

Great Schools Survey

Instructions: Pat Bassett's *Independent School* magazine column (Winter 2013) "[25 Factors Great Schools Have in Common](#)" identifies many attributes of exceptional schools. As “homework” for the presentation and discussion he will conduct with our community, he has asked that participants read the article and then submit their assessment of the relative importance of each factor by marking on this score sheet a plus (+) **next to five to eight factors that are important and our school does well**, and marking with a minus (-) **next to five to eight factors that are important and our school does less well**. All other factors leave unmarked.

- 1. Create and perpetuate an intentional culture** shaped by the adults, rooted in universal values of honesty and caring, and relentlessly oriented toward achievement.
- 2. Eclectically capitalize on the best ideas about what works in schools**, those gleaned from the past as well as those deemed best for the future.
- 3. Manifest a coherent philosophy of learning for students**, be it constructivist, Reggio Emilia, Waldorf, Montessori, strengths-based, progressive, traditional, 1:1, or whatever — so long as it remains open to ongoing discussion, testing, and constant refinement.
- 4. Make a substantial commitment to professional development for faculty**, expecting teachers to grow as learners themselves and to develop mastery in the art and science of teaching.
- 5. Develop collegial means to professionalize the profession**, such as rounds, lesson study, digital faculty portfolios, and the like, adopting professional development strategies that are prevalent in high-performing schools and countries around the world.
- 6. Adopt a big vision**, one that continually refreshes itself in order to sustain the enterprise along the five most strategic continua: demographic, environmental, global, financial, and programmatic.
- 7. Define the school’s “playground” in expansive ways**, beyond the school’s borders into the local community, the region, and the world.
- 8. Demonstrate the public purpose of private education** locally, nationally, and globally through a variety of means, including modeling experimentation to improve schooling and partnering with the public sector at the school and university levels.
- 9. Embrace stewardship of the school and its resources**, renewing and growing the school’s physical, financial, and human resources to achieve financial equilibrium.
- 10. Enable constituents to donate their time and treasure consistently** by providing the metrics on school volunteerism, financing, and eleemosynary benchmarks, and by telling the school’s story in powerfully moving ways.
- 11. Pay it forward** by building endowment and thereby sustaining inter-generational equity so that the next generation of families will be at least as well served by this generation as the current generation of families has been by its predecessors.

12. **Commit to diversity of all kinds and at all levels** to create the conditions and school culture so that students learn how to appreciate and map differences, then navigate and ride the waves of demographic change.
 13. **Redefine the ideal classroom setting as one of intimate environment**, not small classes, since the former can occur in schools or classes of any size and even online, and the latter can miss the point of intimacy.
 14. **Create a financially sustainable future by means other than persistently large annual tuition increases**, recognizing that being the best value, rather than the highest price in town, offers the strongest value proposition.
 15. **Achieve extraordinary parent and alumni participation in annual giving**, reflecting superb volunteer organization and execution and a grateful constituent base.
 16. **Adopt and fund “3 Rs” talent strategies that position the school to recruit, retain, and reward** the best and brightest teachers, school leaders, and board members.
 17. **Compensate staff members fairly and competitively related to performance and contributions** to the well-being of the school and in acknowledgment of the staff’s tremendous responsibility for and impact on students.
 18. **Provide leadership paths for teachers** wishing to stay in teaching, rather than jump to administration, by creating a host of academic and task-force leadership roles.
 19. **Track student outcomes over time**, beyond the years in one’s own school, seeking data on how well the school prepared its students for the next legs of their life journeys — be it the next levels of education or life beyond.
 20. **Seek data to make data-rich (not opinion-rich) decisions**, embracing former Education Secretary Margaret Spellings’ observation, “In God we trust; all others, bring data.”
 21. **To avoid unnecessary distractions, educate the board and parents thoroughly** about how schools work, and about what student and parent needs a school can and cannot meet.
 22. **Market their schools with “sticky messages”** that tell a compelling story.
 23. **Know their priorities when making difficult decisions**, ranking first “what’s best for the school,” then “what’s best for the student,” then “what’s best for all other interests.”
 24. **Know that one’s mission-match with a prospective student (on the intake) and matriculating students (on the outtake) is the controlling factor** in admissions and secondary school or college placement.
 25. **Find the right balance for the drivers of financial aid to achieve school goals** of diversifying the school, managing enrollment, and attracting a talented class of students.
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Instructions to the School:

- 1.) Ask survey participants to email you the numbers of their top five to eight (+) *statements* (plusses: important/we do well) and their top five to eight (–) *statements* (minuses: important/we do less well).
- 2.) Collate the results on this document showing the # of plusses and the # of minuses next to each of the 25 questions. Email the results in advance of the workshop to Bassett@HeadsUpEd.com. Thanks!