

# Just for the Kids Best Practice Institutes: Findings from Rhode Island Schools

*The Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE), The Broad Foundation and National Center for Educational Accountability (NCEA) are pleased to release **NCEA's Executive Summary of the 2005 Just for the Kids Best Practice Institute featuring practices of Rhode Island public elementary schools.***

Rhode Island was among 20 states that participated in 2005 *Just for the Kids (JFTK) Best Practice Studies and Institutes* designed to inform improvement efforts based on the exemplary practices found in higher performing schools and systems. Through this report of the practices of elementary schools that are successful in raising student achievement, schools in need of improvement can gain direct and practical insight from schools in Rhode Island and other states. "*The five Rhode Island schools that participated last year in the Just for the Kids Elementary Best Practices Institute are schools that consistently perform better on standardized tests than schools with similar demographics elsewhere in the state,*" said Peter McWalters, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. "*Just for the Kids has brought these schools together so that they could discuss what they are doing right. They are to be commended for attempting to identify and benchmark schools whose practices can be adopted in similar but lower-performing schools. All schools can learn from the best practices of others.*"

## Goals and Uses for Results

Some schools are more successful at raising student achievement and reaching higher standards than others. We wanted to know what these schools were doing and how their practices could help other schools. The goal of this study is to reaffirm that high academic achievement for all students is possible and to examine the principles and practices that lead to success. Toward that end, a team of NCEA researchers spoke with district leaders, principals, and teachers at schools in Rhode Island and examined the practices of educators in those schools. Those practices are the subject of this summary report.

JFTK Best Practice Studies and Institutes cover specific strategies being used to build leadership capacity, offer intervention to students, make research-based selections of instructional programs, and much more. In addition to [NCEA's Executive Summary](#) of individual state best practices, comprehensive studies for schools with diverse demographics are organized around an interactive JFTK Framework of Best Practices that is accessible at [www.just4kids.org](http://www.just4kids.org). Additionally, [www.just4kids.org](http://www.just4kids.org) offers tools that allow schools and districts to conduct self audits to see how their current practices align with The Framework.

## Just for the Kids Process

Since 2001, NCEA as national sponsor of Just for the Kids, has been focused on finding and sharing excellence in educational practices through the study of consistently higher performing schools in partnership with state-based research and education organizations.

The structure of the JFTK Best Practice Framework is used to examine the successful practices of higher performing schools in each state.

The Framework is not a theoretical creation; it is based on the study of nearly 500 schools and systems across the nation. The Framework only includes the activities and practices that distinguish higher performing schools from average performing schools.

In The Framework, quality instruction is supported systemically by district and school practices, as well as by those

in the classroom. It is also important to remember that the big picture helps us make sense of individual pieces. Interconnectedness of practices is critical in The Framework. However, these programs and practices are presented as examples of what is working in some school systems and should not be interpreted as a prescriptive list of programs or strategies.

## About the Rhode Island Institute

The 2005 JFTK-Rhode Island Best Practice Institute, held in Warwick, was made possible in part through national funding from The Broad Foundation and NCEA, as well as with local support from the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE). It included superintendents, principals, and classroom teachers from consistently higher performing elementary schools from across the state. Participating schools were chosen for their record of student achievement – these schools outperformed their demographically similar peers on the state proficient or advanced standard in every grade and subject tested over three years. Educators were joined by researchers from NCEA in a day of dialogue and exchange about the specific educational practices that distinguish their schools from other schools in the state. The results of that dialogue are recorded in the [NCEA Executive Summary](#).

**To learn more about participating higher performing elementary schools in Rhode Island, use the following information links:**

- [Rhode Island Institute NCEA Executive Summary](#)
- [www.Just4kids.org/RI](http://www.Just4kids.org/RI)
- [Elliot Krieger](#), Communications, R.I. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
- NCEA Institute Coordinator: [Susan Whisenant](#)

Higher Performing School	School District
Bradford Elementary	Westerly
Chester W. Barrows School	Cranston
Francis J. Varieur School	Pawtucket
Hope Valley Elementary	Chariho Regional
Tiogue School	Coventry

---

### National Center for Educational Accountability

national sponsor of [Just for the Kids](#)

4030-2 West Braker Lane  
Suite 200-W  
Austin, Texas 78759

Phone: 512-232-0770  
Fax: 512-232-0777

[info@just4kids.org](mailto:info@just4kids.org)

---

The National Center for Educational Accountability is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization (EIN 01-0577238) whose founding organizations include Just for the Kids, The University of Texas at Austin, and the Education Commission of the States.

[www.just4kids.org](http://www.just4kids.org)