

SCHOLASTIC ACHIEVEMENT PARTNERS

Five Principles of Effective
School Improvement



RESEARCH FOUNDATION PAPER

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Research Foundation Paper

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INTRODUCTION

The Challenge

More than a decade into the 21st century, the rapid expansion of an information- and knowledge-based world economy continues to spur dramatic changes in the competencies young people need to succeed in college, the workplace, and civic life. A high school diploma is no longer sufficient to compete in the career marketplace; whereas only 28% of all job openings in 1973 required some postsecondary education or training, by 2007, 60% of job openings required education beyond high school. A globalized economy means that Americans across diverse fields need the foundational, critical thinking, and interpersonal skills to keep pace with international competition and collaboration. Furthermore, meeting these challenges requires establishing and aligning goals for college and career readiness from prekindergarten to the postsecondary level. Given this changing educational and economic landscape, American schools face unprecedented challenges in preparing U.S. citizenry for success in college, career, and beyond.

Rising to this challenge will require significant improvement in educational outcomes across the country. Currently, the nation's high school dropout rate hovers around 30%, and only about a third of graduates are adequately prepared for college and careers (Rothman, 2009). According to the 2007 Nation's Report Card from the National Center for Education Statistics, just one third of public school 4th graders and fewer than one third of 8th graders read at or above grade level (Lee, Grigg, & Donahue, 2007). Internationally, American high school students lag behind their peers in other countries; out of 34 countries, the United States ranked 14th in reading, 17th in science, and 25th in math in 2009 (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2009).

Recognizing the urgency of raising U.S. educational attainment, many states are moving to adopt Common Core State Standards for college and career readiness. Furthermore, the U.S. Secretary of Education has set a goal to start closing the gap between American students and students in top-performing countries by the year 2014.

Effective school improvement initiatives simultaneously address multiple aspects of a school's operations through a unified, integrated, and customized approach.

To meet these goals, America's education leaders are seeking effective strategies for improving academic achievement for all students and turning around low-performing schools. As noted in a report by the Alliance for Excellent Education, "there is an emerging consensus that the school improvement process should be systemic...based on detailed information about student and school performance, and tailored to meet the individual needs of students and schools" (Pinkus, 2009). Success is also dependent on developing the knowledge and skills of stakeholders at all levels so that they have the capacity to manage the change process (Pinkus). In other words, effective school improvement initiatives simultaneously address multiple aspects of a school's operations through a unified, integrated, and customized approach (Hertling, 2000; Keltner, 1998).

Scholastic Achievement Partners: Comprehensive and Customized Transformation

Scholastic Achievement Partners (SAP), the professional services arm of Scholastic Education, was created to support schools' efforts to effect meaningful and lasting change and achieve academic success for all students. A partnership among three respected educational organizations, Scholastic, the International Center for Leadership in Education, and Math Solutions®, SAP guides schools in improving educational outcomes by transforming literacy, math, and leadership practices school-wide.

SAP uses a research-based approach to diagnose the needs of specific sites—from targeted improvement projects to comprehensive school turnaround—and to work with educators to develop a unified, integrated vision for reform. The next section provides an overview of this SAP Engagement Model.

SCHOLASTIC ACHIEVEMENT PARTNERS OVERVIEW

Partners in School Transformation

SAP brings together three organizations, each with unique expertise in achieving school improvement and increasing student achievement. Scholastic, the International Center for Leadership in Education, and Math Solutions together offer a full range of solutions for helping school and district leaders raise achievement for all students.

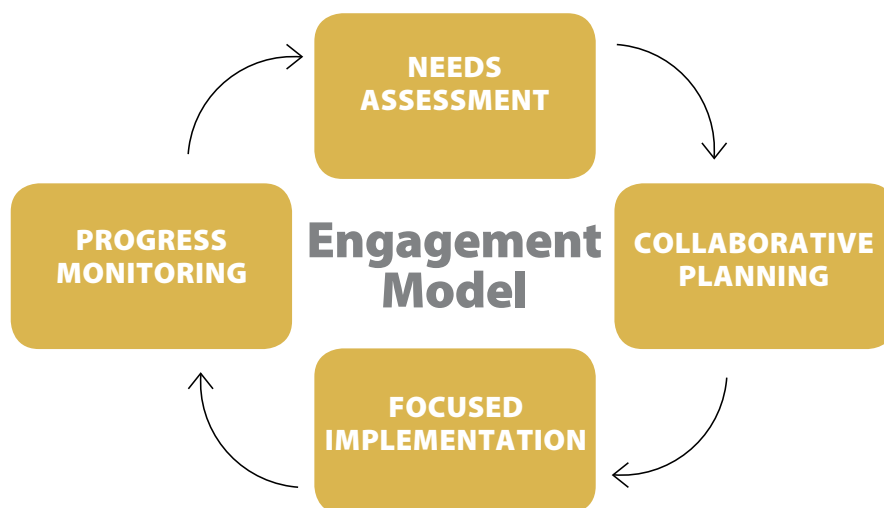
- ✓ **Scholastic** offers comprehensive program and project management support. For more than five years, these support services have helped districts effectively implement school-wide literacy across the content areas as well as comprehensive reading and math intervention programs, centered on Scholastic's *READ 180*®, *System 44*®, Expert 21, and *Do The Math*® programs.
- ✓ **The International Center for Leadership in Education (ICLE)**, founded in 1991 by Dr. Willard R. Daggett, focuses on comprehensive school improvement and the development of effective instruction and strong leadership. For 20 years, ICLE has helped schools and districts implement organizational changes that translate into improved curriculum, instruction, and learning that prepare students for our changing world.
- ✓ **Math Solutions** is a leader in improving math instruction and achievement by helping to ensure that all math teachers have the skills to meet the needs of every student. Founded in 1984 by renowned math educator Marilyn Burns, Math Solutions provides education specialists who are master educators and educational consultants with years of classroom teaching experience as well as experience in providing professional development and consulting services to school districts throughout the nation.

SAP combines the expertise of these organizations with one shared vision for high expectations for all students. Together, the partnership provides a complete suite of services in professional development across content areas, planning and advisory services, comprehensive school improvement, and program implementation.

Scholastic Achievement Partners' Engagement Model: Best Practices for Effective School Transformation

SAP uses a consistent model of engagement, grounded in best practices, to guide schools and districts in transforming student achievement. Figure 1 shows the steps in SAP's research-based engagement model. The following descriptions explain how each step in the model reflects research about effective school transformation.

FIGURE 1: Scholastic Achievement Partners' Engagement Model



Needs Assessment: Educators and policymakers are increasingly recognizing that low-performing schools differ widely in their needs, and different improvement strategies are needed (Pinkus, 2009). Effective efforts at comprehensive school improvement should begin with an assessment of the needs of the particular site, and use data to inform the improvement plan (Haynes, 2011).

In the SAP Engagement Model, the process always begins with a needs assessment that gathers data to inform decisions about curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Throughout implementation of the reform plan, schools are supported in developing rigorous progress monitoring systems, using data to ensure that achievement goals are met.

Collaborative Planning: Research indicates that effective school improvement efforts set clear, achievable goals based on site-specific needs (NGA Center for Best Practices, 2011; Stringfield et al., 1997; Torgesen, Houston, & Rissman, 2007). Unlike a top-down approach, a customized planning approach allows sites to set goals that are ambitious but realistic within their particular context.

Overview (cont.)

Reflecting this research, SAP engages in collaborative planning to ensure that reform plans are customized to each site's needs. The needs assessment identifies unique school or district strengths and challenges using proprietary tools to determine instructional, leadership, and structural "gaps." SAP uses results of the assessment to engage in joint planning with the site, to develop a customized improvement plan.

Focused Implementation: Reviews of school improvement studies consistently show that quality of implementation is a critical component of effective school transformation models. As noted by the Alliance for Excellent Education, this research "suggests that a clear focus and a deep implementation of evidence-based practices at the instructional core are essential for positively affecting student learning and performance" (Haynes, 2011, p. 3).

The SAP Engagement Model provides structured planning tools and consultation to guide educators in implementing a well-defined curriculum that supports the Common Core State Standards and teaches to specific performance indicators. SAP services and resources are grounded in experience in over 20,000 classrooms in 50 states, ensuring that solutions are practical, tactical, and practice-validated.

Progress Monitoring: The National Governors Association recommends that school improvement efforts incorporate multiple measures to monitor and evaluate results (NGA Center for Best Practices, 2011). By regularly reviewing progress monitoring data, schools and districts can adjust strategies as necessary to support effective improvement (Pinkus, 2009).

SAP helps sites support the sustainability and scalability of reform initiatives by identifying and tracking key metrics, as well as systems for ongoing review of data. SAP supports educational leaders in building the capacity of teachers, schools, and districts to monitor and sustain effective implementation into the future.

By consistently using an approach grounded in these best practices, SAP strives to maximize the effectiveness of services provided to districts and schools. The next section provides an overview of the services offered by SAP. The report shows how each type of service aligns with research and best practices, and outlines how the service is delivered using the SAP approach.

FIVE PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

SAP services are centered around five research-based principles for scalable and sustainable school improvement. SAP consultants work with each site to customize a plan that leverages each of these areas in order to maximize student achievement.

For each of the five principles listed below, this section presents relevant information about research and best practices, alongside descriptions of how these research foundations have been translated into program services.

- ◆ Assessing Needs and Developing a Customized Plan
- ◆ Building a Strong Literacy and Math Foundation
- ◆ Aligning Systems Around Teacher and Leadership Effectiveness
 - ✓ Powerful Professional Development for Teachers
 - ✓ Leadership Development and Executive Coaching
- ◆ Implementing a College- and Career-Ready Curriculum
- ◆ Strengthening Community and Family Engagement

Assessing Needs and Developing a Customized Plan

All SAP services are grounded in the understanding that any school improvement plan must be data-driven and customized to each site's individual needs. The SAP process always begins with a needs assessment that identifies critical areas for growth. Information from the needs assessment is used to map out a strategic action plan to guide school improvement efforts toward clearly articulated goals.

RESEARCH AND BEST PRACTICES

- ◆ Federal policy supports that effective comprehensive school reform programs follow a research-based plan, including measurable goals and systems for evaluating implementation, based on a careful assessment of local needs (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).
- ◆ Unlike top-down approaches, customized school reform approaches acknowledge that not all low-performing high schools experience the same challenges or experience them to the same degree (Stringfield et al., 1997).
- ◆ There is increasing consensus that effective school improvement efforts must be differentiated to address the specific needs of each site (Pinkus, 2009).
- ◆ Any successful school improvement initiative should be driven by clearly articulated goals (Torgesen et al., 2007).

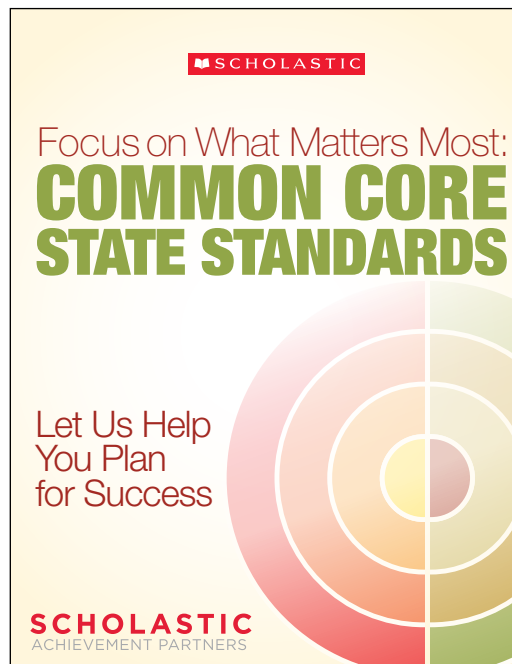
SCHOLASTIC ACHIEVEMENT PARTNERS DELIVERS

Needs Assessment and Collaborative Planning

SAP offers a comprehensive needs assessment for schools and districts seeking to gain a holistic picture of their specific strengths and challenges. Using a combination of proprietary culture surveys, classroom observation tools, interviews with key stakeholders, and rigorous data analysis, SAP provides a comprehensive portrait of each site's performance relative to the attributes demonstrated by the nation's top-performing and most rapidly improving schools. More targeted needs assessments are also available for sites interested in addressing specific issues.

Using the data from the comprehensive needs assessment, SAP consultants work with schools and districts to build a customized strategic plan that will guide school improvement efforts grounded in data. The plan targets specific areas of need for each site, and includes plans for ongoing monitoring of implementation and results.

SAP also provides diagnostic services to help schools and districts transition to the Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Assessments. SAP consultants will conduct a comprehensive Common Core Readiness Audit to identify barriers to transition and help create a multi-year plan to build capacity and meet the new demands.



Building a Strong Literacy and Math Foundation

SAP offers a Response-to-Intervention (RTI) approach, also known as a “Multi-Tier System of Supports” or the “Problem-Solving Method.” This vertically aligned system of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development is designed to meet the needs of learners at all levels of literacy and math proficiency, enabling students to transition to the next level as their skills improve. At the core of this system are research-based solutions for literacy and math improvement, including *READ 180*, *System 44*, *Expert 21*, *Do The Math*, *FASTT Math*®, and *Fraction Nation*®. These blended learning models combine adaptive technology with best instructional practices, providing a personalized learning environment for students and empowering the teacher with actionable data to better differentiate and target instruction.

RESEARCH AND BEST PRACTICES

- ◆ Implementing powerful late interventions for older struggling readers is a necessary component of literacy programs in schools. Research overwhelmingly suggests that students, including those with learning disabilities and English language learners, greatly benefit from effective early literacy intervention (Hiebert & Taylor, 1994; Pikulski, 1994).
- ◆ Low-performing readers experience dramatic reading gains when schools shift from remediation to intervention strategies. The earlier the intervention strategies are implemented for elementary school students, the more likely reading problems will be resolved (Papalewis, 2004).
- ◆ Literacy interventions for struggling readers are most successful when they set benchmarks, incorporate data-driven assessments, and systematically monitor student progress and program implementation at the classroom, school, and district levels (Fisher & Ivey, 2006; Salinger, Moorthy, Toplit, Jones, & Rosenthal, 2010).
- ◆ There is a significant, strong, and positive correlation between teachers’ mathematical content knowledge and the quality of mathematical pedagogical practices (Hill et al., 2008).
- ◆ Teachers’ mathematical content knowledge also positively predicts gains in students’ mathematics achievement (Hill, Rowan, & Ball, 2005).

SCHOLASTIC ACHIEVEMENT PARTNERS DELIVERS

Needs Assessment and Collaborative Planning

During the initial comprehensive needs assessment, SAP consultants evaluate the literacy and math needs of each site using tools such as the Literacy Gap Analysis and Math Gap Analysis. This data will help determine if schools require SAP's Tiered Intervention Solutions, which provide a vertically aligned system of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development designed to meet the needs of learners at all levels of literacy and math proficiency, through tiers of intervention and core instruction.

Focused Implementation

SAP guides the site in implementing the customized action plan using tools such as the Managing Achievement Protocol, a framework for implementing structured, sustainable, district-wide literacy and math improvement plans. The protocol includes the following: 1) help for districts to build a strong team and commitment to support literacy and math success; 2) effective program launch and training to lay a foundation for success; 3) ongoing, collaborative support to improve classroom teaching practices; 4) ongoing implementation progress monitoring, data analysis, and reporting; and 5) defined capacity building for long-term literacy and math improvement.

To address specific literacy and math needs, SAP offers research-based and proven literacy and math intervention programs. Scholastic literacy intervention programs, such as *READ 180* and *System 44*, provide intensive, tiered instruction in reading comprehension, fluency, and foundational reading skills. *Do The Math*, a comprehensive math intervention program, supports students in developing the conceptual understanding necessary for mathematics proficiency. *FASTT Math* and Fraction Nation build fluency and basic math facts. These programs are supported by SAP's professional development offerings for effective math and literacy instruction, which include face-to-face training, model lessons, and job-embedded coaching.

Progress Monitoring

To monitor site-specific progress over the year, SAP's Planning Documents provide a yearlong schedule of metrics that will allow school and district leaders to evaluate the ongoing fidelity of curricular program implementation. This schedule outlines implementation goals, as well as data collection and reporting procedures, with target dates to continuously monitor and provide feedback on implementation effectiveness, teacher knowledge, and student achievement.

Leveraging adaptive technology to collect and report on data, Scholastic's cadre of data analytics professionals partner with school leaders to provide actionable information, allowing districts to track progress against academic improvement goals and to meet accountability demands over the course of the year. To further support sustainability, leaders can use observation tools such as the Classroom Implementation Review and Implementation Fidelity Reporting System to track implementation fidelity, share results with colleagues, and cross-reference student performance results to create a complete picture of program implementation.

Aligning Systems Around Teacher and Leader Effectiveness

Instruction is most effective when fully supported, and achieving the goal of improving instruction requires a fully aligned system. The SAP Framework for Effective Instruction provides organization-wide guidelines for improving academic achievement and school culture through a focus on three critical areas: Teaching, Organizational Leadership, and Instructional Leadership. Following this framework SAP offers professional development to help teachers build capacity to facilitate rigorous and relevant instruction, strengthen relationships with students, and utilize expert instructional strategies. For leaders, SAP offers executive coaching in developing and sustaining a coherent vision, ensuring that systems and structures are aligned to that vision, and leading instructional change.



Powerful Professional Development for Teachers

RESEARCH AND BEST PRACTICES

- ◆ In a synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses of factors affecting student achievement, Hattie (2009) identified high-quality professional development for teachers as one of the most high-impact approaches to improving student learning.
- ◆ Top-performing school systems improve instruction by supporting teachers in three areas: understanding best practices, applying best practices in the classroom, and developing a culture of high expectations (Barber & Mourshed, 2007).
- ◆ Effective professional development should be directly relevant to the needs of teachers and students, and should provide teachers with opportunities for application, reflection, and practice (Reeves, 2010).
- ◆ In addition, high impact professional development is intensive, sustained, focuses on the teaching and learning of specific academic content; and builds strong working relationships among teachers (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009).

SCHOLASTIC ACHIEVEMENT PARTNERS DELIVERS

Needs Assessment and Collaborative Planning

The SAP Framework for Effective Instruction provides a guide for assessing how schools and districts can target efforts to improve instructional practices. SAP's Learning Criteria Rubric examines four dimensions critical to school-wide academic success: foundation learning, stretch learning, learner engagement, and personal skill development. In addition, surveys can be administered to teachers and students to provide insight into their perceptions of school culture and academic rigor and relevance.

SAP consultants use the needs assessment to build a customized action plan that reflects the Framework for Effective Instruction. Depending on whether schools need to improve overall teaching practices, math instruction, or literacy instruction, SAP can draw on a wide array of professional development tools and resources.

Focused Implementation

Following the Framework for Effective Instruction, the action plan guides teachers in shifting the instructional focus from the acquisition of knowledge to the application of knowledge. For example, teachers can participate in Collaborating for Rigor and Relevance (CORR), an online self-paced program designed to assist classroom teachers in developing high rigor/high relevance lessons.

SAP offers a variety of professional development opportunities to help schools strengthen instructional practices and implement the Framework for Effective Instruction, including the following:

- The Learner and Learning Environment
- Literacy Across the Curriculum
- Math Instructional Effectiveness
- Teaching Strategies Aligned to the Common Core State Standards
- Data and Differentiation
- Instructional Strategies for Rigor and Relevance

Progress Monitoring

Additional professional development resources are available to ensure ongoing support for teachers as they adopt new teaching practices. Job-embedded coaching services provide teachers with individualized feedback and support, classroom management guidance, and modeling of strategies to effectively implement data-driven instruction. Scholastic U® Online Professional Development complements in-person support, providing additional on-demand resources for building staff knowledge in literacy, math, Common Core State Standards, leadership, and instructional excellence. The online resources also include implementation support for Scholastic intervention programs, including *READ 180*, *System 44*, *Do The Math*, and *FASTT Math*.



Leadership Development and Executive Coaching

RESEARCH AND BEST PRACTICES

- ◆ Research shows that there is a positive relationship between school improvement and distributed leadership. Distributed forms of leadership include multiple leaders at various levels, rather than a single individual. It is the product of extensive collaborations between teachers, parents, and students (Harris, 2009; Spillane, 2005).
- ◆ At the school level, research identifies strong instructional leadership as one of the critical factors in improving instruction and student outcomes (Barber & Mourshed, 2007). Effective initiatives to raise student achievement focus on factors proven to have the highest impact on instructional effectiveness, including instituting a continuous cycle of evaluation and support, providing high-quality professional development for teachers, and building a culture of strong student-teacher relationships (Hattie, 2009).
- ◆ Teachers and students greatly benefit when principals shift their emphasis from teaching to learning (DuFour & Marzano, 2009). Principals can also support student learning by “purposefully forming” school culture to help drive achievement (Carter, 2010).
- ◆ In a meta-analysis of the effects of leadership practices on student outcomes, Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) identified leadership responsibilities and practices that were significantly associated with student achievement. These practices included factors emphasizing collaboration and adaptability such as the following:
 - 1) **Input:** the extent to which the principal involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies;
 - 2) **Optimization:** the extent to which the principal inspires and leads new and challenging innovations;
 - 3) **Flexibility:** the extent to which the principal adapts his or her leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and is comfortable with dissent; and
 - 4) **Relationships:** the extent to which the principal demonstrates an awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and staff.
- ◆ To work effectively with others, leaders must demonstrate personal growth and self-awareness by assessing their understanding of their own personal strengths and inclinations while reflecting and expanding on their ideas (Alvy & Robbins, 2010; Hill & Lineback, 2011; Lambert, 2007).
- ◆ As districts and schools move toward increasingly data-driven systems, it is critical that principals understand how to translate research findings and evaluative data into useable knowledge (Miller, 2003).

SCHOLASTIC ACHIEVEMENT PARTNERS DELIVERS

Needs Assessment and Collaborative Planning

SAP offers a series of tools and processes to help schools strengthen Organizational Leadership and Instructional Leadership. These include a needs assessment rubric and surveys that provide valuable insight into the leadership style, instructional practices, and overall culture of a school.

SAP consultants help school and district leaders use the findings from the needs assessment, surveys, and leadership inventory to develop an action plan aimed at fostering a rich learning environment and culture of high academic expectations for students. Using the Framework for Effective Instruction as a guide, the action plan will help sites improve Organizational Leadership and Instructional Leadership at all levels.

Focused Implementation

Leaders can use the SAP Framework to begin to shape their daily actions as school leaders. SAP will custom-design a series of in-person courses to build capacity around transformational leadership skills. These leadership development opportunities can be offered in 1–2 week summer institutes and focus on:

- the development of a personalized Leadership Growth Plan for every participant; and
- the development of a School Improvement Action Plan that will guide actions over the course of the school year.

The job-embedded executive coaching provided by SAP is another critical tool for developing the skills of current and emerging transformational leaders. Delivered by a coach carefully selected to match the school's specific areas of need, executive coaching can include facilitated walk-throughs, side-by-side data analysis, and review of progress and coaching against the goal laid out in a Leadership Growth Plan or School Improvement Action Plan.

Progress Monitoring

Through this professional development and coaching, SAP builds the capacity of district and school leadership to implement and sustain an adaptive process by which leaders, teachers, and students take action to improve learning in their school.

Implementing a College- and Career-Ready Curriculum

There has never been a greater need for educators to have an expanded repertoire of instructional skills to engage and motivate students in acquiring the 21st century skills they will use in college, career, and life. SAP's instructional experts will assess what is being taught and make recommendations to better align the curriculum with state standards and Common Core State Standards to meet the demands of a changing world.

RESEARCH AND BEST PRACTICES

- ◆ To meet the demands of today's economy and civic life, experts emphasize the need for aligning K–12 instruction with a system-wide goal of college and career readiness for all students (Association for Career and Technical Education, 2006; Council of Chief State School Officers & National Governors Association, 2010).
- ◆ Although more than 90% of high school seniors say they intend to attend college, many do not engage in the kinds of educational activities that will prepare them to succeed in college (McCarthy & Kuh, 2006). A disconnect exists between high school and college teaching and learning (Smith, Akos, Lim, & Wiley, 2008).
- ◆ An effective high school curriculum requires clear, cohesive goals and a level of intellectual and skill development that aligns with what is expected of students in college (Conley, 2005).
- ◆ The most successful, high-achieving schools have brought focus to their curricula by using data to determine what is on state tests and what skills and knowledge students need to have to succeed once they graduate (Daggett, 2005). This data can be used to prioritize curriculum topics to prepare students for college and career (Conley, 2005; Levine, 2005).

SCHOLASTIC ACHIEVEMENT PARTNERS DELIVERS

Needs Assessment and Collaborative Planning

SAP utilizes two evidence-based tools developed by the International Center for Leadership in Education—the National Essential Skills Study (NESS) and the Curriculum Matrix—to collect the data needed to guide schools' curriculum planning and align instruction to college- and career-ready goals.

The NESS is a national study compiling the responses of over 14,000 educators, community members, and business leaders who were asked to rate the 20–30 most important curriculum topics in four subject areas: English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies. By administering the NESS survey in their schools and local community, analyzing the data, and comparing results with the national survey, districts can better understand how to align curriculum with skills and knowledge sought by local and national colleges and businesses.

The Curriculum Matrix aligns a site's curriculum to state standards and assessments, as well as to essential skills in core subjects. This tool assigns a priority rating to each state standard in ELA, math, and science based on the emphasis given to that standard on that state's tests and in the NESS. Educators can use this data to set curriculum priorities and target instruction toward the skills and knowledge their students will need most to be prepared for college, career, and life.

Focused Implementation

Using the results of the NESS and Curriculum Matrix, SAP consultants work with districts to prioritize instruction based on specific state standards and on the essential skills students will need to be successful in their community and beyond. SAP consultants provide guidance in aligning curriculum to maximize the impact on student achievement and enhance the school's ability to engage and motivate students to gain critical skills and knowledge.

Progress Monitoring

SAP offers continuing consulting services to coordinate and assess curriculum alignment efforts. By systematically reviewing instructional priorities on an ongoing basis, schools can continue to refine and focus curriculum to ensure that students are acquiring the skills they will use in college, career, and life.

Strengthening Community and Family Engagement

SAP will help districts and schools engage and communicate with families and communities as part of the school improvement process. Partner organizations such as Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) and Reach Out and Read (ROAR) work with students, their parents, and community members to foster children's early literacy skills and school readiness. RIF and ROAR also encourage family literacy by distributing free books and resources to those who need them most.

RESEARCH AND BEST PRACTICES

- ◆ Research indicates a strong relationship between student academic achievement and parental involvement in literacy practices across elementary and secondary school levels (Jeynes, 2005). Home literacy experiences correlate significantly with better reading outcomes, such as letter knowledge and kindergarten word reading (Stephenson, Parrila, Georgiou, & Kirby, 2008).
- ◆ Simply having access to print materials is predictive of children's attitudes toward reading, reading behavior, emergent literacy skills, and reading performance (Lindsay, 2010).
- ◆ Research suggests that community initiatives can transform the culture of schools by fostering parental and community participation in children's education (Warren, 2005). According to Epstein et al. (2002), community members can help promote students' positive attitudes and behavior while improving their academic performance.
- ◆ Mourshed, Chijioke, and Barber (2010) reported that sustained school improvements benefit from innovative practices in schools that gain the support of stakeholder groups such as parents and community members.

SCHOLASTIC ACHIEVEMENT PARTNERS DELIVERS

Needs Assessment and Collaborative Planning

SAP offers a variety of tools to help schools and districts understand the needs of their families and communities. ICLE's *We Support* Community Surveys are administered to local business leaders and community members to elicit community perceptions of the school experience as well as the community's expectations of the school system. Districts can also administer the NESS. The NESS asks educators, community members, and business leaders to rank what they believe are the 20–30 most important curriculum topics. Results obtained locally are analyzed and compared to the results of the national survey. Educators can use the NESS to prioritize how curriculum, instruction, and assessment can target the skills and knowledge most valued by colleges and businesses, both locally and nationwide.

Having assessed the specific needs and perceptions of their families and community members, school leaders work with SAP to develop a site-specific plan to engage all stakeholders.

Focused Implementation

SAP offers structured programs to foster outreach to families and the community. For example, ROAR and RIF are programs that work with students, their parents, and community members to foster children's early literacy skills and school readiness. RIF and ROAR also encourage family literacy by distributing free books and take-home resources to those who need them most.

SAP consultants can also work with districts to address any concerns raised by the *We Support* and NESS surveys. Strategies may include reorganizing the teacher-parent conferencing schedule to better accommodate parents, holding parent academies to educate parents about the school curriculum, or partnering with local businesses to help students build career skills through out-of-school learning experiences.

Progress Monitoring

Through programs such as ROAR and RIF, SAP supports schools in helping families develop the skills, attitudes, and behaviors that provide ongoing support for children's literacy development. These at-home literacy practices have been shown to have a long-term impact on students' academic achievement.

SAP's model of school leadership includes engaging all stakeholders in a shared vision of success for students. By improving communication and relationships with families and the community, schools can help ensure that reform initiatives have the necessary support to last into the future.

CONCLUSION

Today's schools face an unprecedented set of challenges in raising and sustaining achievement to meet the demands of the 21st century workplace and beyond. Recognizing that every school and district has different needs and goals, SAP was created to provide customized, research-based support for sustained and scalable school improvement. As described in this report, SAP draws upon key research and best practices to help schools and districts assess site-specific needs, enhance literacy and math instruction, develop a systems-based approach to teaching and learning, align curriculum with college and career-ready goals, and engage families and community. Through the combined expertise of Scholastic, the International Center for Leadership in Education, and Math Solutions, SAP offers comprehensive school improvement solutions that are practical, personalized, and designed to effect lasting change to help all students succeed.

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