

# THE INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH AND REFORM IN EDUCATION AND FIRST THINGS FIRST



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President

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Institute for Research and Reform in Education

- IRRE is a not-for-profit organization.
- We created and developed First Things First.
- We ground all of our work in youth development theory and research.
- We partner with districts and states to plan and implement reform of secondary schools.




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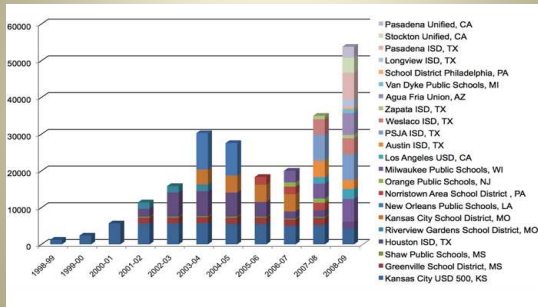
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## Students Enrolled in IRRE Partner Schools (2008-09 school year)



Source: State departments of education.

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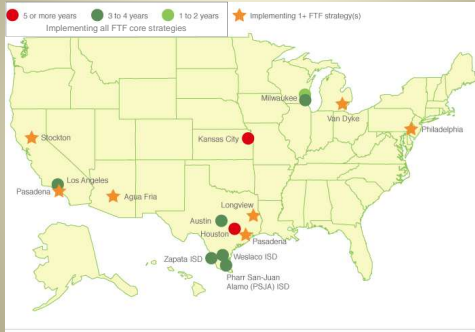
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## IRRE Partner Districts and Schools (as of Fall 2009)




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## How Can Struggling Secondary Schools Be “Transformed”?

- Change the quality of relationships among young people and adults at school and at home.
- Change the quality of teaching and learning in every classroom every day.
- Redirect political, financial and human resources to do these two things.

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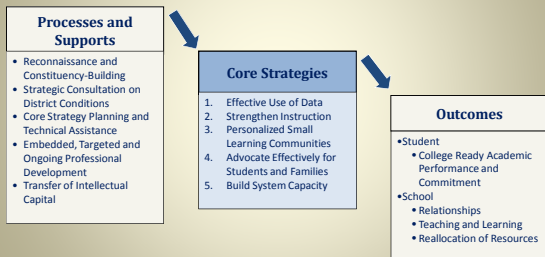
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## First Things First Theory of Change




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## FTF Core Strategies

- **Effective Use of Data**
  - Strengthen data infrastructure and reporting.
  - Training in effective use of data to prioritize and guide action.
- **Strengthen Instruction**
  - Engagement, Alignment and Rigor as shared instructional goals.
  - Targeted curricular and instructional supports guided by data on student learning and EAR classroom practice.
- **Advocacy for Students and Families**
  - Qualified and supported advocate for every student and family.
  - Intensified supports for highest risk students.

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## FTF Core Strategies

- **Personalized Small Learning Communities (PSLCs)**
  - Smaller groups of students (and families) and dedicated staff interact intensively over multiple years around shared interests with mutual accountability.
  - PSLCs used as informational, structural and management platform for effective implementation of other strategies.
- **Building District Capacity**
  - Create district conditions for successful implementation and outcomes.
  - Transfer IRRE's intellectual capital to strengthen, sustain and expand reform.

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## AYPF Elements of Success and First Thing First Core Strategies

	Effective Use of Data	Strengthen Instruction	Advocacy for Students and Families	Personalized Small Learning Communities	Building District Capacity
Rigor and Academic Support	X	X	X		X
Relationships			X	X	X
College Knowledge and Access			X	X	X
Relevance		X		X	X
Youth Centered Programs	X		X	X	X
Effective Instruction		X			X
Partnerships and Cross-Systems Collaborations	X		X	X	X
Strategic Use of Time			X	X	X
Leadership and Autonomy				X	X
Effective Assessment and Use of Data	X	X	X		X

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### Independent Evaluation/Research Studies of FTF Core Strategies

- Youth Development Strategies, Inc.-Multiple Foundations (1998 - 2004)
  - Quasi-experimental, longitudinal comparative design.
  - 12 secondary schools and 30 elementary schools in Kansas City, KS (KCKPS) a high poverty, high minority district.
- MDRC-OERI (2000 - 2005)
  - Quasi-experimental, matched control schools design.
  - Examined impacts of FTF strategies in five districts with 24 schools serving high percentages of economically disadvantaged, minority students.
- University of Rochester Consortium-IES (2009 – 2013)
  - Randomized control trial (20 schools/5 districts/4 states).
  - Impacts of FTF instructional improvement strategies on 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade literacy and math instruction and student achievement in struggling high schools.

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### What Are the High School Results?

- In all four Kansas City, Kansas comprehensive high schools with at least three years of implementation:
  - Compared to matched non-FTF schools:
    - Significantly greater increases in attendance (7 point difference), graduation rates (14 point difference), language arts proficiency (12 point difference);
    - Sharper reductions in dropout rates (4 point difference).
  - Reduction in economic and ethnic achievement gaps in FTF schools compared to rest of state (YDSI study).
- In MDRC study, sites with less than two full years of implementation showed less consistent results.

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### What Are the Middle School Results?

- Matched all significant high school findings across eight middle schools.
- Significantly greater math achievement gains over matched controls (9 point difference).

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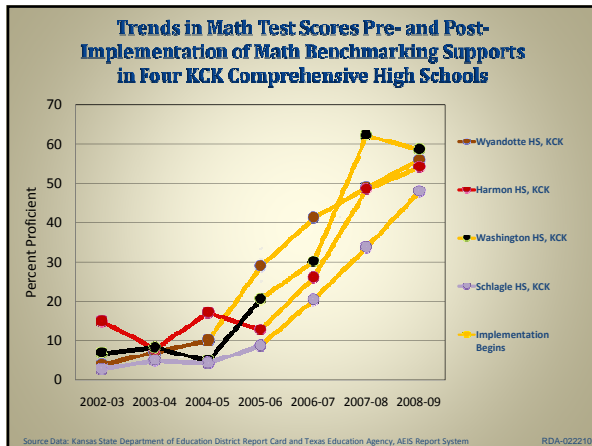
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### High School Results from Texas Sites

- Eight high schools from four urban and rural districts serving 14,300 students (80% economically disadvantaged and minority).
- Now in third year of implementing FTF reform strategies.

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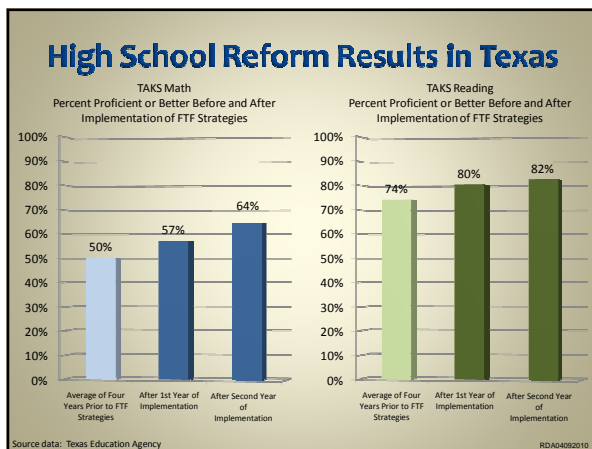
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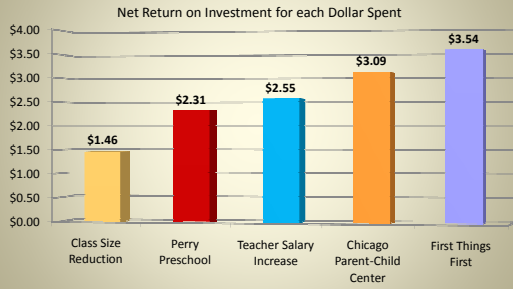
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### What Is the Relative Cost/Benefit of FTF High School Reform?



Source: Levin, H., Belfield, C., Muennig, P. and Kase, C. (2006). *The Costs and Benefits of an Excellent Education for All of America's Children*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.

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### Current Opportunities and Challenges for the Field

- Enriching the secondary school reform repertoire with more evidence-based strategies.
- Creating district and state conditions to strengthen and accelerate reform implementation and results.
- Building local, state and national capacity to support and then sustain reform for all schools that need it.

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- Visit our website:  
[www.irre.org](http://www.irre.org)

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