Reaching New Heights with High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools

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"Although public schools are responsible for educating *all* students, they historically have had greater success educating middle-to-upper income and white students than poor and minority students. Nearly all the worst-performing schools are high-poverty schools.

But there are striking exceptions to the pattern of low income/low performance. There are enough schools that defy the trend to prove that the background of the student body does not have to determine achievement results."

- Inside the Black Box of High-Performing High-Poverty Schools

Essential Elements of High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools

➤ Student Achievement Focus

➤ Standards-Based Instructional Program

➤ Use of Assessment Data to Improve Student Achievement and Instruction

➤ Adequate Instructional Resources

➤ Community of Teacher Leaders

➤ Parent & Community Involvement

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"But it's all about expectations….Because if you set high expectations and communicate them to children, then they in turn will work hard to meet those expectations….It has noting to do with your ethnicity or any of these things."

Dr. Norma Baker, Principal
Hudnall Elementary School
Los Angeles, CA

Student Achievement Focus
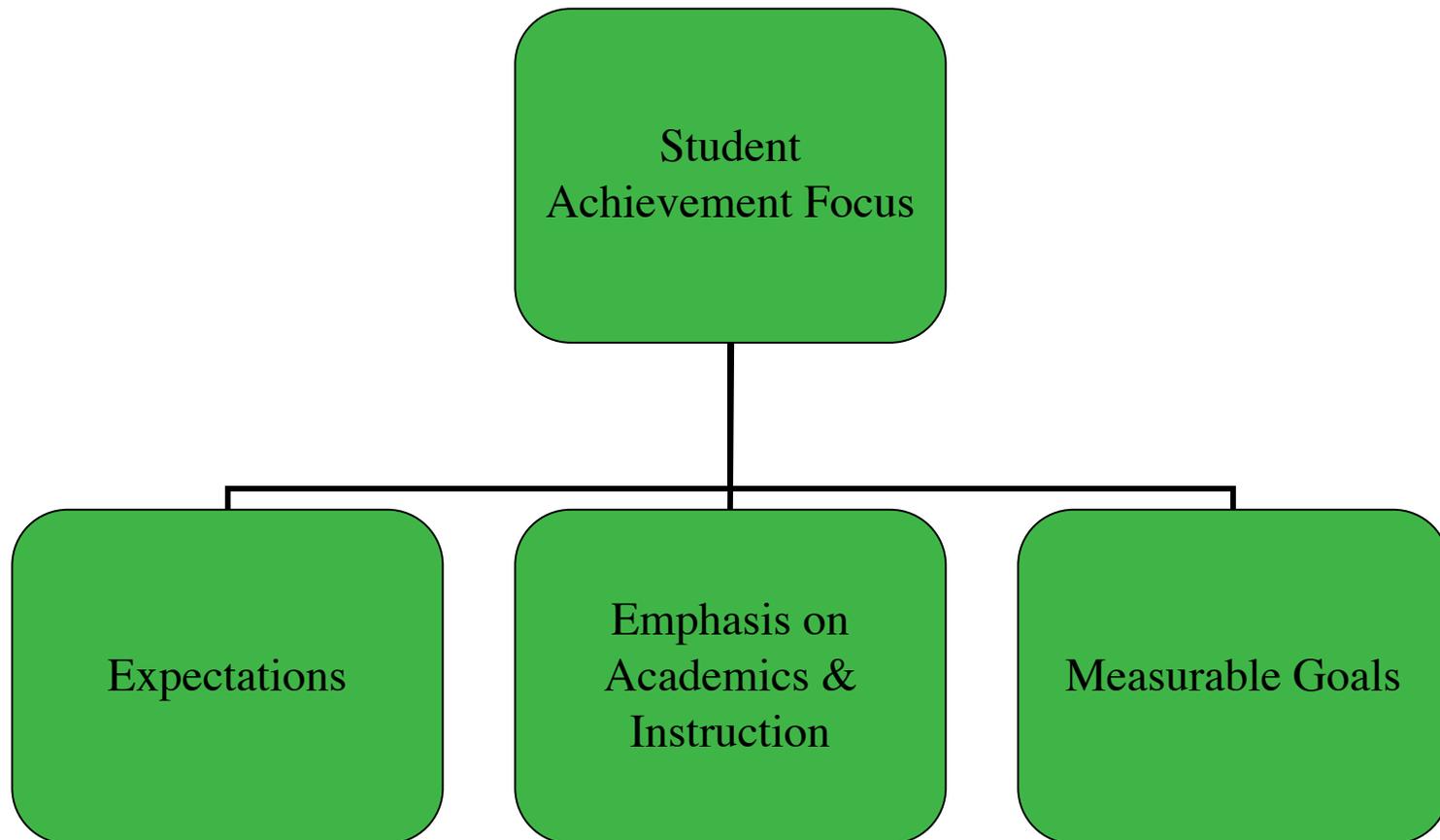
Student Achievement Focus: Expectations

➤ Principal communicates strong expectation that all students and teachers can and will succeed

➤ Principal communicates clear vision for the school, sets high standards for student learning, makes expectations clear to teachers for meeting academic goals

➤ Principal explicitly states district expectations for state assessment

Student Achievement Focus: Emphasis on Academics & Instruction

➢ Schools focus on student learning outcomes

➢ Teachers take responsibility for & are committed to improving student achievement

➢ Schools have well-defined plans for instructional improvement

➢ Schools make teaching & learning the top priority

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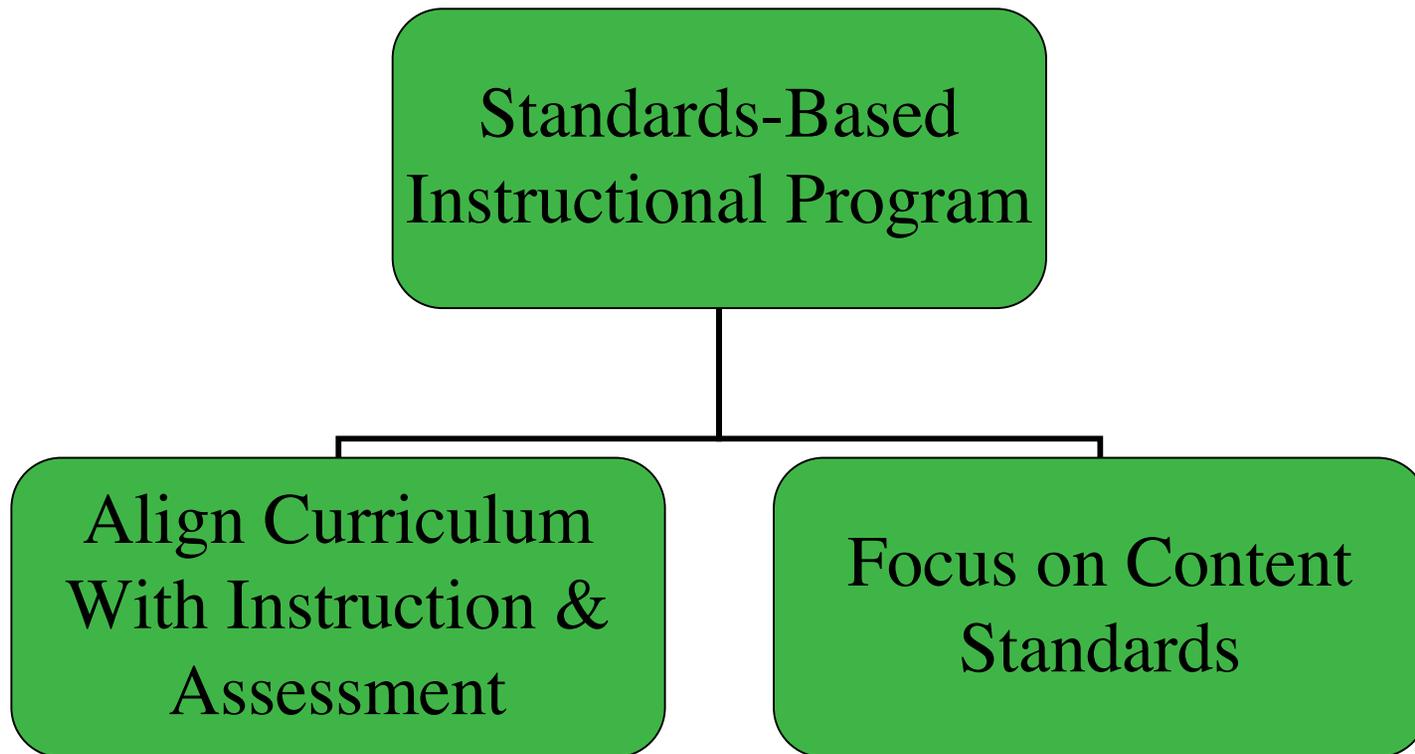Associates

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Student Achievement Focus: Measurable Goals

➢ Schools set measurable goals for exceeding mandated state subgroup targets for improved achievement

➢ Schools use measurable goals to establish culture of achievement

➢ Schools make goals tangible, unyielding, and a priority

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"*The more difficult the curriculum, the greater likelihood your students will be successful.*"

Gregory Hodge, Principal
Fredrick Douglass Academy
New York, NY

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Standards-Based Instructional Program

Standards-Based Instructional Program

Align Curriculum With Instruction & Assessment

Focus on Content Standards

Standards-Based Instructional Program: Align Curriculum with Instruction & Assessment

➢ Clear link between student assessment and instructional activities

➢ School-wide instructional consistency within grades

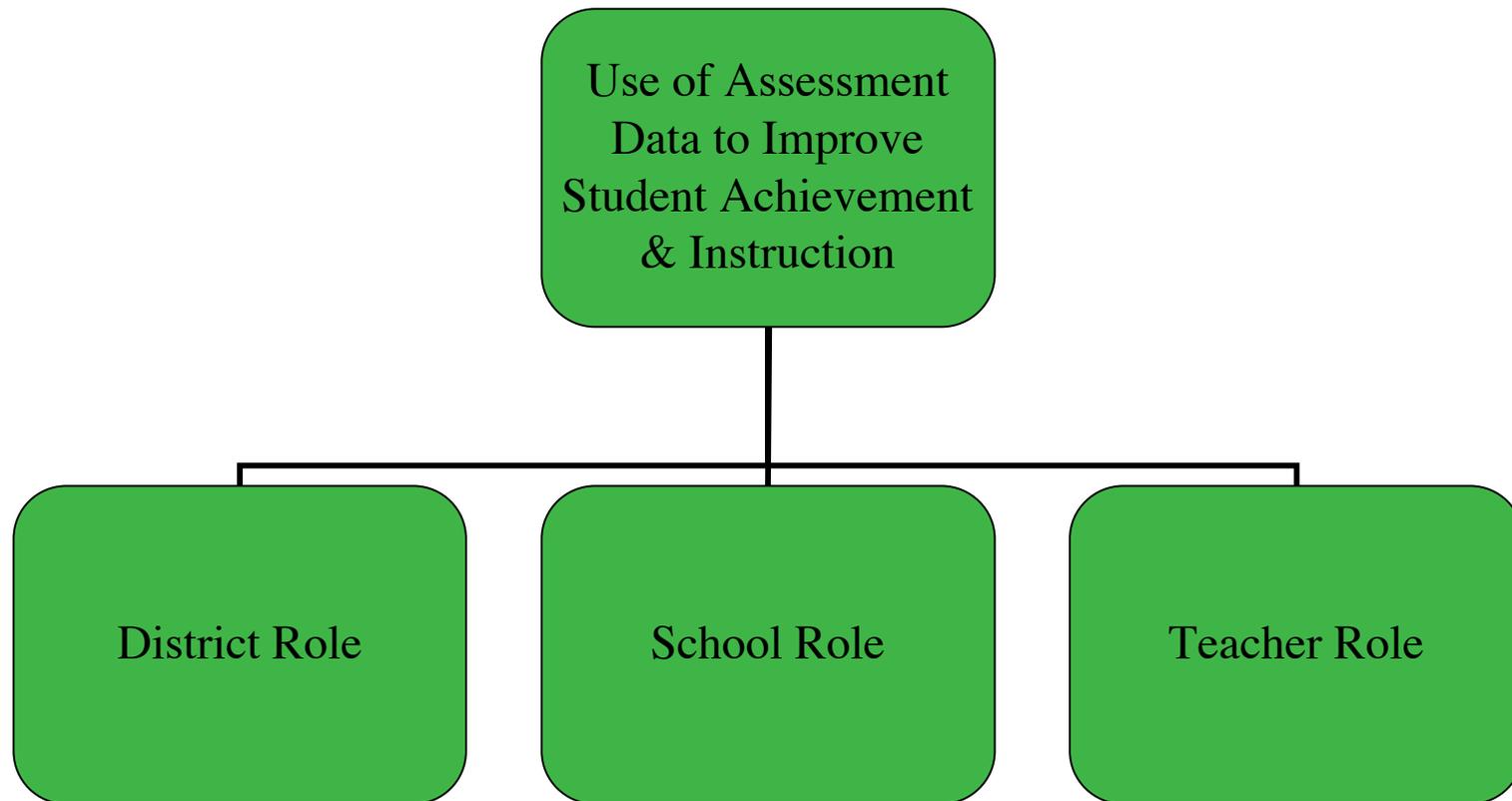➢ Curriculum aligned from grade to grade

Standards-Based Instructional Program:
Focus on Content Standards

➢ Identified essential standards & classroom instruction guided by state academic standards

➢ Curriculum in English Language Arts & Math aligned with state standards

➢ Curriculum standards frequently mapped onto classroom lesson plans

"Without assessment, you will not know "that Johnny needs help with spelling" or "that Johnny is not decoding right."

Debbie Tate, Principal
Payne Elementary School
Los Angeles, CA

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Use of Assessment Data to Improve Student Achievement & Instruction

Use of Assessment Data to Improve Student Achievement & Instruction: District Role

➢ District expects that all schools will improve student achievement

➢ District evaluates principals on student achievement

➢ District provides support for site-level planning related to improving achievement

Use of Assessment Data to Improve Student Achievement & Instruction: School Role

➢ Assessment data influences school-wide attention to improving student achievement

➢ Assessment data used to evaluate teacher practices & to identify teachers who need instructional improvement

➢ Principal reviews data independently & with individual teachers

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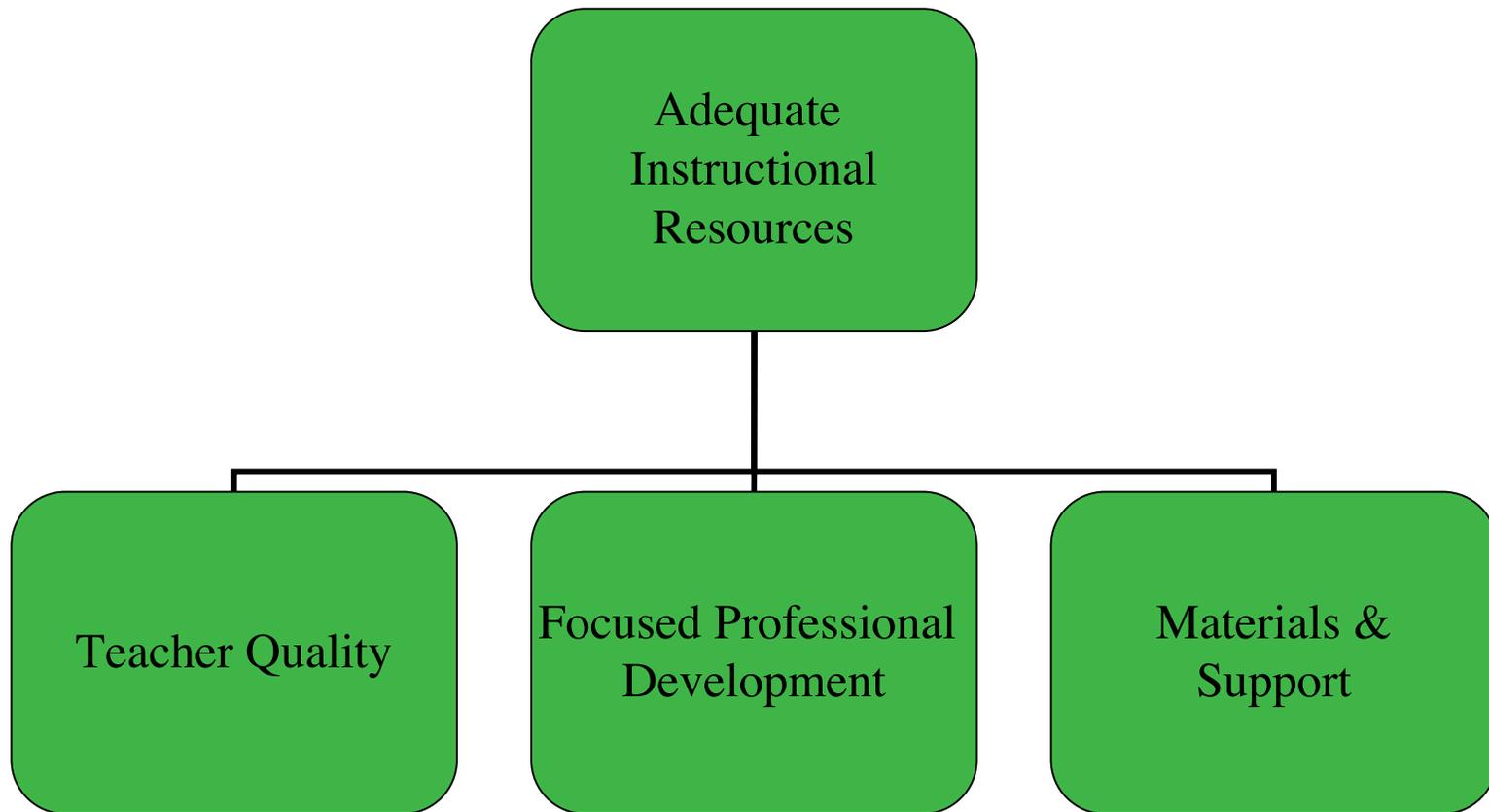Associates

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Use of Assessment Data to Improve Student Achievement & Instruction: Teacher Role

➢ Use frequent assessment data to address academic needs of students

➢ Use data to develop strategies to help students reach goals & follow progress of students

➢ Use tailored instruction, based on information from data, to meet student needs

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"Getting the right people is the best thing you can do. You can put $3 million of remedial materials in the school, and it won't do any good if you don't have the right people."

Principal
Lexington, KY

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Adequate Instructional Resources

Adequate Instructional Resources

Teacher Quality

Focused Professional Development

Materials & Support

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Adequate Instructional Resources: Teacher Quality

➤ Quality, not seniority, is the key

➤ Recruit and hire staff with specific qualities

- Excited about teaching

- Demonstrated ability to raise student achievement

- Strong content knowledge

- Good fit with school culture

- Able to map curriculum standards into instruction

- Able to use data from student assessments

Adequate Instructional Resources: Focused Professional Development

➢ Uses state academic content standards as a tool

➢ Focuses on curricula

➢ Promotes supportive and nurturing classroom environments

➢ Incorporates training in instructional programs

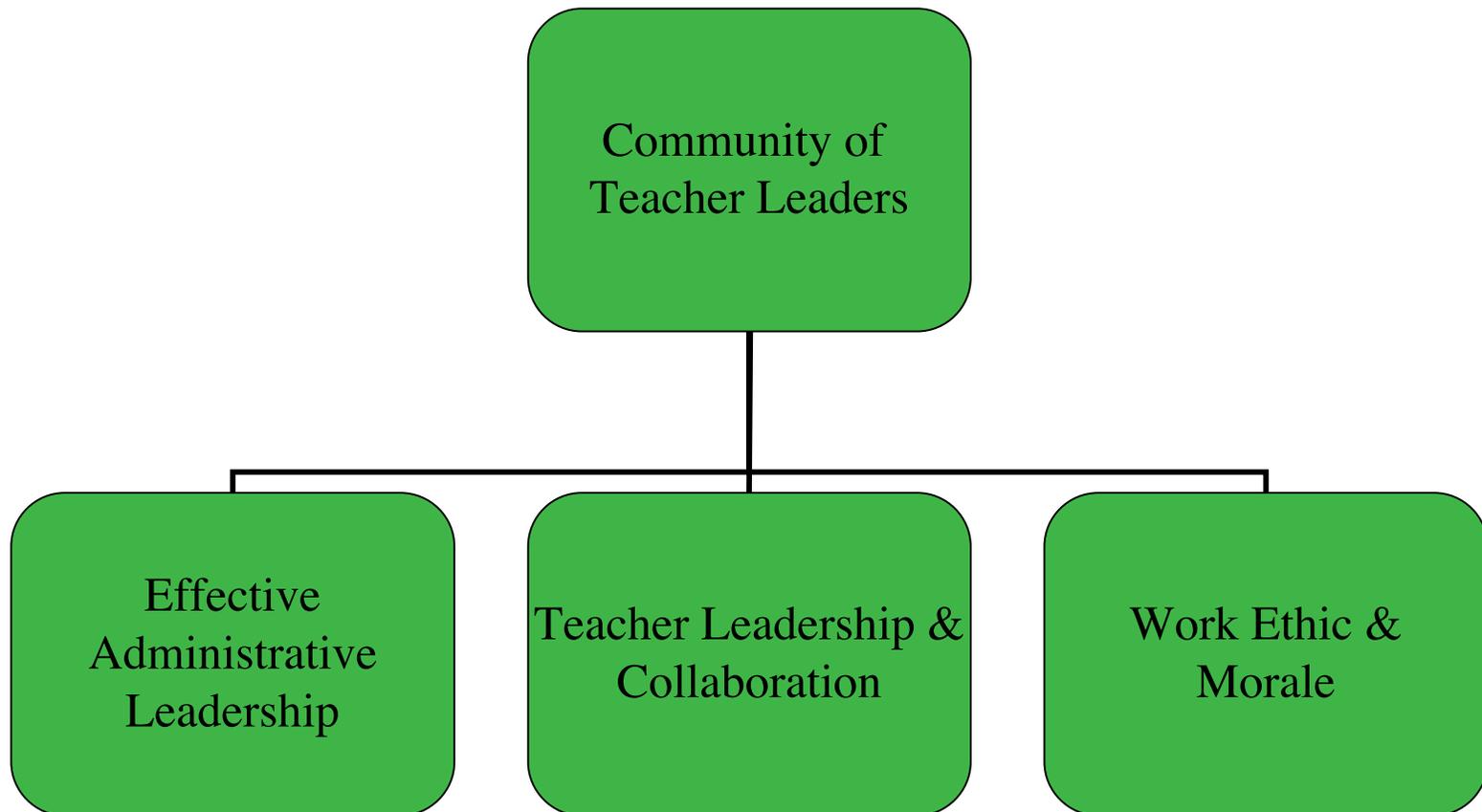➢ Based on a needs assessment and sustained over time

Adequate Instructional Resources: Materials & Support

➢ Up-to-date materials

➢ Materials for all students

➢ Support to provide supplementary instruction for struggling students

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"…the main reason for the high performance of Vanalden students is the collaboration of all the staff to work together for a common goal – student achievement."

Teri Cooke, Principal
Vanalden Elementary School
San Fernando Valley, CA

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Community of Teacher Leaders

Community of Teacher Leaders: Effective Administrative Leadership

➢ Principals fashion a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community

➢ Principals nurture and sustain a school culture and instructional program conductive to student learning and staff professional growth

➢ Principals include staff in key decisions regarding school matters, curriculum and instruction

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Community of Teacher Leaders: Teacher Leadership & Collaboration

➢ Teachers assume leadership roles by providing professional development, presenting issues to staff, or participating in interviewing & hiring

➢ Teachers participate in peer evaluations, team teaching and mentoring other teachers

➢ Teachers and specialists share responsibility for all students

➢ Teachers focus on planning lessons, assessing students, and group problem solving with a team approach
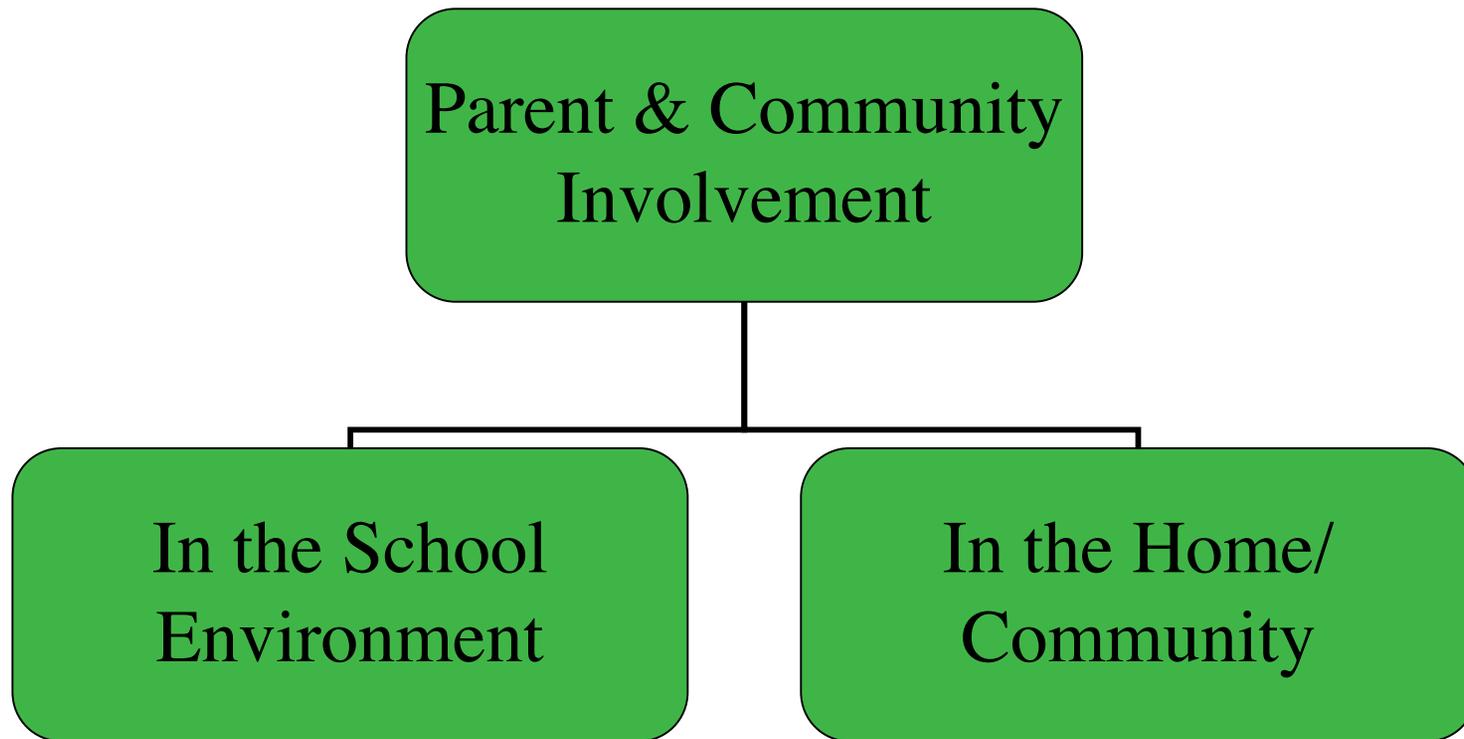
Community of Teacher Leaders: Work Ethic & Morale

➢ Teachers work "to the goal, not to the clock"

➢ Teachers foster a culture of responsibility and ownership

➢ Staff does not blame students or make an issue of the fact that students are low-income

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"…students, parents, and teachers all sign a commitment to do whatever it takes to learn."

Michael Feinberg, Principal
KIPP Academy
Houston, TX

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Parent & Community Involvement

Parent & Community Involvement: In the School Environment

➢ Parents and community members have an active voice and involvement in the school improvement process

➢ Staff understands the importance of parent and community involvement in the school and creates diverse opportunities for involvement

➢ Staff creates and uses business partnerships to expand the curricula

➢ Staff recruits and trains parents & community members

➢ Parents participate in and are involved in open houses, PTA events, and other school activities

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Parent & Community Involvement: In the Home/Community

- ➢ Staff establish frequent communication using a variety of means and languages
- ➢ Staff identify and implement practical ways to involve families in the learning process
- ➢ Teachers work actively with parents to make the home a center of learning
  - Establish contracts with parents to support children's efforts to learn
  - Teach parents to read to children, check homework, and ask to see assignments

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Resources

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