Curriculum Associates

i-Ready

Keys to Unlocking Success

Promising Leadership Practices of Schools That Exceeded Expectations during the Pandemic

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Findings Summary

In spring 2022, Curriculum Associates conducted a mixed-methods study to first identify schools whose below-level students exceeded growth expectations and subsequently interview leaders at these schools to learn how they managed to do so during an exceedingly difficult time. More than 300 schools exceeded expectations during the 2020–2021 school year. Of these schools, Curriculum Associates focused on interviewing leaders in schools that were economically disadvantaged and/or schools that predominantly served students of color. Given the research showing that economically disadvantaged, Black and Latino, and below-grade level students have the most pandemic-related unfinished learning, we wanted to identify promising district- and school-level leadership practices for supporting those students who have been most heavily impacted by the pandemic. Six key practices that were most effective in supporting students emerged from these interviews.

Promising Leadership Practices of Schools That Exceeded Expectations during the Pandemic

Key 1

Cultivate educator mindsets that support student success.

Key 2

Create a culture of data.

Key 3

Prioritize meeting the needs of the whole child.

Key 4

Create a school environment that engages and inspires students.

Key 5

Enhance teacher practice with more resources and support.

Key 6

Strengthen connections with families.

The full research paper, **Keys to Unlocking Success: Promising Leadership Practices of Schools That Exceeded Expectations during the Pandemic**, is available for download **here**.

1. **Cultivate educator mindsets that support student success, such as:**

   - Instilling the belief that *all* students can achieve at high levels
   - Encouraging teachers to take ownership of student learning, both within and beyond their own classrooms
   - Establishing a schoolwide commitment to do whatever it takes—with available resources—to support the success of every student

2. **Create a culture of data through:**

   - Professional development opportunities
   - Regularly scheduled data discussions with staff as well as with students
   - Clear norms and expectations around using data to drive improvements
   - Leverage data champions to reinforce a culture of data use

3. **Prioritize meeting the needs of the whole child with:**

   - Material resources, such as Chromebooks™, meals, and hot spots
   - A multi-tiered system of supports to address students' academic, behavioral, social, and emotional needs
   - Designated intervention and enrichment blocks during the school day
   - Carefully selected programs and tools for both academic and social-emotional learning

4. **Create a school environment that engages and inspires students by:**

   - Encouraging strong, caring relationships between teachers and students
   - Recognizing and rewarding students for meeting goals
   - Incorporating game-based learning and competition-based learning

5. **Enhance teacher practice with more resources and support, such as:**

   - Opportunities to improve content knowledge and instructional practices, shift deficit mindsets, and use data more effectively
   - Making academic support coaches and interventionists available
   - Providing targeted support to new and beginning teachers

6. **Strengthen connections with families through:**

   - Offering a variety of evening activities at school
   - Making regular phone calls to students' homes to discuss students' progress
   - Visiting students' homes to deliver instructional materials
   - Providing families with technical support that allows them to assist their children at home

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