

Characteristics of Schools that Close Achievement Gaps

Abstract

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In the 1970s and 1980s a series of studies, collectively known as “effective schools research” attempted to distinguish the characteristics of urban schools that achieved substantially better academic results than other schools (Edmonds, 1979; Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; Goodlad, 1984; Berliner, 1988; et.al.). Since the 1990s, a number of researchers (Lein, Johnson, & Ragland, 1996; Stringfield, 1997; Cawelti & Protheroe, 2001; Skrla, Scheurich, & Johnson, 2000; et. al.) have attempted to advance this inquiry by examining the characteristics of schools and school districts that achieve better results for historically underserved children, particularly in the context of present day school accountability systems. For example, currently the presenter is leading studies of schools in Ohio designated as the *State Superintendent’s Schools of Promise*. These schools serve low-income communities; yet in these schools, at least 75 percent of each racial/ethnic group of students and at least 75 percent of students who meet low-income criteria have demonstrated proficiency on state assessments.

This session will explore the lessons learned from many of these more recent studies, with a particular focus on how they build upon previous studies and how they challenge conventional thinking about best practices.