

New York State Education Department
Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Draft Characteristics of Highly Effective Schools

The following are characteristics of a school that provides a highly effective education to students and enables them to become prepared for college, career, and civic responsibility:

1. Visionary instructional leaders partner with all stakeholders. Visionary leaders create a professional, respectful and supportive school culture and community that values and promotes diversity and leads to success, well-being, and high academic and career expectations and outcomes for all students. This is accomplished through the use of collaborative systems of continuous and sustainable school improvement.
2. All students receive curricula in all disciplines that are challenging, engaging, and integrated. The curricula are tied to appropriate formative and summative assessments, which are aligned to State learning standards. This results in instruction that is relevant and responsive to student needs and modified to maximize student growth and learning outcomes.
3. Teachers and staff engage in ongoing professional development to equip themselves with effective, research-based, strategic instructional practices. Teachers and staff use multiple measures, so that targeted instruction maximizes student learning outcomes. Teachers and staff address the needs and interests of diverse learners and design lessons and activities that are responsive to what students need to learn. These efforts allow students to consistently experience high levels of engagement and achievement.
4. The school community identifies, promotes, and supports social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development throughout the school day. This is accomplished by designing systems, programs and strengths-based experiences that identify and foster healthy relationships, as well as safe, inclusive, and respectful environments. These efforts lead to students developing social emotional skills and barriers to learning being removed.
5. The school has active partnerships that are culturally and linguistically inclusive and in which families, students, community members and school staff respectfully collaborate. These partnerships support student academic progress, social-emotional growth, well-being, and personal and civic responsibility, so that students have the opportunity to reach their full potential.
6. The school community identifies, promotes, and supports multiple pathways to graduation and career readiness based on individual strengths, needs, interests, and aspirations. These pathways create access to multiple opportunities for students to pursue advanced coursework and actively explore and/or pursue specific career-

related coursework and experiences in the arts, languages and Career and Technical Education. Consequently, students develop the knowledge and skills to meaningfully transition to postsecondary opportunities and to exercise civic responsibility.

7. The school community continuously and critically examines and challenges its own cultural assumptions to understand how they shape school-wide policies and practices, so as to inform plans for continuous movement towards a school environment that is inclusive, as well as linguistically and culturally responsive.
8. The school community promotes cultural responsiveness and appropriate responses to individuality and differences, as reflected in policies, programs, and practices. The school examines its cultural assumptions to inform practice and professional development on culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy.