

# School Works Findings 2015

## Schools that work can create positive, stable, and rigorous environments that foster student success.

The findings from A+ Schools' 2015 School Works community action research represent the views of the 50 principals in our schools.

We asked principals about best practices and conditions that support student engagement and success. Topics covered included academic rigor, restorative discipline, staff hiring and stability, and school resources.

The trends point to practices linked to student success and engagement. We also found that barriers to hiring and retaining effective teachers result in instability that unfairly disadvantages students in our most vulnerable schools.

Students in our most vulnerable schools deserve high expectations and to attend school in stable environments that foster positive relationships and rigorous engagement in learning.

We believe all schools must do the following in order to work for their students:

- **Demonstrate high expectations for students and provide targeted resources to support academic rigor.**
- **Replace zero tolerance policies with practices that address the cause of behavior and restore relationships.**
- **Be able to hire, keep, and support great teachers. Policies preventing schools from doing so should be eliminated.**
- **Spend money in smart ways that positively impact student success.**

**Key Finding:** Students in vulnerable schools are more likely to be suspended, have less experienced teachers, and have higher principal turnover than students at less vulnerable schools. Therefore internal practices and external policies prevent vulnerable schools from creating conditions for student success.

### **Additional Findings:**

#### Mission Driven Schools

High expectations are linked to positive environments, better attendance, and achievement.

Schools report reducing use of zero tolerance policies due to TeenBloc supported changes to the Student Code of Conduct.

Academic rigor and restorative practices linked to lower suspension rates.

#### Great Teaching

Principals at vulnerable schools report greater challenges retaining effective teachers.

Most principals report policy barriers to hiring effective teachers.

#### Fair Funding, Smart Spending

Costs are high at small schools which have fewer practices linked to student success.

Principals report needing human resources; staffing rules barriers to community supports.