

Seven Cornerstone Strategies to Improve Student Performance

Seven cornerstone strategies have been gleaned from the experiences of *Breaking Ranks* schools and will help those who wonder how to start. These seven cornerstone strategies cut across all three core areas and most of the 31 recommendations. Together, these seven cornerstone strategies, if implemented effectively, will form the foundation for improving the performance of each student in your school.

1. **Core Knowledge:** Establish the essential learnings a student is required to learn in order to graduate, and adjust the curriculum and teaching strategies to realize that goal
2. **Connections with Students:** Increase the quantity and improve the quality of interactions between students, teachers, and other school personnel by reducing the number of students for which any adult or group of adults is responsible
3. **Personalized Planning:** Implement a comprehensive advisory program that ensures each student has frequent and meaningful opportunities to plan and assess his or her academic and social progress with a faculty member
4. **Adapting to Differences:** Ensure teachers use a variety of instructional strategies and assessments to accommodate individual learning styles
5. **Flexible Use of Time:** Implement schedules flexible enough to accommodate teaching strategies consistent with the ways students learn most effectively and that allow for effective teacher teaming and lesson planning
6. **Distributed Leadership:** Institute structural leadership changes that allow for meaningful involvement in decision making by students, teachers, family members, and the community and that support effective communication with these groups
7. **Continuous Professional Development:** Align comprehensive, ongoing professional development program and individual Personal Learning Plans of staff members with the content knowledge and instructional strategies required to prepare students for graduation.

Breaking Ranks II illustrates how school principals and their leadership teams hold the key to initiating essential conversations about relationships among people and relationships between students and ideas.



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