

# Did You Know

## National researchers have highlighted three NC school districts for boosting student achievement.

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A recent report highlights three North Carolina school districts that significantly boosted student achievement. The three districts share several key practices:

- **School administrators frequently conduct classroom observations of teachers;**
- **Teachers discuss student performance and instruction in small, focused meetings; and**
- **Teachers utilize research-based instructional techniques.**

Center for American Progress (CAP) researchers identified **Montgomery County Schools**, **Catawba County Schools**, and **Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools** as “success stories” for their notable improvement. The proportion of Catawba and Montgomery County Schools meeting “expected growth” increased 10 percent between the 2007-2008 and 2010-2011 school years. Student proficiency rates in Winston-Salem/Forsyth increased in 40 of 80 schools, rising an average of 13 percentage points.



**Common Strategies for Uncommon Achievement**  
How Districts Enable and Support High-Performing Schools  
By Robert Harris July 2013

Each district had similar standards-based achievement goals and employed similar practices, even as they implemented different models to address particular needs. According to Dr. Don Martin, then superintendent of Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools, the district’s success can be attributed to the **Single School Culture**, a philosophy that intensifies the commitment to academics, collaboration, and unified goals for student achievement.

Success in Montgomery County Schools followed a shift from “**program teaching**” to “**process teaching**” according to Dr. Dale Ellis, Montgomery County’s school superintendent. Process teaching targets instructional practice rather than purchased programs for instructional guidance. The district hired facilitators to frequently observe teachers and support small group collaboration among teachers.

Catawba County, like Winston-Salem/Forsyth and Montgomery Counties, encouraged a renewed commitment to core academics through the **Learning Centered Schools** model. Catawba County leaders focused on strengthening teachers’ understanding of how students learn through frequent observations focused on instruction rather than evaluation. Teachers met in small groups to discuss content, purpose, and methodology for their lessons.

As the CAP study finds, purposeful collaboration, research-based practices, and frequent observations as part of goal-orient professional development are important elements of student growth. Montgomery County, Catawba County, and Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools are three success stories showing the way to higher student achievement.

Click [here](#) for more information on the study.