



THE SCHOOLS TO WATCH™ CRITERIA

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE. The school is academically excellent. It challenges all students to use their minds well.

1. All students are expected to meet high academic standards.
2. Curriculum, instruction, assessment, and appropriate academic interventions are aligned with high standards.
3. The curriculum emphasizes deep understanding of important concepts and the development of essential skills.
4. Instructional strategies include a variety of challenging and engaging activities that are clearly related to the grade-level standards, concepts, and skills being taught.
5. Teachers use a variety of methods to assess and monitor the progress of student learning (e.g., tests, quizzes, assignments, exhibitions, projects, performance tasks, portfolios).
6. The faculty and master schedule provide students time to meet rigorous academic standards.
7. Students are provided the support they need to meet rigorous academic standards.
8. The adults in the school are provided time and frequent opportunities to enhance student achievement by working with colleagues to deepen their knowledge and to improve their standards-based practice.



EVIDENCE OF A HIGH PERFORMING SCHOOL

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE. The school is academically excellent. It challenges all students to use their minds well.

1. All students are expected to meet high academic standards.
 - Expectations are clear for students and parents.
 - Prior to students beginning an assignment, teachers supply students with exemplars of high quality work that meet the performance standard or level.
 - Students know what high quality work should be like.
 - Students revise their work based on meaningful feedback until they meet or exceed the performance standard or level.
2. Curriculum, instruction, assessment, and appropriate academic interventions are aligned with high standards.
 - They provide a coherent vision for what students should know and be able to do.

- Students, teachers and families understand what students are learning and why. In any class and at any time, students can explain the importance of what they are learning.
 - The curriculum is rigorous, non-repetitive, and moves forward substantially.
 - Work is demanding and steadily progresses.
3. The curriculum emphasizes deep understanding of important concepts and the development of essential skills.
 - Teachers make connections across the disciplines to reinforce important concepts and assist students in thinking critically and applying what they have learned to solve real-world problems.
 - All teachers incorporate academic and informational literacy into their course work (i.e. reading, writing, note taking, researching, listening, and speaking)
 4. Instructional strategies include a variety of challenging and engaging activities that are clearly related to the grade-level standards, concepts, and skills being taught.
 - To reach students, all teachers draw from a common subset of instructional strategies and activities such as direct instruction, cooperative learning, project-based learning, simulations, hands-on learning, and integrated technology
 5. Teachers use a variety of methods to assess and monitor the progress of student learning (e.g., tests, quizzes, assignments, exhibitions, projects, performance tasks, portfolios).
 - All teachers use frequent assessments to benchmark key concepts and the achievement of their students.
 - Students learn how to assess their own and others' work against the performance standards, expectations, or levels.
 6. The faculty and master schedule provide students time to meet rigorous academic standards.
 - Students are provided more time to learn the content, concepts or skills if needed.
 - Flexible scheduling enables students to engage in academic interventions, extended projects, hands-on experiences, and inquiry-based learning.
 7. Students are provided the support they need to meet rigorous academic standards.
 - Teachers know what each student has learned and still needs to learn.
 - Students have multiple opportunities to succeed and receive extra help as needed, such as: co-teaching or collaborative resource model, support and intervention classes, before- and after-school tutoring, and homework centers.
 8. The adults in the school are provided time and frequent opportunities to enhance student achievement by working with colleagues to deepen their knowledge and to improve their standards-based practice.
 - They collaborate in analyzing student achievement data and making decisions about rigorous curriculum, standards-based assessment practice, effective instructional methods, and evaluation of student work.
 - The professional learning community employs coaching, mentoring, and peer observation as a means of continuous instructional improvement.