educational decisions add to the attainment of student success by personalizing the instruction to meet community expectations. The standards reflect the demands of the civic and economic environment in which people will live.

Teaching to a standard is a very different model than traditional seat-time approaches to learning. In a standards-based system, the student is given the time and support needed to reach the standard. Tests are used to support learning, not to dictate it. Tests are not used to sort students on a bell curve with the expectation that most will be average and some above average and others below average. Tests are used to assess the effectiveness of the teaching strategies and determine and provide information about improving teaching. Letter grades have little meaning when teaching to a standard – the standard is met or not met.

*3. Curriculum and instructional activities are relevant to the lives of students.*

The curriculum and instructional activities relate student lives to academic learning and vice-versa. Applied learning opportunities create a real-world environment and allow the learner to build upon his/her learning experiences. Review of literature provides evidence that robust learning experiences:

- are problem-focused and/or develop student problem-solving abilities;
- use multiple, real-life contexts such as workplaces and the community in which to teach and foster learning;
- address learning as situated, social-cultural, and distributed;
- foster self-regulated learning;
- anchor teaching and learning in students’ diverse life contexts;
- employ ongoing and blended assessment of student achievement and employ multiple methods for assessing student achievement;
- use interdependent learning groups so students can learn from each other; and
- model contextual teaching and learning strategies. (Sears, S. and Hirsch, S., 1998)

- 4. The student has access to a rich and varied elective co-curricular and extra-curricular program.*

Students have a range of opportunities for participation, personal and group achievement, and recognition. Involving the student in his/her learning environment through non-classroom activities builds a connectedness and promotes commitment to the educational process. The blending of curricular and co-curricular activities creates a sense of authenticity to the educational process.

- 5. The school makes data-informed decisions about the capability of programs to foster individual student achievement.*

Schools must have the capacity to collect and interpret data. Not only does this involve access to the information, but it also requires the ability to understand and make meaningful decisions. Local data can be as important as state data in making key decisions. All data should be utilized to evaluate and prescribe student programs. Multiple sources of data that are relevant to the various “customers” are critical to making effective long- and short-term decisions about what is working well and to set priorities for areas of improvement.

- 6. The school provides and encourages connections with significant adults, including parents, mentors and other advisors to ensure that each student develops a connection to the greater community, along with a strong sense of self.*

Students require guidance and support. The greatest danger in our current environment is that students will lose contact with interested adults who can support the student in his/her studies. Mechanisms for providing this support include ongoing parent involvement, small learning communities, schools within schools, alternative programs, mentor programs, and co- and extra-curricular programs.

This Panel recognizes that a child’s education is a responsibility shared by the school and family during the entire period the child spends in school. The Panel supports the development, implementation and regular evaluation of parent-involvement programs in each school, at all grade levels and in a variety of roles. Programs should be comprehensive and coordinated in nature. School involvement applies not only to parents, but also to other adults who play a significant role in the life of a child.

- 7. The school creates small learning environments that foster student connection.*

Small schools, by their very nature, have a distinct advantage in dealing with student connectedness. In small schools, learning communities exist which facilitate student engagement and personalize educational learning. The challenge is to the larger, comprehensive schools to create similar learning environments.

8. *The school uses community-based and worksite learning as integral components of its instructional program.*

School cannot be all things to all students. Learning beyond the classroom connects the instruction within the school to the world beyond the academic setting. Worksite learning adds meaning and purpose to the instructional programs. Off-site learning requires an interactive relationship between the school and the worksites, which benefits both the student and the community.

9. *The school has a comprehensive induction program that guides recruitment and employment and provides ongoing professional development programs.*

New demands require high levels of prior training, and changing requirements demand ongoing staff development. Preservice training and in-service training are essential to bridge the gap between academic preparation and local needs and expectations. Ongoing professional development is essential to maintain a quality workforce and to create a consistent approach to instruction. Effective approaches will require strong partnerships among the K-12 schools, Education Service Districts, teacher preparation programs, the Oregon Education Association, and the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission to mentor teachers in their first few years of the profession and to provide continuing professional development throughout their careers. Induction mentoring is essential to the recruitment and retention of effective teachers. Emphasis on the use of technology, both as an instructional and a management tool, increases student learning opportunities and staff productivity.

10. *Time is considered a variable, not a constant, in achieving high student success.*

Time is the currency of instruction and education. Students learning at a slower rate are provided more time and additional instruction. Multiple opportunities are provided for demonstrated student success. Relevant learning allows advanced students to move beyond the expected to additional learning opportunities.

11. *Cost-effective management of resources allows school districts to better meet the needs of the greatest number of students.*

In identifying best practices for high school reform, we cannot and should not lose sight of the economic environment in which this reform is taking place. While it is easy to argue that effective high school reform will demand a more significant financial investment, we should not lose sight of the need to operate our schools with efficiency. Utilization of sound business practices, collaboration with business and community partners, and consistent review of program effectiveness are part of what must be an ongoing program of responsible cost management.

## **Recommendations**

1. Modify the prototype high school to allow for greater flexibility to meet the growing academic and social needs of these students and to allow for personalized learning and connectedness with staff and other significant adults.
2. Develop systems that can objectively assess the existence of specific quality indicators at the local school level.
3. Develop recommendations for sustaining technology as an instructional tool in the classroom.
4. Develop alternatives that deal with time as a variable in achieving student success
5. Review the appropriateness of developing a prototype small school model.
6. Research methods for measuring additional Quality Indicators.

## **For Future Panel Consideration**

1. Determine the appropriateness of including preschool programs as part of the elementary prototype model.
2. Develop alternatives to personalize high school instruction in large high schools.
3. Develop plan for transitioning grade levels and schools that promotes academic achievement.

## Chapter II

### THE WORK OF THE PANEL

#### **Multiple Prototype Models**

The Panel reviewed the value of developing a number of prototype models at all three grade level divisions. The Panel concurred with the original commission that the prototype models were examples of school staffing configurations developed to serve primarily as a funding model. The prototypes were not developed to provide a template or standard for schools throughout Oregon.

Given the diversity of our state's schools, it was important to allow for local decision-making in the design of community schools. As such, it was important not to develop additional prototype schools and further cloud the purpose of the Quality Education Models.

As prototypes, the three models--elementary, middle, and high school--serve to generate a funding baseline which, if fully implemented, would achieve high academic standards. Each model also provides the school district with an example of components that are effective instructional components. The concepts that predicate the model design serve as counsel to the local decision makers.

#### **Small Schools**

Small schools as defined by the State of Oregon include 91 elementary and middle schools and 102 high schools. The panel considered the value of designing a specific small school model. Given the fact that over 16.5 percent of our schools, which represent 4.5 percent of Oregon's students, fall into this category, there was support to create such a model. It was clear that there was a different set of challenges present in achieving high student performance in small schools.

However, as the research and discussion evolved, it became apparent that small schools, by their very nature, contained many of the key components of a quality instructional environment. In fact, many larger high schools should look for ways to create small learning communities within their large schools to meet the personalized needs of students. While small and/or remote schools do not have the same diversity of offerings and may not have the same access to career-related learning, they can still achieve similar academic results through the application of the Quality Indicators. The personalized planning and instruction may compensate for the variety of large school offerings.

## **Certificate of Advanced Mastery**

With the revision of the Certificate of Advanced Mastery (CAM) requirements, it was important to review the existing high school prototype model. As career-related learning and personalized planning became a focus of the CAM plan, the high school prototype model has been adjusted to reflect the need for a greater diversity of learning opportunities. The model creates greater blocks of staff with fewer identified core classes. This change creates opportunities for schools to meet the expected diverse requests of students as they design post high school plans. It also expects students to fully participate for the full four years of high school.

It is the belief of the Panel that motivation to achieve either the Certificate of Initial Mastery or the Certificate of Advanced Mastery was not high on the priority list for high school students. As the change to personalized planning for post high school becomes the driving force of the CAM, it is expected that students and staff will find the relevance to embrace this part of the Oregon plan.

## **Technology**

The Panel reviewed successful technology programs and learned what it takes to bring technology into the classroom. The importance of this instructional tool was apparent, but it was not clear what the model should include as part of the baseline for funding. It is clear, however, that this area is important as an integrated part of the instructional process and an area that contains an overwhelming potential cost. It was the belief of the Panel that this area should be a consideration for future panel review.

## **Student as the Customer**

The question of why schools exist and who is the true customer provided a compelling example of the diverse forces within the public school. The Panel reviewed this issue with the goal of better understanding the viewpoint of a customer-focused business. When programs are designed to meet the needs of the student and not the system, the true customer is served. The key to making that a priority is to constantly challenge what is being done and who is best served by that activity. If the student and academic achievement is not at the heart of the decision, the program should be critically reviewed and modified.

## **Role of Quality Indicators**

Quality Indicators were originally referred to as “intangibles” that were important to the success of the model school. It became clear to the Best Practices Panel that for intangibles to have real meaning to school staff, they must have a clearer focus. Quality Indicators are based on the belief that specific actions taken during the organization and operation of the school will consistently result in high student performance. Not all of the Quality Indicators can be measured qualitatively, but their presence and active pursuit can be monitored. As school staff teach students, the presence of Quality Indicators serves as signposts that the instruction is the result of productive and effective planning.

Quality Indicators were reviewed by the Panel for appropriateness in the K-12 system. The Quality Indicators were compared with practices that the panel believed would result in high student achievement. Understanding the difference between a Best Practice and a Quality Indicator is an important clarification.

Best Practices are programs or strategies that are implemented throughout a school or school system. The implementation results in a consistent strategy either in organization or instructional delivery. The more the program or strategy is uniformly understood and implemented, the greater the degree of consistency in performance results. Best practices alone will not create high achieving students. They only create the operational network.

The underlying elements of success are embedded in the Quality Indicators. Consistently applied and logically linked to student achievement, Quality Indicators become the necessary components of a successful school system.

Examples of Key Quality Indicators:

### Teacher quality

1. Teachers have solid and deep knowledge of their subject matter and make connections with other disciplines.
2. Teachers are proficient in creating units of instruction that reflect alignment with long-term curriculum goals, state and district standards, and an understanding of the appropriate developmental level of their students.
3. Teachers demonstrate professional commitment and responsibilities through respectful, caring and positive interpersonal relationships with students, colleagues, administrators, assistants and parents; they model professional behavior, demonstrate academic integrity, and maintain professional ethics and values.

### Demonstrably effective instructional programs and methods

1. Teachers demonstrate mastery of a range of instructional strategies, including integration of diversity and exceptionality to enable all students to meet standards.

2. Teachers are adept at using flexible grouping strategies with frequent regrouping based on accurate data of student knowledge and skill.
3. Instructional time is a high percentage of the total time available during the day and year.
4. The time devoted to instruction is utilized effectively.
5. Technology is used to enhance learning efficiency.
6. Homework is used to supplement classroom learning or practice skills, not to introduce new skills or as busywork.
7. Homework is not used in class as a substitute for instruction.
8. Homework is coordinated among teachers and subjects to ensure students are capable of completing assigned homework in a quality fashion.
9. Decisions about instructional materials, texts, and instructional programs are made with reference to the potential of these materials and programs to enhance student learning and to provide research or other evidence to that effect.

#### Teacher efficacy

1. Teachers believe all students are capable of making substantial learning gains each year.
2. Teachers act in ways that suggest they believe they have a direct effect on student learning and student academic success.
3. The school is organized in a way that maximizes teacher ability to have a positive effect on student learning.
4. While acknowledging the challenges faced from various external factors, teachers continue to take primary responsibility for ensuring that students learn in school.

#### Leadership that facilitates student learning

1. The school community is focused on goals and has some sense of vision or purpose.
2. State standards are a part of the school's goals; and the school has a clear, realistic plan to enable progressively more students to meet standards over time.
3. There is a broad-based involvement in decision making that is clearly focused on student learning.
4. Leadership roles are present in the school community, and involvement in those roles by individuals enhances student learning.
5. The school community has a healthy organizational climate and a minimum of political "in-fighting".
6. Employees are held accountable to high standards of performance.

#### Parental/community involvement

1. There is extensive communication with parents and community.
2. Parents and the community influence the functioning and programs of the school.

3. Parents and the community have a positive attitude and a sense of belonging to and ownership of the school.
4. There is a range of adults present in the school in a variety of roles including licensed teachers, paraprofessionals, aides, parent volunteers, senior citizens, college students, and members of the business community.
5. Tutoring and mentoring programs provide one-on-one assistance to young people with special needs.
6. Someone in the school coordinates and maximizes adult resources available to the school.

#### Safe and orderly learning environment

1. Students are on task within their classrooms.
2. Hallways and all public spaces are orderly at all times.
3. Students are not fearful of attending school.
4. Violent incidents are very rare and dealt with immediately and effectively.
5. Parents and the community view the school as being safe and orderly.
6. The school cooperates with community agencies to ensure consistency in the enforcement of laws and rules in the provision of programs for students who are disruptive influences.

#### Students enter kindergarten and each subsequent benchmark level ready to learn academic curriculum

1. When measured at the beginning of kindergarten, third, fifth, eighth, and tenth grade, students demonstrate skill and knowledge levels adequate to ensure they have the potential to reach prescribed benchmarks by the end of the benchmark year.
2. Adequate diagnostic information exists for each student so that, at any point, the school can identify the student's level of functioning and prescribe a program of improvement if necessary to enable the student to enter the next level and be ready to achieve the benchmark.
3. Programs exist to support students who need extra help in reaching benchmark levels.

#### School-based data collection and analysis as the basis for instructional programs

1. The school has a planning process that utilizes data on student performance as a key element.
2. School staff have skills in the collection and analysis of data on student performance.
3. A system exists to collect and utilize data on student knowledge and skill.
4. There is a direct relationship between decisions about the instructional program and data on student knowledge and skills.

#### Professional development program focused on improving student learning

1. A systematic, long-term professional development plan links directly to improvement on student performance.

2. Teachers participate in and show ownership of the professional development plan.
3. Changes in instructional programs and classroom teaching practices are a direct result of the professional development program.

#### Student connectedness to school and engagement in academic and extracurricular programs

1. School size or organizational structure is appropriate to ensure student interactions occur at a human and manageable scale and that the adults in the school know all students.
2. The opportunities for student involvement are numerous and varied enough to ensure something is available for all students and that involvement is not restricted to a particular group of students.
3. Award and recognition programs do not result in the same students being selected for multiple awards and recognition.
4. The school has the mechanisms to identify and engage students who may fall through the cracks or drift through school anonymously until they drop out.
5. Alternative education programs are not one-way streets that funnel students out of the school. Instead, they are connected to the broader school in ways that encourage participation by all students in the general school community.

#### School district policies that support high expectations, accountability, curriculum alignment, and maximum allocation of resources to teaching/learning

1. The district mission is focused on high achievement for all students.
2. Policies make assumptions that all groups of students are capable of learning.
3. A regular review process exists to ensure alignment between grade levels and schools and articulation is occurring across schools.
4. Accountability policies exist that use data to identify under-performing schools to diagnose causes for under-performance and to ensure improvement occurs at such schools.
5. The performance of individuals in leadership positions is reviewed on a regular basis, and movements are made to ensure a quality leader is present in every key leadership role.

#### Organizational adaptability

1. Procedures exist to review and update policies frequently.
2. Mechanisms exist to stimulate organizational renewal, including task forces, study groups, ad hoc committees, and external visitation teams.
3. A formal planning process exists that takes into account internal and external data on organizational functioning, purpose, and potential opportunities and challenges.
4. Evidence exists of a culture within the school that believes in identifying new challenges instead of recounting old accomplishments.
5. The school views public relations as a tool to stimulate change.

## Contributing Factors in School Success

During the Panel's work, two factors continually impacted the discussions and appeared to have a major influence on the ability for schools to implement Best Practices.

The first factor that affected schools and their ability to plan for high student achievement is the increase in special student populations. The two special populations that have experienced the most significant gain in enrollment are the English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities. The increase in enrollment of English Language Learners has had a dramatic impact on some school districts and a minimal effect on others. Where the population has increased significantly, compensatory programs have been implemented to assist with the acquisition of language and related academic skills. Although federal grant programs aid in this effort, it is still the responsibility of the local school district to meet the needs of this diverse population.

The increase in students with disabilities has affected school districts more uniformly throughout the state. Most school districts identify approximately 13 percent of their students as qualifying for special education. Where this number rises above 13 percent or the disability requires extensive services, the impact on the local school district is significant. State resources are increased in consideration for the added services; however, in specific cases, local costs can far exceed the available resources. Developing a financial plan to adjust for these two groups of students will assist local schools in developing Best Practices and meet the unique educational needs of all students.

Chart No.1 below demonstrates the demographic changes in the English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities populations. The chart reflects the increases each year to these two groups of students.

Chart No. 1

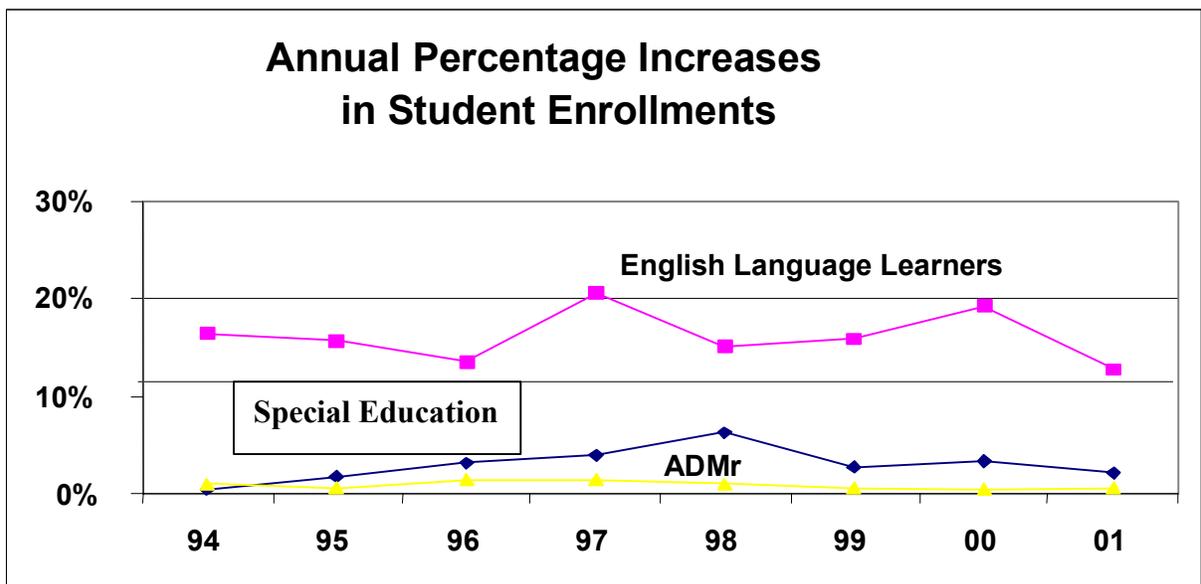
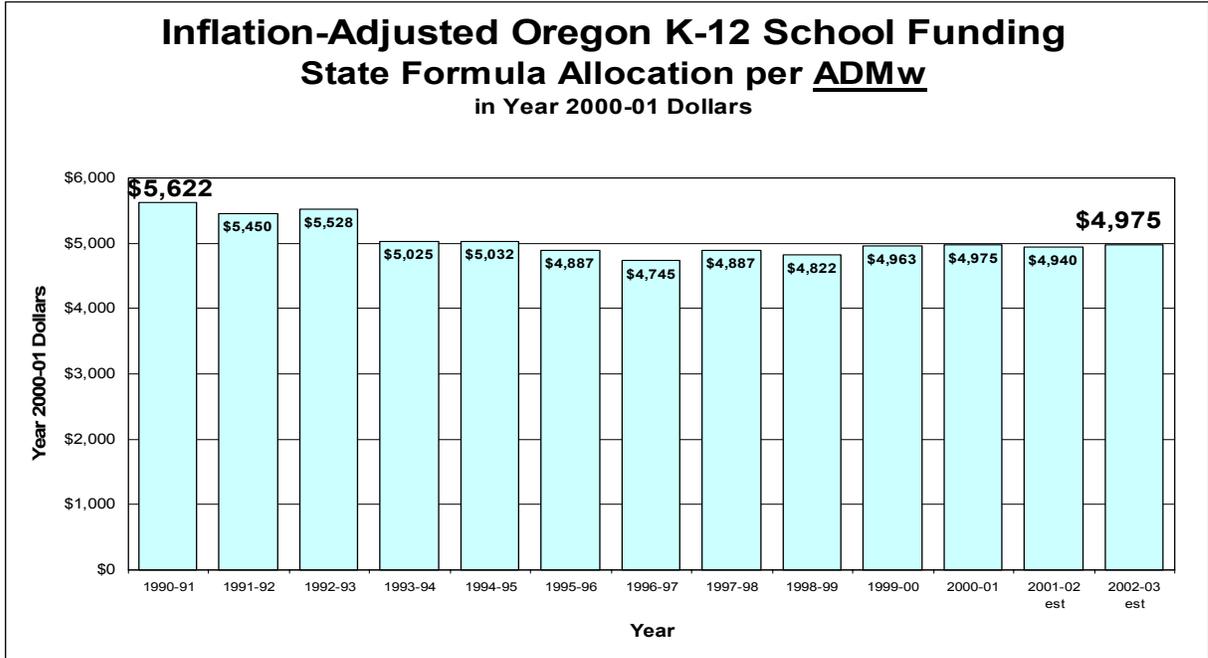


Chart No. 2 reports the per-student funding for students across the state. The dollar amount is adjusted for inflation and is allocated on an average daily membership weighted (ADMw). The chart demonstrates a flat rate of student funding over the past ten years.

**Chart No. 2**



Both charts reflect clear indications of the trend in funding and the growth of special student populations. Designing schools to achieve high student achievement with limited education dollars will require new or different priorities. Meeting the needs of all students, while achieving continual growth in student achievement, will demand creative planning and conscientious management of resources.

## Chapter III

### HIGH-PERFORMING SCHOOLS

#### National Models for High-Performing High Schools

Dr. David T. Conley, associate professor at the University of Oregon, consultant to the Commission, and member of the Best Practices Panel has reviewed national models of high-performing high schools. His research has identified the following key characteristics.

High-performance prototype high schools: (Conley, 2002)

- Are fully aligned with elementary and middle school instructional programs.
- Emphasize proper placement of students into appropriate courses, semi-independent study, tutoring, and workshops to ensure appropriate and challenging learning activities at all times.
- Are designed to enable students to transition successfully from high school to a variety of post-secondary options.
- Develop courses of study from model courses developed by teams of content experts and master educators.
- Assume that the percentage of students meeting benchmark performance levels at third, fifth, and eighth grades will increase gradually each year.
- Assist low-performing students by being clearly focused on the most important concepts, skills, ideas, and facts.
- Allow students who master concepts quickly to spend their time deepening their understandings and creating connections among concepts.
- Create technology workstations within the school for independent study and web-based research.
- Maintain a learning center enabling students to master core concepts, access student records, and provide aids to placement in college and the workplace.
- Encourage creativity as an important aspect of the student experience.
- Expect all faculty to have a deep knowledge of their content area.
- Have a large number of highly trained, specialized paraprofessionals to support community-based programs, mentorships, internships, skill workshops, and technology infrastructure; maintain order at the school; and contact students in danger of dropping out.
- Support adults meeting frequently in reference groups and across job responsibilities.
- Network teachers, administrators, counselors and paraprofessionals into a record-keeping and information-management system.
- Connect with post-secondary institutions and align coursework with entry-level college courses.
- Create a “school within a school” small learning community to address student affiliation needs.

## **Oregon's Model for High-Performing Schools**

Given the philosophical underpinning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools legislation and the work completed over the last decade, there is good reason to support the values and strategies contained in the Oregon Plan.

### **Prototype Schools Assumptions**

The assumptions incorporated in the Quality Education Model 2002 prototype schools reflect many of the same assumptions as the Quality Education Model 2000. An effort was made to retain a level of consistency to create a stable baseline for comparison and program development.

The model uses three prototype schools, constructed to be examples of schools in Oregon, that have a structure consistent with best, research-based practices. To allow for a consistent base model, the Commission has made assumptions about the demographics of each prototype: elementary, middle, and high school.

Those basic assumptions include:

- The size of each school is at a level within a range that research literature recognizes is reasonable.
- The assumed level of teacher experience is about average for schools in Oregon.
- Each school classroom has Internet access.
- Teachers are using technology in the design, delivery of instruction, and assessment of learning.
- The schools are located in close proximity to an urbanized area.
- The schools are slightly below the state median in socioeconomic status (40th percentile).
- The schools have approximately 13 percent of their students identified for special education.
- Five percent of the students are identified as speaking English as a second language.
- The principal is knowledgeable about reform requirements and is supportive of the reform goals.
- Full implementation of the model will still create a percentage of students that are unable to achieve benchmark standards and will need supplemental instruction.

## **Model Prototype Schools**

**Model No. 1  
Elementary**

**Model No. 2  
Middle**

**Model No. 3  
High School**

*High School Prototype Illustration*

The Panel has developed the prototype high school using the Quality Indicators, Best Practices research and basic organizational assumptions outlined in Chapter 1. The exact organizational structure may vary from community to community.

The following illustration is provided as one way the prototype high school might be organized and structured:

**Mt. Hood High School  
2002 Innovation Court  
Wild Chinook, Oregon**

*Defining Characteristics*

- All students can and will achieve at a level that prepares them for post-secondary training or entry into the work force.
- Students, staff and other significant adults contribute to make school programs a vital part of the community.
- Involvement in the life of the school is an expectation for all students.
- Assessment of student progress and subsequent adjustment of instructional programs is an ongoing process.

**High Student Learning –  
High Student Involvement**

*Essential Components*

- Personalized educational plan
- Small learning communities that connect students with significant adults and personalize learning
- High academic expectations and achievement
- A wide range of elective and co-curricular programs
- Core learning academic support
- Community/school-based career learning
- Professional growth expectations for all staff

**Personalized learning through small learning communities  
and  
individualized educational planning.**

*Small Learning Community Assumptions*

- Daily schedule is 4 classes per day with 20 minutes daily advising time.
  - 14 teachers work with 250 students for a two-period block of time.
  - Overall class size average 1-25.
  - Teachers are in class 3 of 4 periods plus a 20-minute advising time.
  - All licensed staff meets with their mentor group daily.
  - Students take four classes per day.
  - Each student has an advisor -- ratio 1:17.

- 10 % of juniors and seniors are involved in career-related learning, mentorships, or independent study at any given time. (School-to-work coordinator)
- 5 % of juniors and seniors are taking college courses at any given time.
- .5 FTE classified staff work with each group of 250 students in the area of volunteer coordination and community outreach.
- Classes include multi-aged and multi-grade groupings.
- 50% of the small learning community classes are integrated and thematic.
- Instruction combines large group, team, and individual instruction.
- Core instructional support services are targeted to get students to standards and reduce the dropout rate.
  - .75 FTE licensed staff is available for alternative education, teen parents, and home tutors.
  - .5 FTE licensed staff is available school wide for English Language Learners.
  - 1.5 classified staff is available school wide for learning center support.
- 75% of students are engaged in at least one co-curricular activity.
  - 37 coaching stipends are available school wide.
  - 12 co-curricular sponsors are available school wide.
  - FTE co-curricular activities director available school wide.

### *School Organizational Structure*

- ✓ All students take a minimum of four classes daily each of four years.
- ✓ The media center, learning lab, and new-comers center are staffed before school and in the evening for academic assistance and student projects.
- ✓ Co-curricular programs and student activities are organized during the school day and do not conflict with core academic programs. Extra-curricular programs are scheduled to have the least possible effect on the regular school day.
- ✓ Social services are on site or in an adjacent facility to support student attendance and reduce the dropout rate.

### *Staffing Organization*

- ✓ All staff is divided across disciplines into four learning communities. Each learning community will be responsible for a portion of the school population. The counseling staff will serve as team leaders, coordinating each learning community.
- ✓ Licensed staff is assigned a student mentor team of 15-18 students. Responsibilities will include:
  - Helping the student develop a personalized educational plan.
  - Mentoring the student on academic progress.
  - Advocating for career-related learning opportunities.
  - Organizing and leading the evaluation of the career-related learning project.

- ✓ Mentor teams meet regularly and formally review and modify the personalized learning plans bi-annually.
- ✓ Academic departments meet across disciplines to coordinate joint student projects and learnings. Courses emphasize thematic learning through integrated curriculum.
- ✓ All staff receives professional growth opportunities in:
  - Reading instruction
  - Personal educational planning for students
  - Interdisciplinary planning and course work development

**Professional growth opportunities for staff result in instructional change and student achievement.**

## Organizational Outline

Entry Level Student	Core Plan Development	Extended Plan Development
Grade 9	Prior to enrollment, students not meeting Grade 8 benchmarks will attend a two-week summer program in core academic coursework and high school study skills.	
	Upon enrollment, all students will develop a Personalized Educational Plan and an individual profile which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic goals</li> <li>• Personal goals</li> <li>• Engagement activities</li> <li>• Potential career-related projects</li> <li>• Potential post-secondary goals</li> </ul>	Students exceeding benchmark standards will develop a Personalized Educational Plan which also includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possible core course challenges through end-of-term exams</li> <li>• Semi-independent study opportunities</li> <li>• Forecasted college-level courses during the junior and senior years</li> </ul>
	Students not meeting the Grade 8 benchmarks in reading and/or math will be enrolled in learning centers as a course requirement	English Language Learners will be assessed and placed in a new-comer center for language proficiency and core academic skill development
		At risk students are identified and referred to special student programs
	All students will be enrolled in 7 of 8 or 6 of 7 classes	
Grade 11	Advanced high school student status is achieved upon successful completion of the Grade 10 benchmark standards and the development of a career-related learning project.	Students not meeting the Grade 10 benchmark standards will be enrolled in core learning center classes as part of the regular school schedule.
	Each student will develop and implement a two-year community/school-based career-related learning project that demonstrates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher order thinking</li> <li>• Student personal interest</li> <li>• Problem solving</li> <li>• Critical thinking</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Teamwork</li> </ul>	Students exceeding benchmark standards will take: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entry-level college courses</li> <li>• Career-related mentorships</li> <li>• Semi-independent study</li> </ul>

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