

# STRATEGIES TO “KEEP EXCEEDING”

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[www.ncust.org](http://www.ncust.org)

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# NCUST



## National Center for Urban School Transformation

*DEDICATED TO IDENTIFYING, STUDYING, AND  
PROMOTING THE BEST PRACTICES OF AMERICAN'S  
HIGHEST ACHIEVING URBAN SCHOOLS IN A  
MANNER THAT SUPPORTS URBAN DISTRICTS IN  
TRANSFORMING TEACHING AND LEARNING.*

*Learn more at our  
Symposium on High-Performing Urban Schools  
May 22-24, 2013 in Houston, TX*

<http://www.ncust.org>



SAN DIEGO STATE  
UNIVERSITY



The Center sponsors the National Excellence in Urban Education Award Program, annually identifying some of the nation's highest performing urban elementary, middle, and high schools, and alternative schools.

Since 2006, we have awarded 62 schools from 17 states. Award winners receive cash prizes and opportunities to present at the National Symposium on Excellence in Urban Education.

# IF YOUR SCHOOL

- Is in a city with a population greater than 50,000
- Does not use selective admissions criteria
- Serves mostly children who qualify for free or-reduced price lunch
- Has, in each racial/ethnic group you serve, a higher percentage of proficient students than the state overall
- Shows strong gains for English learners and students with disabilities
- Has low rates of suspension/expulsion for all demographic groups
- Has many other indicators of academic excellence, then

PLEASE APPLY FOR THE NATIONAL EXCELLENCE IN URBAN  
EDUCATION AWARD (App. Deadline 11/14/2012)

Go to [www.ncust.org](http://www.ncust.org) to see 2013 application & criteria

# GREAT SCHOOLS...



Exceed the expectations of others

Not just once,

Not just occasionally,

But consistently!

HOW?

# STRATEGY I



**Keep Raising the Bar:**

*Promote more ambitious goals*

# Build and Sustain a Goal-Focused Culture

School and classroom leaders:

- Help everyone understand that while worthwhile improvements have been achieved, it is morally wrong to be satisfied with current levels of performance
- Encourage and support the development of grade level, department, classroom, and individual student goals that align to school goals
- Keep goals in the forefront by frequently and regularly assessing, reporting, and celebrating progress toward goals. While promoting ambitious goals, generously celebrate growth toward those goals



# Build Hope Grounded in Realities



## School and classroom leaders:

- Help students and parents understand that college, careers, and a better quality of life are attainable with specific efforts
- Eliminate policies and practices that allow students to drift down dead end roads (e.g., attendance policies that prevent possibilities of earning credit; use of zero's in grading; scheduling policies that deny students access to challenging courses; scheduling policies that deny students opportunities to exit courses when they are not learning and growing).
- Create programs that offer students more real opportunities to grow and experience academic success.

# STRATEGY II



Keep the Main Thing the  
Main Thing:

*Keep Improving Instruction*

# FOCUSING ON MASTERY

**School and classroom leaders support teachers as they work to:**

- Create and maintain clarity about what students will learn: ensuring that every student will master specific, rigorous learning goals (guaranteed curriculum);
- Generate depth of understanding vs. coverage of a multitude of standards (viable curriculum);
- Be driven (not by textbooks, worksheets, pacing guides, or scripts) to lead each child to mastery of specific learning goals; and
- Promote a sense of student accomplishment and mastery.



# TEACHING CLEARLY, LOGICALLY, AND CONCISELY

**School and classroom leaders support teachers as they work to:**



- Continuously learn more about their content;
- Present key concepts logically, based upon detailed task analyses;
- Prepare thoroughly and anticipate student misconceptions;
- Use non-verbal representations, graphic organizers, and similar tools strategically to promote clarity and understanding; and
- Scaffold learning experiences so that students ascend safely and securely toward rigorous concepts.

# CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING

**School and classroom leaders support teachers as they work to:**

- Frequently check to determine what students understand (using oral, written, and non-verbal strategies);
- Distribute opportunities to respond abundantly and require feedback from all students;
- Adapt/refine instruction based upon feedback;
- Ask questions that elicit higher-order thinking;
- Engage in continuous formative assessment;
- Strategically differentiate questions/tasks;
- Refuse to allow students to sit passively and fail; and
- Avoid chicken feeding.



# BUILDING ESSENTIAL VOCABULARY

**School and classroom leaders support teachers as they work to:**



- Pre-identify the lesson vocabulary that will be the gatekeeper to understanding; and
- Provide students plentiful opportunities to use the key vocabulary in original sentences with confidence.

# PROVIDING APPROPRIATE PRACTICE

**School and classroom leaders support teachers as they work to:**

- Assign work that students are likely to complete successfully (Gradual release of responsibility: I do, we do, you do WHEN I know you are likely to do it well);
- Instruct more/assign less;
- Differentiate assignments (including homework);
- Employ grading policies that encourage students to strive toward mastery; and
- Monitor student completion of assignments (and/or give students ways to monitor their own practice) and intervene when necessary.



# CONNECTING STUDENTS TO CONTENT

**School and classroom leaders support teachers as they work to:**



- Know students well;
- Tap into student motivations, interests, backgrounds, prior knowledge, culture;
- Use culture/background as a tool to teach rigorous academic content;
- Help students perceive the foreign as familiar; and
- Make the content “real” for students.

# HELPING STUDENTS FEEL VALUED & RESPECTED

**School and classroom leaders support teachers as they work to:**



- Maintain a clean, attractive classroom;
- Express a genuine interest in each student's ideas;
- Demonstrate courtesy and respect in all interactions;
- Provide specific praise in response to student effort; and
- Post high-quality student work frequently.

# LEADING STUDENTS TO LOVE LEARNING

**School and classroom leaders support teachers as they work to:**



- Demonstrate enthusiasm and help students understand the importance of the content to be learned,
- Provide opportunities for students to use technology and/or manipulate objects to reinforce lesson objectives,
- Integrate other disciplines to teach lesson objectives,
- Provide students leadership opportunities, and
- Encourage student-to-student interaction.

# STRATEGY III



**Keep Building Collaborative  
Strength:**

***Promote distributed leadership***

# BUILDING LEADERSHIP IN OTHERS

## School and classroom leaders:

- Create opportunities for other (especially other teachers and support personnel) to provide leadership of projects, groups, and tasks that can help the school achieve its goals;
- Generously acknowledge large and small leadership contributions; and
- Mentor potential leaders in ways that build their capacity to support the pursuit of the school's goals.



# MAKING TEACHING PUBLIC

School and classroom leaders:

- Visit and observe classrooms frequently and provide constructive feedback; and
- Create a culture in which every educator accepts the responsibility of ensuring the success of every classroom



# BUILDING SHARED UNDERSTANDINGS OF MASTERY

## School and classroom leaders:

- Engage teams of educators in developing deep understandings of learning goals and their implications for instruction;
- Engage teams of educators in developing short, common assessments that gauge student mastery of important learning goals;
- Help parents and students understand what mastery of learning goals requires



# FOCUSING COLLABORATION ON IMPROVING LEARNING

## School and classroom leaders:

- Help educators use collaboration opportunities to plan instruction that is much more likely to lead student mastery of learning goals through initial instruction; and
- Help educators use collaboration opportunities to learn from data (student work products) in ways that will refine instruction, provide high-quality support, and lead to better learning results.



# STRATEGY IV

## Keep Learning from Other High-Performers

*Visit, read about, & interact with  
educators who achieve great results*

# VISIT OTHER HIGH-PERFORMING SCHOOLS



- Find schools that serve students who are similar to your students; yet, where some results are better.
- Visit, observe, ask questions, learn, and bring back ideas that can advance your improvement efforts.
- Then invite the school you visited to come and visit you.

# GO TO CONFERENCES LIKE THIS ONE!



- Seek out conferences that feature high-performing schools (e.g. The Exceeding Expectations Conference or the National Symposium on Excellence in Urban Education).
- Be around educators who believe that it is possible to keep exceeding expectations!
- Bring a team!

# READ ABOUT GREAT SCHOOLS



- Engage your staff in reading and studying books and articles about high-performing schools that serve communities like yours.

# IT IS POSSIBLE TO KEEP EXCEEDING



- It isn't easy, but our students are worth the effort.
- Any school can achieve outstanding results for all students. It requires focus, teamwork, and persistence.