STUDENT ACADEMIC
ASSIMILATION

How to Effectively Assimilate Low-Performing Students into a Rigorous Academic Program

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How to Effectively Assimilate Low-Performing Students into a Rigorous Academic Program

ACSI

Colorado Springs, Colorado

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About ACSI Urban School Services

The Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) established the Urban School Services Department to better meet the ever-increasing needs of students in urban centers. The department assists those who are establishing new schools and who are operating established schools to provide education as effectively and efficiently as possible.

The twofold focus of Urban School Services is (1) making ACSI services readily available to urban schools and (2) providing support to individuals and organizations that wish to start Christ-centered schools within urban centers. Urban School Services helps ACSI carry out its mission and focus by seeing that in each of the 600 urban school districts in the United States there are Christ-centered schools that offer an "ABC" education:
  • **A**cademically excellent
  • **B**ible based
  • **C**haracter shaping

Urban School Services also helps equip existing urban schools in their efforts to deliver a quality education through "FACTS":
  • **F**und and resource development
  • **A**cademic enrichment
  • **C**haracter development
  • **T**eacher training
  • **S**chool improvement

To find out more about ACSI's Urban School Services, email us at urbanservices@acsi.org or call us at 719-528-6906, ext. 256.

Acknowledgments

Introduction

For years, Christian educators have claimed that they provide the answer to America's failing public schools. A common theme heard from church pulpits and Christian school podiums has been, "We do a better job and for less money." With the advent of school choice initiatives and Opportunity and Promise Scholarships under the federal No Child Left Behind Act, more Christian schools have been given—and we hope more will be given—the opportunity to back up these assertions.

However, many of the Christian schools that have accepted students from public schools are educating those students no better than did the "failing" schools from which they came. Even Christian schools with strong academic reputations are having difficulty addressing the needs of these students. Christian educators are realizing that merely placing a low-achieving child in a standard Christian school program is not enough to convert him or her into a successful student, prepared and equipped for college and life.

Does this mean that a Christian education does no better in preparing students academically than a public school education? That is the conclusion drawn by some people on the basis of a recent NCES publication.* Another conclusion that could be drawn is that Christian education works only for elite or gifted students. Many Christian schools have de facto come to that conclusion by not welcoming low-achieving students, saying they "can't handle" them or "aren't equipped" to do so.

About This Booklet

The first purpose of this booklet is to show that the educational needs of low-achieving students can be met if schools will (1) adopt certain beliefs and attitudes, (2) put in place the right processes, and (3) support those processes with the right institutional resources and infrastructure. These three steps are supported by quantitative and qualitative research, and they affirm what we as Christians believe about children and education. Successful academic assimilation is not a specialized ministry limited to schools possessing unique or rarefied resources. The primary requirements

*Henry Braun, Frank Jenkins, and Wendy Grigg (2006), *Comparing Private Schools and Public Schools Using Hierarchical Linear Modeling* (NCES 2006-461). U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

for academic assimilation are determination and knowledge; therefore, academic assimilation can—and should—be practiced by all schools.

The second purpose of this booklet is to provide a launching pad for schools committed to achieving academic assimilation. The booklet includes an assessment instrument designed to help schools evaluate the approach they are using and determine whether they have the support structures in place to achieve academic assimilation. A compendium of resources is provided so that schools can begin the ongoing and continuous process of school improvement, with the goal of achieving academic assimilation for all students.

What Is Academic Assimilation?

For purposes of this booklet, academic assimilation is the process by which an under-resourced, low-achieving elementary or secondary school student adjusts to the academic rigors of a college preparatory educational program. Tens of thousands of our children—ethnic minorities and those growing up in poverty, especially in urban settings—are performing below grade level. These generally under-resourced children start school having less exposure to adults, hearing far less English vocabulary, and experiencing developmental delays as a result of poor nutrition or poor health.

The schools they attend generally receive less funding, have less-experienced teachers and administrators, and are more likely to be considered low performing. So it is not surprising that these students are academically behind, and the gap widens with each passing year. Somehow, these children hope to break this cycle, so they show up at your college preparatory Christian school wanting a chance to attend. Will you be able to academically assimilate such students into your program?

WHY IS ACADEMIC ASSIMILATION IMPORTANT?

It is unreasonable to expect that low-achieving, under-resourced students will match the academic performance of their more privileged peers if they are simply given the same books, curriculum, and classes. Circumstances beyond a student's control, such as culture or background, often are contributing factors when students fail to achieve academic proficiency. Most schools realize that academic assimilation requires additional work and a

different type of approach, so they simply refuse to admit those students, saying either that they are "not equipped" to accomplish the task or that it is "not worth the effort" (perhaps because there are plenty of "more worthy" students trying to get in).

Nevertheless, there are many schools—public and private, Christian and non-Christian—that are committed to reaching these "left behind" students. Moreover, an established body of research, both qualitative and quantitative, shows that academic assimilation can be accomplished for all students. Since you are reading this booklet, you apparently want to be counted among those who wish to minister to the academic "least of these."

The good news is that this research-based approach to academic assimilation does not require a lot of money or special resources. Moreover, there are plenty of people and places you can turn to for help. The challenge is that making the needed changes is neither easy nor quick. Just as *knowing* what is right is easier than *doing* what is right, *knowing* how to achieve academic assimilation is much easier than actually *accomplishing* academic assimilation in each student's life.

The Straight-A Approach to Academic Assimilation

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to academic assimilation. However, the research points to a specific approach that has proven successful in schools throughout the United States, regardless of a school's situation or circumstance. We have chosen to call this approach the straight-A approach, and we have labeled each step with a word beginning with the letter *A*. By doing so, we hope to make this six-step approach easy to remember and keep its ultimate goal in the forefront: **A**cademic **A**chievement for **A**ll.

The Straight-A Approach to Academic Assimilation	
Qualities	**Steps**
1. Continuous and ongoing 2. Sustainable and growing 3. Leading to overall school improvement	1. Assume all students can learn 2. Assess the student 3. Ascertain targeted progress 4. Assign an educational program and resources 5. Arrange checkpoints 6. Adjust according to ongoing evaluation

Quality 1: Continuous and Ongoing

The straight-A approach is not a linear process that moves from benchmark to benchmark, with the process coming to a stop when progress toward the next benchmark stalls. Rather, this approach relies on continuous formative assessments that provide a flow of new and relevant data. This information is the basis for ongoing action research that instructs the teacher how to appropriately adapt instruction to meet the needs of each student. Each step naturally moves to the next until the entire cycle has been completed, at which time the cycle begins again.

Consider the following analogy: If you were to enter a hospital intensive care unit, you would observe several machines that have a single function: to monitor and record data pertinent to a patient's condition. The patient also has a chart where additional observations and data are recorded. These continuous streams of data—some current and some historical—give the doctor the information needed to make decisions about appropriate treatment. However, the doctor does not simply make a treatment decision and send the patient home. The results of each treatment are continuously monitored, and this information tells the doctor whether the treatment is working or whether another approach is warranted. Monitoring continues, and the treatment is adjusted as needed. This flow of data continues to be needed until the patient is fully able to function independently.

In education, teachers often try to diagnose and treat educational maladies without data. Or if they have some data—perhaps from an entrance test—no ongoing assessment is done to determine whether the initial diagnosis

was correct and whether the "treatment" is working. Such poor care, even if well-intentioned, is not effective and should not be acceptable—in medicine or in education. The straight-A approach, by relying on continuous and ongoing assessment, will improve student academic achievement and teacher proficiency in every school. Research studies overwhelmingly support this approach.

Quality 2: Sustainable and Growing

An important quality of any improvement process is sustainability. In other words, the process must develop a momentum or energy of its own. If a process constantly requires attention, resources, and energy, it will drain the school and the staff members, and it will eventually collapse under its own weight. The straight-A approach is sustainable because as more and more data are collected, teachers become more proficient and effective with each cycle. As teachers acquire more experience and become more proficient, they become collaborative resources for their peers, and professional learning communities of increasing effectiveness are naturally created.

With each cycle, the likelihood of student growth and progress increases, and student success happens with increasing frequency. Such success builds its own excitement and momentum. Sustained practice of the straight-A approach will result in individual student growth, overall school improvement, and ongoing teacher professional development.

Quality 3: Leading to Overall School Improvement

With the advent of federal No Child Left Behind requirements, failing schools have been forced to explore ways to bring about school improvement or suffer severe consequences. Schools that complain are usually unable to turn their situation around. However, schools that focus on improving student achievement have made academic assimilation a regular practice by raising their academic expectations. These "highly successful" or "high impact" schools don't view nonperforming, under-resourced students as the cause of their problems. Instead, they see student improvement through academic assimilation as their ticket to schoolwide improvement.

The straight-A approach works with all students, regardless of their academic history. Under-resourced and low-achieving students will show the most dramatic improvement because their needs are most acute. However,

just as good medicine benefits all patients, good educational practice benefits all students. Every student and every educational institution needs improvement in some area. The straight-A approach can be used as a vehicle for individual student improvement as well as for overall school improvement.

The Straight-A Approach to Academic Assimilation
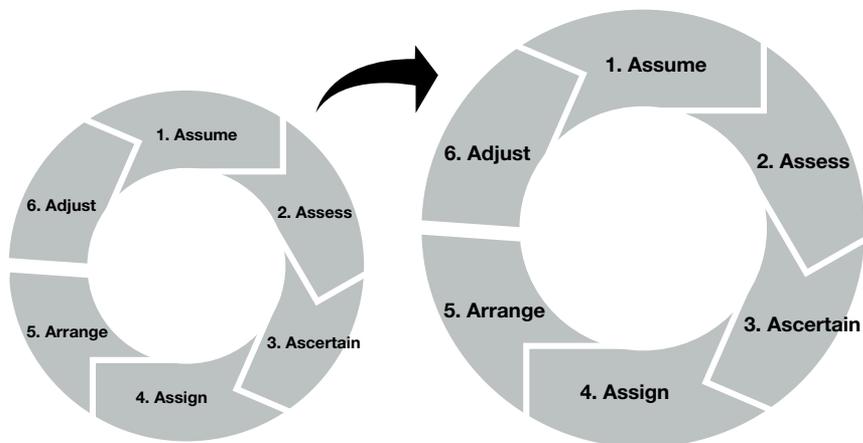
As benchmarks are achieved, greater and more advanced goals are established for attainment.

Step 1: Assume All Students Can Learn

The first step in straight-A academic assimilation is the most important: a sincere belief based on the firm philosophical position that all students can learn and achieve. For K–12 schools, this means that every student should graduate prepared for college. Does everyone in your school community believe that every student is special (Psalm 139:14) and destined for greatness (Romans 12:2)? Are these values reflected in your school's curriculum, academic standards, and student goals? Do you allow students to merely "get by" academically, or do you push them to excel (Colossians 3:23)? Straight-A schools have high expectations for students in academics and conduct, and they refuse to accept any excuses from students, staff members, or parents for substandard performance. Successful schools and successful educators focus on helping students get the job done rather

than complain about how hard it is to reach the standards. A school and staff members who truly believe that all students can learn and are truly committed to this belief are well on their way to achieving academic assimilation and academic achievement for all.

The outcome or product of a school with high expectations is a rigorous curriculum with specific standards and benchmarks in each subject and grade. Yours cannot be a high-expectations school if those academic expectations—and conduct expectations—are not spelled out in a systematic fashion.

Step 2: Assess the Student

Regular ongoing assessment—especially in language arts and math—is the most universal practice of straight-A schools. Some schools have formal assessments as often as every week. The frequency of testing can vary, but the process must provide individual, disaggregated data showing specific areas of strength and weakness for each student. This information then serves as the basis for making educational decisions.

Step 3: Ascertain Targeted Progress

Just as a doctor's proper diagnosis is essential to proper treatment, a teacher's ability to analyze student data and determine the appropriate strategies and approaches is critical to helping all students reach the appropriate benchmarks. A teacher must not only ascertain the proper benchmarks but also determine the proper pacing so that assimilation will take place as quickly as possible without setting up a student for failure. Every student's background, abilities, and progress are different, but a general rule of thumb is that the fastest pace at which one should expect a student to assimilate is one additional grade level per year. For example, a fourth grader testing at first-grade level will need three years, or until the seventh grade, to be at grade level. Moreover, the emphasis should be placed on developing reading, writing, and math skills because they apply across the curriculum.

This step requires a great amount of training, focus, collaboration, and follow-up. Teachers must make a specific plan, execute it, evaluate it, and be held accountable for its outcomes. One might think that evaluation of assessment data is a natural result of standardized testing, but in fact it is the most neglected step. Many times the data are examined in the aggregate

(for example, class or school composite data); however, individual students "fall through the cracks." Sometimes teachers don't know how to interpret data, so the information does not become the basis for instruction. Finally, some fearful teachers see tests as accountability devices measuring their own performance rather than as means for providing valuable assessment data for action research leading to positive change in students. In other words, these teachers perceive student assessment as a grade assigned to themselves, not as a guide to improve their instruction and ultimately the students' education.

Step 4: Assign an Educational Program and Resources

A skilled teacher can look at the assessment data and determine how to adjust his or her teaching to meet the needs of students. For many students, remediation and additional time on task are necessary. Other students may need reading strategies, instruction in a different modality, or help in study skills. Different schools find different programs that meet the needs of their population. The key factor in successful schools is that somewhere it was determined that this was a need, so a program was created or resources committed to address it. There is no one-size-fits-all program or remedy for all students, let alone for all schools. However, many programs, strategies, and methodologies have been developed—more than enough to successfully address any specific area of student need.

Step 5: Arrange Checkpoints

Not every strategy works for every student as planned. No teacher, no matter how expert or experienced, is right all the time. Moreover, as a student grows and progresses, his or her needs change. Therefore, it is important that a student's educational program adapt and change to meet the student's changing needs. The only way this is going to happen is if there are regular, periodic, and active formative assessments to guide instruction. The straight-A approach requires teachers to follow up on their initial assessment and plan by using formative assessments to see whether adequate progress is being made. This means scheduling specific times to check on progress and using assessments tied to standards and benchmarks.

Step 6: Adjust According to Ongoing Evaluation

Willingness to change midcourse is the sign of a mature and skillful teacher. If something is not working, finding out about it and moving on to something else is critical for student accomplishment. Just as success

breeds success, repeated failure will lead to frustration, disillusionment, resignation, and defeatism. Many students are mislabeled "learning disabled" or "special needs" because of insufficient follow-up once the initial evaluation is done. Ongoing evaluation that informs instruction is the key to seeing that no child is left behind.

If the student achieves the benchmarks and goals, it is time to celebrate and to set new goals and benchmarks. Again, these goals and benchmarks should already have been established and sequenced by the school to assure academic success; therefore, the new milestones should be a natural progression from the previous ones and should be attainable. This step begins a new cycle of student academic achievement using the straight-A approach. Each successive cycle brings more accomplishment, greater proficiency, and less dependence on teacher directives as students develop into self-directed lifelong learners.

Assessing for the Straight A's of Academic Assimilation

Now that you have a better understanding of the straight-A approach to academic assimilation, perhaps you have decided to implement that approach in your school. If so, your next step is to determine whether you have the infrastructure to support that approach. The included rubric and score sheets will help you assess your school program from three different perspectives. It is important to note that the purpose of each assessment is diagnostic only. The score sheets are intended to help you identify areas of relative strength and weakness so that you will know where to direct your attention and resources. *Your school's scores are valuable for your school only; they cannot be used to compare your school with other schools.*

USING THE RUBRIC

A rubric is provided on pages 26–31 after the instructions for the score sheets. This rubric provides a quick and concise means of evaluating your school's preparedness to support academic assimilation. The rubric can be used by the school administrator, by an outside evaluator, or by a consultant or mentor. Read the following sections to determine the significance of your findings; then write your answers on the score sheets.

A factor is *documented* if it is a written policy or practice of the school that is published and distributed to the affected constituents. For instance, a school's board may have passed a policy years ago saying that all teachers must be evaluated, but if that policy is not in the school's teacher manual or the teacher's job description, then it is not documented.

For a factor to be *practiced*, it must be something that is regularly and objectively observable. In other words, an outsider visiting the school should be able to observe evidence that the factor is a practice at the school.

Finally, a practice is *evaluated* if the school leadership has a mechanism in place to ensure that the practice is taking place and, if a regular evaluation is actually done, to assess how effective that practice is. For example, check the "Evaluated" box for factor 7 ("The school has regular staff assessments") if school leadership ensures that teacher evaluations are done and that they are being done effectively.

Using Score Sheet A and Score Sheet AA

There are two score sheets provided in this booklet. Score Sheet A (see pages 32–33) is designed to help you assess institutional and constituent health; Score Sheet AA (see pages 34–35) is designed to help you assess pedagogical health. Make copies of the score sheets so you can do follow-up or multiple assessments and preserve the original as a copy master. Complete Score Sheet A first. Read each numbered factor and decide whether it is documented, practiced, and evaluated at your school. Place an *X* only in the boxes that apply. (Leave blank the boxes that do not apply.) Add the number of marked boxes and write that total in the "Score" column for that factor.

After you complete Score Sheet A, transfer the answers for the same factors from Score Sheet A onto Score Sheet AA. Note that some factors are listed under more than one step on Score Sheet AA. Once you have tallied all the scores, follow the instructions below to analyze the results.

Evaluating Your Assessment

How did you score, and what does your score mean? The score sheets are designed to help you quickly assess your school's strengths and weaknesses. Unlike scores on accreditation instruments, scores on this assessment

are relative and diagnostic. They are not meant to determine how your school compares with other schools or whether your school meets certain prescribed standards. The purpose of the score sheets is to point out which areas in your school should receive attention and priority. No school is perfect, and school improvement is an ongoing and continuous process. Therefore, the area of greatest need should become the area of highest priority for examination and scrutiny, regardless of how your school does in that area in comparison with other schools.

OVERALL INSTITUTIONAL HEALTH

The institutional health rating (see page 25) indicates how much of the needed infrastructure you have in place to support academic assimilation. After you have completed Score Sheet A, tally the total number of checked boxes under "Documented," "Practiced," and "Evaluated." Enter these totals on the score line at the bottom of the score sheet. If the total is 26 or greater, circle *H* (high) for that category; if the total is 25 or below, circle *L* (low).

After entering the totals, find and read the paragraph below that matches your school's rating. That paragraph is a general assessment of your school's institutional health relative to academic assimilation.

- **High documentation, high practice, high evaluation**. Your institutional health is excellent. This rating indicates not only that you have policies in place but also that you practice them and evaluate them to make sure they are carried out. Check your constituent health and pedagogical health for possible areas of weakness. Otherwise, you have everything in place for academic assimilation, and you should be fine-tuning your areas of need to be more effective and efficient.

- **High documentation, low practice, low evaluation**. Your school has done a good job of setting up policies, but those policies have not been translated to your staff members. The policies are neither practiced nor checked; therefore, they are not considered very important. A schoolwide review should be done to see whether the staff members really believe in the written policies and practices and whether additional training is needed to help staff understand the policies and implement them.

- **High documentation, high practice, low evaluation**. Your school has good policies that are practiced by your staff members. The fact that there

is low evaluation could mean that your supervisors are overworked, your staff members place higher priority on other areas, or your school practices are so ingrained in the school culture that staff members see little need to evaluate those practices. Your school is putting good policies into practice, but ongoing evaluation will need to be put in place at some point if you want to move up to the next level in effectiveness.

• **High documentation, low practice, high evaluation**. Your school has good policies, and your administrators and supervisors follow up to see that those policies are followed, but your staff members are still not practicing them. There could be several explanations for this situation: your staff members have not bought in to your school's values, your supervisors need training on how to mentor, or you have a young and inexperienced staff. Whatever the explanation, there is a disconnect between what your school says it does and what your staff members actually practice. This issue must be addressed.

• **Low documentation, high practice, high evaluation**. Though your policies are not well documented, your school "does all the right things." Your teachers and supervisors have the right values and put them into practice, but the school leaders have not gotten around to putting those policies and practices in writing. While it is good that your people are doing the right things, you will eventually need to spend the time to get your policies and practices on paper so that these practices can be sustained over time, especially as your school undergoes growth or staff change.

• **Low documentation, low practice, high evaluation**. Your policies are not documented, and your staff members do not utilize good practices, yet you expect your people to do the right things. Perhaps you have a young school or young staff members and the administration has set idealized expectations. For whatever reason, the school has not established the institutional structures needed to support good practices. You need to get the right policies on paper and help teachers put good practices in place before you can reasonably expect good results.

• **Low documentation, high practice, low evaluation**. Your policies are not documented, and administration and supervision are weak, yet your staff members implement good policies. This can happen with a young and inexperienced school or administration and an experienced

or talented teaching staff. The staff members do the right things even though no one tells them to do those things or holds them accountable. You need to change the institutional infrastructure to support the staff members before they burn out or leave in frustration.

- **Low documentation, low practice, low evaluation.** Your school needs help in all areas of institutional infrastructure. It is recommended that you develop documentation first and then train your staff members on the importance of these policies and practices as soon as possible. Mentor your staff members regarding proper practices and evaluate the staff members regularly in order to monitor progress.

CONSTITUENT HEALTH

Your constituent health score indicates how prepared your school's major constituent groups are to support academic assimilation. Total the scores under each measure and determine the overall percentage score for each constituent area: "School," "Staff," and "Student/Family/Community." You will quickly be able to determine which constituent area requires the most attention for overall improvement.

To improve constituent health, communicate your expectations to those within each constituency and train them to improve. This cannot be done in a one-time meeting. It will require an ongoing series of training, instruction, practice, and feedback sessions (see page 32).

PEDAGOGICAL HEALTH

The pedagogical health score represents the support provided for each step in the straight-A approach. You may find that while your school scores high overall, it might be deficient in one particular step. Such a deficiency can be enough to break the cycle of continuous improvement and prevent academic assimilation from occurring. The weakest step should be addressed first. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link.

Copy the scores from Score Sheet A to Score Sheet AA, line by line. (Score Sheet AA contains the same factors and the same line numbers as Score Sheet A; however, the factors are listed in a different order. The easiest way to transfer scores from one sheet to another is to look for the same factor number.)

Total the scores for each step of the straight-A approach on Score Sheet AA and determine the percentage of possible points earned in each category.
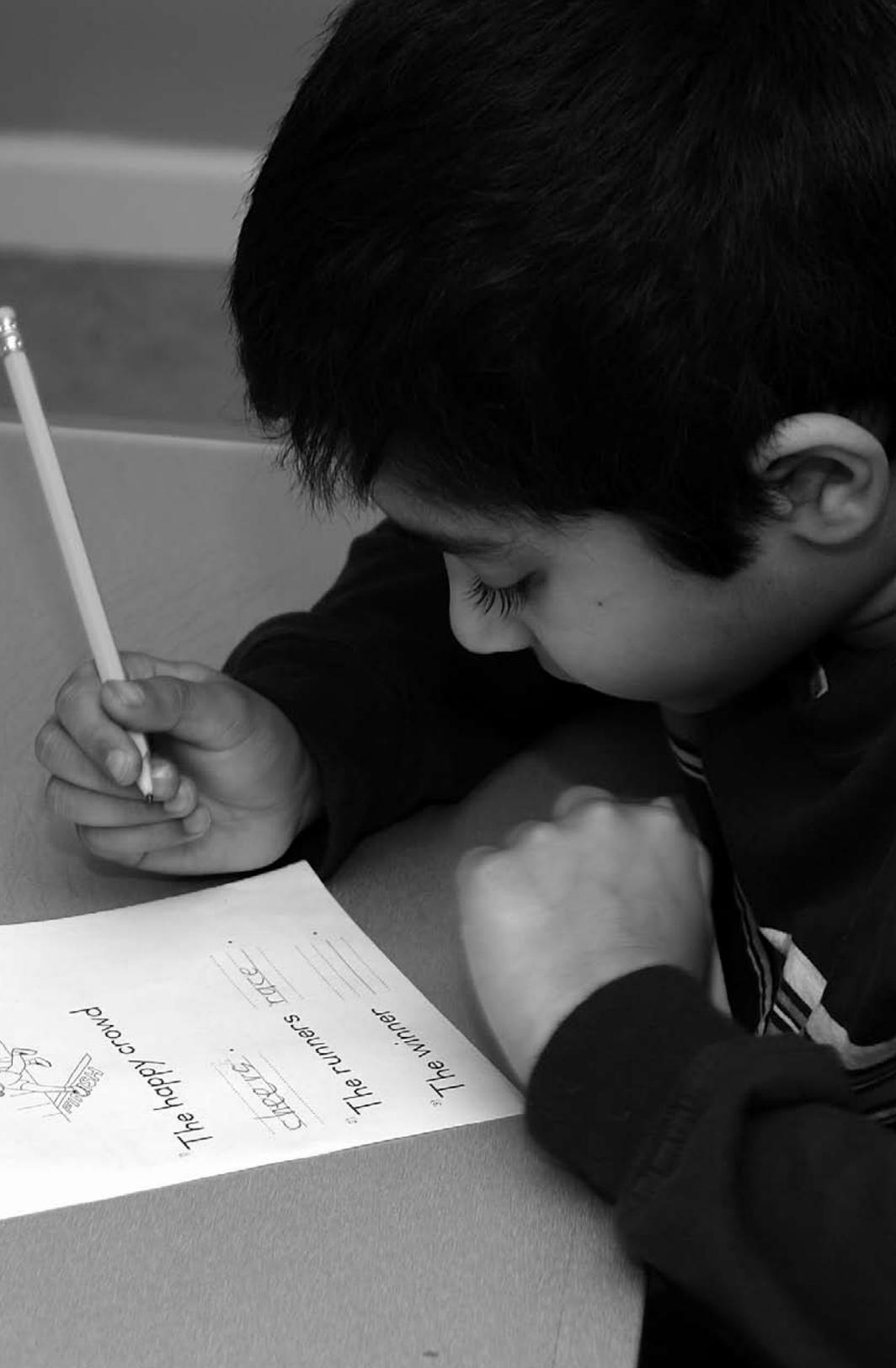
Identify which step requires the most attention in order to maintain a complete six-step improvement cycle (see page 34).

Next Steps

Now that you have done the assessment, what should your next steps be? Determine the areas of greatest need for institutional health, constituent health, and pedagogical health. You may be able to get a quick idea by looking at the score sheets and noting the areas with the greatest amount of white space. Then review the findings with your staff members. If possible, have others who are knowledgeable about your school do the same evaluation to see whether they get similar results.

Once you identify your areas of greatest need, make them your areas of highest priority. Remember that school improvement requires everyone's participation and support. Do not try to do too much too quickly, but set reasonable goals.

To begin with, everyone must agree that you can and will achieve your goal; they must "Assume all students can learn." After setting your goal, "Assess the student." Prescribe the measures or steps you will take to accomplish the goal, then reassess the school at specific checkpoints in order to "Ascertain targeted progress." Make changes as needed throughout the process until you can assess and document achievement of your goal. Then, make a new goal and continue on the path of continuous and ongoing improvement.

You will likely find that "success breeds success." After meeting a few set goals, assess your school again. There is a good possibility that you will find improvement in areas you haven't even addressed yet. This is because the attention and commitment your school expends to have a quality program in one area gradually influence your overall school culture and values. Teachers will begin seeing things differently and will establish best practices in other areas in order to be consistent with quality practices adopted in your area of focus. Such discoveries bring excitement and sustainability as your drive for school improvement develops momentum.

When you have reached this point, congratulate yourself and your staff members because you have taken the biggest step needed to achieve academic assimilation. So do not "be weary in well doing." Studies show that lasting school change takes three to five years to accomplish, but it becomes easier with time if you stay committed to academic achievement for all.

Where Is Christian Education?

You may have noticed that so far this booklet on academic assimilation has made little reference to the Scriptures or to Christian education. One reason is that all the primary research in education is focused on public education. Also, academic assimilation has primarily been the concern of public schools; relatively few Christian schools have ministered to large numbers of academically challenged students.

However, there is nothing in the straight-A approach that would not work in the Christian school setting. In fact, one could contend that the straight-A approach should be especially effective in a committed Christian school.

EDUCATION AS A SPIRITUAL MINISTRY

Christian educators believe that teaching is their calling and that education is their spiritual ministry. They should be motivated to improve and to be their very best for God. If there truly is no distinction between secular and sacred, then the teacher who prepares students for their calling as businesspeople or engineers is involved in ministry every bit as much as the teacher who prepares students for service as pastors or missionaries. Therefore, academic assimilation is an essential ministry to help students achieve their God-given calling.

EDUCATION FOR THE "LEAST OF THESE" AS A SPIRITUAL CALLING

Education that ministers to the downtrodden, the poor, and the neglected is a special calling of God that He highly values. God commends those who minister to the "least of these" (Matthew 25:34–45) and those who serve people who cannot repay (Luke 14:12–14). Therefore, academic assimilation, a ministry to under-resourced and low-achieving students, also has a special place in God's ministry because it reaches those who are generally considered the "least of these" and those of low economic means. If anyone should consider academic assimilation a calling, it should be those in Christian education.

High Expectations as a Reflection of the Heart of God

Every person is a special creation of God with a special calling and purpose. Education is a means of preparing students to fulfill that special calling. Therefore, holding high expectations reflects the heart of God. God wants His children to carry out their life's mission successfully and effectively, so it follows that God wants students to strive to be their best. An attitude of high expectations for everyone is simply an outgrowth of the belief that God prepares and equips those He calls (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

In Conclusion

If you have made it through this booklet and have made an assessment of your school, you are to be commended. School improvement is more a matter of will and determination than anything else. Your commitment to school improvement is by itself a strong indicator of future success.

School improvement is a long journey, and trying to go it alone makes the process more difficult. There are resources, ministries, and other schools available to help you along the way. Make good use of them because the quest to achieve academic assimilation will involve twists, turns, and bumps. Trained and experienced mentors can help smooth the rough spots and provide needed encouragement during the "tough times" (Ecclesiastes 4:9–12).

School Assessment Instrument

The Straight-A Approach to Academic Assimilation

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Make copies of the attached score sheets so you can do follow-up or multiple assessments and preserve the original as a copy master.

Complete Score Sheet A: Institutional and Constituent Health

2. Read the 39 listed factors and determine whether each one is documented, practiced, and evaluated at your school. Put an *X* in the corresponding box on the score sheet. (If a factor is not documented, practiced, or evaluated at your school, leave the box blank.)

3. After all factors have been evaluated, record the score for each factor by indicating whether one, two, or three of the boxes were marked.

4. Add the number of "School Measures" boxes marked in the "Documented" column and enter the total in the "School Measures Rating" row. If the number is 12 or over, circle the letter *H* to indicate a "high" rating. If the number is 11 or under, circle the letter *L* for "low."

5. Do the same computation for the "Practiced" and "Evaluated" columns. Look at how you rated your school in the three areas—"Documented," "Practiced," and "Evaluated"—and read the corresponding institutional health analyses on Score Sheet A.

6. Total the factor scores in the far right column and put the sum in the last box in the "School Measures Rating" row. Divide that total by 51 to arrive at a percentage score for "School Measures."

7. Follow steps 4–6 for "Staff Measures" and "Student/Family/Community Measures."

8. The relative percentage scores for each school constituency will tell you which area to focus on. The school constituency with the lowest score should receive the highest priority.

9. Total the "Documented," "Practiced," and "Evaluated" scores for the entire school and place the totals in the "Institutional Score" row at the bottom of the score sheet. If the combined total is 26 or over, circle the letter *H* (high). If it is 25 or under, circle *L* (low). Again, look at the corresponding analyses on Score Sheet A. The area scoring lowest among the three areas should receive priority attention.

Complete Score Sheet AA: Pedagogical Health

10. Transfer the data from the 39 factors on Score Sheet A to the corresponding boxes on Score Sheet AA. (Note that factors 6 and 18 are listed twice, once under step 3 and once under step 6.)

11. Total the scores for each of the six steps and calculate the percentages for each one. The percentage scores for each step and for each column will tell you the relative strengths and weaknesses for each area. Examine the areas with the lowest percentage scores and make them your priority items to address.

12. Read the "Next Steps" section (see page 20) in this booklet for additional thoughts about how to assess and interpret the results of this exercise, and then put an action plan into place to address priority areas of concerns.

Constituent Health

Calculate the percentage scores for "School," "Staff," and "Student/Family/Community" measures on Score Sheet A. These percentages are derived from the fractional scores in the boxes. (The "School" score is based on 51 points, the "Staff" score is based on 39 points, and the "Student/Family/Community" score is based on 27 points.) The lowest percentage score indicates the constituency that most likely needs the greatest attention. You can also look at the institutional health within that group to see which area should be addressed first for that constituency.

Pedagogical Health

Calculate the percentage scores for each of the six steps listed on Score Sheet AA. These percentages are derived from the fractional scores on Score Sheet AA. All six steps are necessary to complete the improvement/assimilation process, so the area with the lowest percentage score should be addressed first.

Summary Analysis
Overall Institutional Health

Documented	Practiced	Evaluated	Analysis
High	High	High	Excellent institutional health. Check constituent and pedagogical health for possible deficiencies, otherwise just fine-tune areas that need work.
High	Low	Low	Good policies, but poor follow-through. Check for buy-in or the need for training.
High	High	Low	Good policies and practices, but little evaluation. Administration may be new or overwhelmed in other areas.
High	Low	High	Good policies and follow-up, but poor execution. Staff may not have bought in to policies or may need training; administration may need training on mentoring.
Low	High	High	Staff members do the right things but those things aren't documented on paper. This can work in the short run, but you'll need to document policies as the school grows or the staff changes.
Low	Low	High	High expectations by administration, but no infrastructure to support the staff. Set up policies and train staff to uphold them. This situation is more common in new schools.
Low	High	Low	Low expectations, but good execution. This can happen with a new school that has an experienced staff. Setting up infrastructure is important if you don't want to frustrate your staff.
Low	Low	Low	All-around help needed. Start with documentation, then train staff and administration. Do not get discouraged.

School Assessment Rubric

School Measures

	Factor	Documented
1	The school has a clear, concise, written, and well-rehearsed mission statement.	❏ Does the mission statement specify whom the school seeks to reach, the school's mission, how the school will accomplish that mission, and why?
2	The school requires student and parent "buy in."	❏ Are the school's mission statement, values, and goals included in materials given to prospective students and parents?
3	The school orientation provides full disclosure to students and parents.	❏ Does the school explicitly state what students and parents should expect in terms of academic load, homework, conduct standards, and any necessary remedial work?
4	Parents fully disclose their student's background to the school.	❏ Does the school have a form to request student background information that will be helpful to support instruction?
5	The school has regular individualized student assessments (formal and informal).	❏ Is there a policy to ensure that students are regularly assessed for progress in relation to school benchmarks and standards?
6	The student assessments inform the teaching process.	❏ Is there a policy stating that teachers are to evaluate individual student data and adjust their instruction as a result?
7	The school has regular staff assessments.	❏ Is there a policy for regular staff evaluation in order to determine how effectively staff members are aiding student progress?
8	The school has positional and functional instructional leaders.	❏ Do administrative and supervisory job descriptions include the responsibility to monitor instruction and ensure its quality?
9	Emphasis is placed on the core subjects: reading, writing, and math.	❏ Does the school have policies in place to ensure that the core subjects receive instructional time and resources as a matter of priority?
10	There is ongoing curriculum evaluation.	❏ Does the school have a policy requiring regular review of its curriculum and materials?
11	The school has differentiated student instruction.	❏ Does the school have a policy stating that teachers are responsible for seeing that all their students learn?
12	The school has a rigorous academic environment.	❏ Does the school have benchmarks, standards, and a course of study in place that will lead to student success?
13	Tutoring and academic support are offered.	❏ Does the school have a program in place that is easily accessible to students who need additional help?

Practiced	Evaluated
❏ Do the school staff members refer to the mission statement when making decisions about school policy, direction, or practice?	❏ Does the school regularly assess whether it is accomplishing its mission and how it can do so more effectively?
❏ Does the school go over its mission statement, values, and goals with prospective families before students are enrolled?	❏ After enrollment, does the school assess whether prospective students and families have a good understanding of the school's mission, values, and goals?
❏ Does the school take time to fully disclose and explain to prospective families what is expected of them in order to make academic assimilation work?	❏ After enrollment, does the school assess whether students and families fully understand what is expected of them?
❏ Does the school go over the completed student background form prior to enrollment to ensure that the information is complete and accurate?	❏ Is student background information passed along to the student's teachers to help with initial assessment and to inform instruction?
❏ Are assessments done on a regular basis and the data documented for future reference?	❏ Are the assessments evaluated in order to identify the individual student's areas of strength and weakness regarding school benchmarks and standards?
❏ Do the teachers evaluate individual student data, adjust their teaching accordingly, and document this process?	❏ Are teachers held accountable for their effectiveness in evaluating student data and for the adjustments they make?
❏ Are staff evaluations done on a regular basis to determine whether teachers are effectively aiding student progress?	❏ Is the staff evaluation process itself evaluated to determine whether it is effectively aiding student progress?
❏ Do administrative and supervisory staff members regularly monitor teachers and help them maintain a quality instructional program?	❏ Are administrators and supervisors evaluated regarding their efforts to maintain a quality instructional program?
❏ Are instructional time and resources devoted to the core subjects as a matter of priority?	❏ Are instructional time and resource allocations evaluated to ensure that the core subjects receive sufficient time and resources as a matter of priority?
❏ Do school administrators and teachers regularly evaluate the curriculum and materials for effectiveness?	❏ Is the school reviewing and evaluating available curriculum, materials, and information to ensure that teachers are employing best practices?
❏ Does the school implement instructional strategies and methods to ensure that every student learns?	❏ Are the school's teachers and curriculum evaluated to see how effective they are in assuring that all students learn?
❏ Do the staff members teach at the level of the school's benchmarks and standards, and are students held accountable to that level of achievement?	❏ Are the school's teachers and academic programs evaluated to see how effective they are in producing student success?
❏ Are students who need extra help able to easily access tutoring and academic support?	❏ Does the school regularly evaluate whether enough resources are made available to students who need extra help?

	Factor	Documented
14	Extended enrichment and learning programs and opportunities are available.	❏ Does the school have additional enrichment and learning opportunities available so that students can develop other skills and interests?
15	The school has a structured, orderly environment (classrooms, entire school).	❏ Does the school have a schoolwide discipline plan and student standard of conduct and behavior?
16	The school has culturally sensitive family expectations.	❏ Are the school's expectations of parents sensitive to the culture and context of the students' families?
17	The school community is inclusive and supportive.	❏ Does the school have policies that require families to be supportive of each other and that stress the values of unity, diversity, and biblical tolerance?

Staff Measures

	Factor	Documented
18	The school has qualified, competent, and culturally sensitive staff members.	❏ Do the school's hiring policies require staff members to be qualified, competent, and culturally sensitive?
19	The school has regular staff development.	❏ Does the school have a written plan for overall staff development?
20	Staff members have a strong calling to teach in a Christian school.	❏ Are all teachers informed in writing that one of the requirements for teaching in the school is having a strong calling to teach in a Christian school?
21	Staff members are engaged in peer mentoring, coaching, and collaborating.	❏ Does the school have a written policy that teachers are to help each other through peer mentoring, coaching, and collaboration?
22	Staff members have classroom management skills.	❏ Do teachers have established policies and procedures to ensure that their classrooms are effective learning environments?
23	Staff members are inspirational and motivational.	❏ Do the school's standards of instruction foster teaching excellence, creativity, student engagement, and interaction?
24	Staff members communicate high student expectations.	❏ Is the expectation that all students can succeed a written core value of the school?
25	Staff members are accessible beyond the classroom.	❏ Does the school have a policy that requires teachers to make themselves available to students who need additional help?
26	Staff members are responsible for assessment interpretation, intervention, and implementation.	❏ Is there a written policy that requires teachers to examine student assessment data and adjust their instruction accordingly?

Practiced	Evaluated
❏ Are students able to develop other interests and skills through the school's extracurricular programs?	❏ Does the school regularly evaluate whether its extracurricular programs are sufficient to meet the needs and interests of the students?
❏ Are the schoolwide discipline plan and code of conduct enforced so that the school environment is one of structure and order?	❏ Does the school regularly evaluate whether student conduct and behavior are conducive to learning and whether any changes in policies or practices are needed?
❏ Does the school readily make accommodations to assist families who may have difficulty meeting expectations?	❏ Are the school's expectations of student families regularly evaluated to see whether the expectations are necessary and not an undue burden?
❏ Does the school have an atmosphere and culture in which everyone feels welcome, valued, and safe physically and emotionally?	❏ Does the school regularly evaluate its atmosphere and culture to ensure that the school is inclusive, inviting, and supportive of all?

Practiced	Evaluated
❏ Does the school evaluate its staff members to ensure that they are qualified, competent, and culturally sensitive?	❏ Does the school make training and resources available to help staff members develop their abilities, competencies, and cultural sensitivities?
❏ Does the school carry out staff development as part of a strategic plan?	❏ Does the school regularly evaluate the effectiveness of its staff development plan in terms of student achievement?
❏ Does the school thoroughly check prospective teachers to ensure that they have a strong calling to teach in a Christian school?	❏ Does the school regularly remind teachers of their calling as Christian school teachers and evaluate their faithfulness to that calling?
❏ Do the teachers regularly practice peer mentoring, coaching, and collaboration?	❏ Does the school regularly check and evaluate the effectiveness of peer mentoring, coaching, and collaboration among teachers?
❏ Are the culture and atmosphere in each classroom conducive to effective learning and instruction?	❏ Does the school regularly evaluate and train teachers so that an effective learning environment is created in each classroom?
❏ Are the teachers enthusiastic, positive, uplifting, and encouraging in carrying out their responsibilities?	❏ Does the school evaluate itself and hold itself accountable for the tone, example, and atmosphere that the teachers create?
❏ Do the staff members regularly communicate, directly and indirectly, that they expect all students to succeed?	❏ Does the school regularly evaluate its policies and practices to determine whether its both written and unwritten rules support a belief in high expectations?
❏ Do the teachers go out of their way to meet with students who need additional help?	❏ Does the school evaluate whether teachers are sufficiently available to meet the needs of all students, not just those who ask for it?
❏ Do teachers regularly review student assessment data to assess individual progress and adjust their instruction accordingly?	❏ Does the school train teachers and hold them accountable for evaluating student assessment data and adjusting their instruction accordingly?

	Factor	Documented
27	Accountability is assisted by observations and supervision.	❏ Is there a written policy that requires all teachers to be observed and supervised at levels appropriate to their demonstrated proficiency?
28	Staff members set and pursue goals for professional development.	❏ Is there a written policy that requires all staff members to set and achieve specific goals in ongoing professional development?
29	Documentation is kept as evidence and evaluation of assessment.	❏ Is there a written policy that requires teachers to document and record student progress in the achievement of goals, benchmarks, and standards?
30	Staff members are responsible for measurable student progress.	❏ Are teachers required to regularly assess students' attainment of specific goals, benchmarks, and standards?

Student/Family/Community Measures

	Factor	Documented
31	Students express a willingness to work hard.	❏ Does the school require prospective students to be willing to work hard and take responsibility for their progress?
32	Students show a potential for academic engagement.	❏ Does the school require prospective students to demonstrate potential and readiness to learn as conditions of enrollment?
33	Students participate in character training and the development of cultural and social skills.	❏ Does the school have a systematic plan in place to develop student character and social and cultural skills?
34	The school has student attendance requirements.	❏ Does the school have a strict policy that requires students to attend school every day?
35	The school has extended hours, days, months (circle all that apply).	❏ Does the school have a policy in place to ensure that there are enough instructional hours to support academic assimilation?
36	Ample time is spent on task.	❏ Does the school have written policies and procedures to maximize student time on task?
37	The school has a formal parent commitment policy.	❏ Does the school require parents to agree in writing to the school's mission, goals, and approach?
38	Students are held accountable for their actions.	❏ Does the school have a written policy that holds students accountable for their actions?
39	There is community engagement and support.	❏ Does the school have a plan to use community resources to improve student learning?

Practiced	Evaluated
❏ Does the school hold teachers accountable to an appropriate degree of achievement through the use of observation and supervision?	❏ Does the school regularly assess whether its program of teacher observation and supervision is sufficient to achieve the school's mission?
❏ Does the school provide professional development opportunities and hold staff members accountable for achieving their goals?	❏ Does the school regularly assess whether staff development is effective in helping the school reach its goals for student achievement?
❏ Do teachers produce the requisite documentation, and does the school maintain that documentation for purposes of evaluation?	❏ Does the school regularly assess the effectiveness of its programs and practices through the use of evidence and documentation?
❏ Are teachers held accountable to ensure that all students are making adequate progress toward their goals, benchmarks, and standards?	❏ Does the school regularly assess whether all its students are making adequate progress and how they can do so more effectively?

Practiced	Evaluated
❏ Are the students expected to work hard, and are they held to that standard of effort in their schoolwork?	❏ Does the school regularly assess whether its "unwritten rules" support the value of hard work and effort?
❏ Does the school examine a student's academic history, needs, and progress before attempting academic assimilation?	❏ Does the school regularly assess its admissions process to ensure that it does not overpromise what it can do for a student whom it may not be equipped to help?
❏ Does the school program emphasize and assess student character development as much as it does academic progress?	❏ Does the school regularly assess its program to see whether it can more effectively help students develop their character and social and cultural skills?
❏ Does the school follow up on student tardies and absences to ensure that students are meeting attendance requirements?	❏ Does the school regularly evaluate student attendance patterns to ensure that students are meeting attendance requirements?
❏ Does the school take the necessary steps to ensure that there are enough instructional hours in each school year?	❏ Does the school regularly evaluate its schedule and program to ensure that there are enough instructional hours to support academic assimilation?
❏ Are teachers and students trained and monitored to ensure that they are utilizing ample time-on-task opportunities?	❏ Does the school regularly train, monitor, and evaluate staff and students to ensure that they are benefiting from time on task?
❏ Does the school ensure that parents understand what the school expects of them before enrolling their children in the school?	❏ Does the school train parents and follow up on them to ensure that they are upholding the school's expectations of them?
❏ Do the school's discipline and academic policies hold students accountable for their actions?	❏ Does the school regularly assess its policies to ensure that students are taught personal accountability for their actions?
❏ Does the school regularly use community resources to improve student learning?	❏ Does the school regularly assess its efforts to use community resources?

Score Sheet A: Institutional and Constituent Health

School Measures

		Documented	Practiced	Evaluated	Score
	Admissions Policy and Procedures				
1	The school has a clear, concise, written, and well-rehearsed mission statement.				
2	The school requires student and parent "buy-in."				
3	The school orientation provides full disclosure to students and parents.				
4	Parents fully disclose their student's background to the school.				
	Assessment				
5	The school has regular individualized student assessments (formal and informal).				
6	The student assessments inform the teaching process.				
7	The school has regular staff assessments.				
	Academics				
8	The school has positional and functional instructional leaders.				
9	Emphasis is placed on core subjects: reading, writing, and math.				
10	There is ongoing curriculum evaluation.				
11	The school has differentiated student instruction.				
12	The school has a rigorous academic environment.				
13	Tutoring and academic support are offered.				
14	Extended enrichment and learning programs and opportunities are available.				
	Affective Environment				
15	The school has a structured, orderly environment (classrooms, entire school).				
16	The school has culturally sensitive family expectations.				
17	The school community is inclusive and supportive.				
	School Measures Rating (high ≥ 12 > low)	/17 H L	/17 H L	/17 H L	/51

Staff Measures

		Documented	Practiced	Evaluated	Score
	Adept				
18	The school has qualified, competent, and culturally sensitive staff members.				
19	The school has regular staff development.				
20	Staff members have a strong calling to teach in a Christian school.				
21	Staff members are engaged in peer mentoring, coaching, and collaborating.				

Staff Measures (cont.)

		Documented	Practiced	Evaluated	Score
22	Staff members have classroom management skills.				
	Affirming				
23	Staff members are inspirational and motivational.				
24	Staff members communicate high student expectations.				
	Accessible				
25	Staff members are accessible beyond the classroom.				
	Accountable				
26	Staff members are responsible for assessment interpretation, intervention, and implementation.				
27	Accountability is assisted by observations and supervision.				
28	Staff members set and pursue goals for professional development.				
29	Documentation is kept as evidence and evaluation of assessment.				
30	Staff members are responsible for measurable student progress.				
	Staff Measures Rating (high > 8 ≥ low)	/13 H L	/13 H L	/13 H L	/39

Student/Family/Community Measures

		Documented	Practiced	Evaluated	Score
	Attitude				
31	Students express a willingness to work hard.				
32	Students show a potential for academic engagement.				
33	Students participate in character training and the development of cultural and social skills.				
	Attendance				
34	The school has student attendance requirements.				
35	The school has extended hours, days, months (circle all that apply).				
36	Ample time is spent on task.				
	Accountability				
37	The school has a formal parent commitment policy.				
38	Students are held accountable for their actions.				
	Allied				
39	There is community engagement and support.				
	Student/Family/Community Measures Rating (high ≥ 6 > low)	/9 H L	/9 H L	/9 H L	/27
	Institutional Score (high ≥ 26 > low)	/39 H L	/39 H L	/39 H L	

Score Sheet AA: Pedagogical Health

Step 1: Assume All Students Can Learn		Documented	Practiced	Evaluated	Score
1	The school has a clear, concise, written, and well-rehearsed mission statement.				
2	The school requires student and parent "buy-in."				
3	The school orientation provides full disclosure to students and parents.				
4	Parents fully disclose their student's background to the school.				
7	The school has regular staff assessments.				
17	The school community is inclusive and supportive.				
19	The school has regular staff development.				
20	Staff members have a strong calling to teach in a Christian school.				
24	Staff members communicate high student expectations.				
28	Staff members set and pursue goals for professional development.				
31	Students express a willingness to work hard.				
32	Students show a potential for academic engagement.				
33	Students participate in character training and the development of cultural and social skills.				
34	The school has student attendance requirements.				
37	The school has a formal parent commitment policy.				
39	There is community engagement and support.				
	Step 1 Score	**/16**	**/16**	**/16**	**/48**
Step 2: Assess the Student		Documented	Practiced	Evaluated	Score
5	The school has regular individualized student assessments (formal and informal).				
16	The school has culturally sensitive family expectations.				
	Step 2 Score	**/2**	**/2**	**/2**	**/6**
Step 3: Ascertain Targeted Progress		Documented	Practiced	Evaluated	Score
6	The student assessments inform the teaching process.				
18	The school has qualified, competent, and culturally sensitive staff members.				
	Step 3 Score	**/2**	**/2**	**/2**	**/6**
Step 4: Assign an Educational Program and Resources		Documented	Practiced	Evaluated	Score
8	The school has positional and functional instructional leaders.				
9	Emphasis is placed on core subjects: reading, writing, and math.				
10	There is ongoing curriculum evaluation.				
11	The school has differentiated student instruction.				
12	The school has a rigorous academic environment.				

Step 4: Assign an Educational Program and Resources (cont.)	Documented	Practiced	Evaluated	Score
13	Tutoring and academic support are offered.				
14	Extended enrichment and learning programs and opportunities are available.				
15	The school has a structured, orderly environment (classrooms, entire school).				
22	Staff members have classroom management skills.				
23	Staff members are inspirational and motivational.				
25	Staff members are accessible beyond the classroom.				
35	The school has extended hours, days, months (circle all that apply).				
36	Ample time is spent on task.				
	Step 4 Score	**/13**	**/13**	**/13**	**/39**
Step 5: Arrange Checkpoints		**Documented**	**Practiced**	**Evaluated**	**Score**
21	Staff members are engaged in peer mentoring, coaching, and collaborating.				
26	Staff members are responsible for assessment interpretation, intervention, and implementation.				
27	Accountability is assisted by observations and supervision.				
29	Documentation is kept as evidence and evaluation of assessment.				
30	Staff members are responsible for measurable student progress.				
	Step 5 Score	**/5**	**/5**	**/5**	**/15**
Step 6: Adjust According to Ongoing Evaluation		**Documented**	**Practiced**	**Evaluated**	**Score**
6	The student assessments inform the teaching process.				
18	The school has qualified, competent, and culturally sensitive staff members.				
38	Students are held accountable for their actions.				
	Step 6 Score	**/3**	**/3**	**/3**	**/9**

Note: Factors 6 and 18 are listed under steps 3 and 6.

Resources

Where do you turn for help once you recognize that improvement is needed in a certain area? The following organizations provide information and resources on how to improve in the practice and support of academic assimilation:

Association of Christian Schools International
PO Box 65130
Colorado Springs, CO 80962-5130
Phone: 800-367-0798
Fax: 719-531-0631
Email: info@acsi.org
www.acsi.org
Publications:
Christian School Personnel Forms (2001)
Developing School Handbooks (2004)
Tools to Run an Urban Christian School (2001)
How to Start a Christian School (2002)
How to Start an Urban Christian School (2001)

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
1703 N. Beauregard Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22311-1714
Phone: 800-933-2723
Fax: 703-575-5400
Email: member@ascd.org
www.ascd.org
Publications:
Assessing Student Outcomes: Performance Assessment Using the Dimensions of Learning Model by Robert J. Marzano, Debra Pickering, and Jay McTighe (1993)
Classroom Assessment and Grading That Work by Robert J. Marzano (2006)
The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners by Carol Ann Tomlinson (1999)
Test Better, Teach Better: The Instructional Role of Assessment by W. James Popham (2003)

The Truth About Testing by W. James Popham (2001)

Education Trust
1250 H Street NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20005
Phone: 202-293-1217
Fax: 202-293-2605
Email: sbooker@edtrust.org
www2.edtrust.org
Publications:
Gaining Traction, Gaining Ground: How Some High Schools Accelerate Learning for Struggling Students by Stephanie Robinson, Amy Stempel, Isis McCree, et al. (2005)
The Power to Change: High Schools That Help All Students Achieve by Karin Chenoweth (2005)

Learning First Alliance
4455 Connecticut Avenue, Suite 310
Washington, DC 20008
Phone: 202-296-5220
Fax: 866-218-3759
www.learningfirst.org
Publication:
Beyond Islands of Excellence: What Districts Can Do to Improve Instruction and Achievement in All Schools by Wendy Togneri and Stephen E. Anderson (2003)

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)
4601 DTC Boulevard, Suite 500
Denver, Colorado 80237
Phone: 303-337-0990
Fax: 303-337-3005
Email: information@mcrel.org
www.mcrel.org
Publication:
Designing a Sustainable Standards-Based Assessment System by Don Burger (1998)

National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE)
1699 E. Woodfield Road, Suite 406
Schaumburg, IL 60173-4958
Phone: 800-843-6773
Fax: 847-995-9088
Email: schoolimprovement@nsse.org
www.nsse.org
Publications:
Breakthrough School Improvement: An Action Guide for Greater and Faster Results
Breakthrough School Improvement: Resources and Tools

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL)
211 E. 7th Street, Suite 200
Austin, TX 78701-3253
Phone: 800-476-6861
Fax: 512-476-2286
Email: info@sedl.org
www.sedl.org
Publications:
Disaggregation Without Aggravation by Glynn D. Ligon and Barbara S. Clements (2000)
Improving Classroom Assessment: A Toolkit for Professional Staff Developers, Toolkit 98 by Regional Educational Laboratory Network, Glenda Copeland, Chris Ferguson, Jackie Palmer, and Barbara Salyer (1998)
101 More Questions and Answers About Standards, Assessment, and Accountability by Douglas Reeves (2004)

101 Questions and Answers About Standards, Assessment, and Accountability by Douglas Reeves (2001)

Springboard Schools (formerly Bay Area School Reform Collaborative)
181 Fremont Street, 2nd Floor
San Francisco, California 94105
Phone: 415-348-5500
Fax: 415-348-1340
www.springboardschools.org
Publication:
Lessons from High Achieving Schools by Ida Oberman (2005)

United States Department of Education
www.ed.gov
Links:
Federal Resources for Educational Excellence (FREE): www.free.ed.gov
What Works Clearinghouse: www.whatworks.ed.gov

WestEd
730 Harrison Street
San Francisco, California 94107
Phone: 877-493-7833
Fax: 415-565-3012
www.wested.org
Link:
Schools Moving Up: www.schoolsmovingup.net.

Supportive Research

The straight-A approach to academic assimilation is supported by educational research. A comparison of schools that successfully practice academic assimilation points to the same factors. The research findings make clear that academic assimilation is possible, that it is being done, and that the steps for achieving it are not a mystery. The following list includes only the major works of research in this area. For a more complete literature review, contact ACSI Urban School Services.

Cicchinelli, Lou, Ceri Dean, Mike Galvin, Bryan Goodwin, and Danette Parsley. 2006. *Success in sight: A comprehensive approach to school improvement.* Denver, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL).

Education Trust. 2005. *Gaining traction, gaining ground: How some high schools accelerate learning for struggling students*. Washington, DC: The Education Trust.

Kannapel, Patricia J., and Stephen K. Clements. 2005. *Inside the black box of high-performing high-poverty schools*. With Diana Taylor and Terry Hibpshman. Lexington, KY: Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence.

Mattson Almanzán, Heather. 2005. Schools moving up. *Educational Leadership* 62 (Summer). Turnaround Schools (online only). www.ascd.org.

National High School Alliance. 2005. *A call to action: Transforming high school for all youth*. Washington, DC: Institute of Educational Leadership.

Petrides, Lisa, and Thad Nodine. 2005. *Anatomy of school system improvement: Performance-driven practices in urban school districts*. With Lilly Nguyen, Anastasia Karaglani, and Robin Gluck. NewSchools Venture Fund. http://www.newschools.org/viewpoints/documents/District_Performance_Practices.pdf.

Reeves, Douglas B. 2000. *Accountability in action: A blueprint for learning organizations*. 2nd edition. Englewood, CO: Advanced Learning Press.

Springboard Schools. 2007. *Balancing act: Best practices in the middle grades*. San Francisco, CA: Springboard Schools.

Walsh Symonds, Kiley. 2003. *After the test: How schools are using data to close the achievement gap*. San Francisco, CA: Bay Area School Reform Collaborative.

WestEd. 2007. Helping districts improve: Q&A with WestEd's Fred Tempes. *R&D Alert* 8, no. 2:12–14.

———. 2007. How to support school transformation. *R&D Alert* 8, no. 2:4–7, 20, 24.

Williams, Trish, Michael Kirst, Edward Haertel, Mary Perry, Carol Studier, Elisabeth Woody, Jesse Levin, et al. 2005. *Similar students, different results: Why do some schools do better? A large-scale survey of California elementary schools serving low-income students*. Mountain View, CA: EdSource.

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