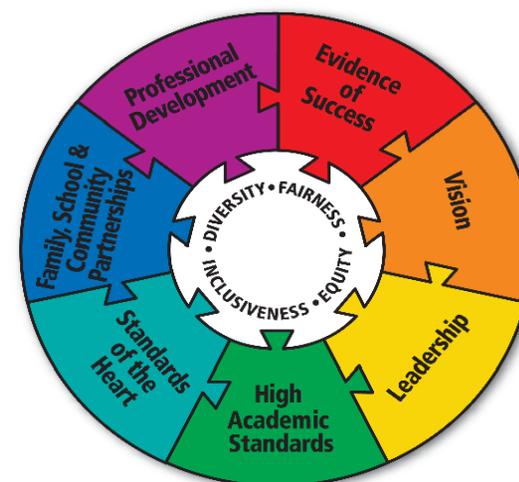


Connecting District and School Improvement Efforts

Characteristics of Successful Schools

In 2000, the Department of Public Instruction released the *Characteristics of Successful Schools* guide. Based on research, this framework was designed to summarize the critical characteristics present in schools that have been successful in closing the achievement gap. The characteristics of successful schools are:

- **Vision:** Having a common understanding of goals, principles, and expectations for everyone in the learning community
- **Leadership:** Having a group of individuals dedicated to helping the learning community reach its vision
- **High Academic Standards:** Describing what students need to know and be able to do
- **Standards of the Heart:** Helping all within the learning community become caring, contributing, productive, and responsible citizens
- **Family, School, and Community Partnerships:** “Making room at the table” for a child’s first and most influential teachers
- **Professional Development:** Providing consistent, meaningful opportunities for adults in the school setting to engage in continuous learning
- **Evidence of Success:** Collecting and analyzing data about students, programs, and staff



Central to the implementation of these characteristics is equity, diversity, fairness, and inclusiveness. Each characteristic listed above must include and attend to these important principles, commitments, and the corresponding responsive practices.

The Characteristics formed the basis for school improvement needs assessments surveys and tools available on the Wisconsin Information Network for Successful Schools (WINSS) website www.dpi.wi.gov/sig/index.html. These tools have been used by many Wisconsin schools. The *Characteristics of Successful Districts* is the logical next step. This framework provides district-level staff the opportunity to examine the impact that district decisions and support are having on student success in low-performing schools. Successful schools are supported by efficient, responsive district systems and structures. The *Characteristics of Successful Districts* delineates the support and guidance that such districts provide.

Improvement efforts, whether initiated at the school or district level, must promote research-based strategies. The accompanying graphic shows the connection between the *Characteristics of Successful Schools* and the *Characteristics of Successful Districts*. These combined characteristics create the basis for improvement efforts in any educational system.

