

THE OPPORTUNITY:
From “Brutal Facts” to the Best Schools We’ve Ever Had

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INTRODUCTION: DO WE TRULY WANT BETTER SCHOOLS?

Because organizations only improve...

“where the **truth** is told and the **brutal facts** confronted”

Jim Collins

BRUTAL FACTS:

Only 7% of low-income students will ever earn a college degree

BRUTAL FACTS:

Only **32% of our college-bound** students are adequately prepared for college

“Understanding University Success”
Center for Educational Policy Research

COLLEGE SUCCESS:

ANALYTICAL **READING & DISCUSSION**
PERSUASIVE **WRITING**

- Drawing inferences/conclusions from texts
- Analyzing conflicting source documents
- Supporting **arguments** with evidence
- Solving complex problems with no obvious answer

David Conley
College Knowledge

READ, WRITE, PROBLEM-SOLVE in Math

- Teachers need to focus on the **interplay of numbers and words**, especially on expressing quantitative relationships in **meaningful sentences**. ...to make mathematics meaningful, the **three Rs** must be well blended in each student's mind

Lynn Steen

READ, WRITE, PROBLEM-SOLVE in Math

- Read about, write & solve problems involving percents, ratios and proportions, simple and compound interest, maps and scale drawings
- interpretations of bar, line and circle graphs
- interpretations and analyses of statistical data

Littleton High School

COLLEGE and LIFE SUCCESS DEPEND ON...

- “The TEACHER EFFECT makes all other differences pale in comparison”
William Sanders
- Five years of **effective teaching** can completely close the gap between low-income students and others.

Marzano; Kain & Hanushek

IMPACT of TEACHING

- Mortimore & Sammons: **teaching** has 6 to 10 times as much impact as other factors
- Dylan Wiliam: 400% “speed of learning” differences

REALITY CHECK

- **“Effective practices never take root** in more than a small proportion of classrooms and schools”
Tyack and Cuban
- **“Effective teaching is quite different** from the teaching that is typically found in most classrooms”
Odden and Kelley

BRUTAL FACTS

- **After decades of reform, we still DO NOT INSPECT instruction, i.e.:**
 1. **WHAT we teach** (essential standards)
or
 2. **HOW we teach** (effective lessons/units)Gordon; Elmore; Marzano; Tyack & Cuban; Hess; Berliner
The case of **SEAN CONNORS**

EFFECTIVE LESSON: WHAT & HOW

- **Clarity @ essential standard** being learned that day (“introductory paragraphs”; “infer character”)
- **“Scaffolded” (step-by-step) instruction**
 - Modeling → “guided practice”
 - **“Check for understanding”/formative assessment** *between each step or “chunk”*
 - **Models/exemplars:** students studied these in pairs
- **Engagement/on-task behavior**—students monitored/called on randomly
- Students write own intro. paragraph...
only when most/all students are ready

Hunter; Popham; Fisher and Fry; Marzano; Burns

WHY IS MOST TEACHING MEDIOCRE?

- “The administrative superstructure of schools ... exists to **‘buffer’ teaching from OUTSIDE INSPECTION**”

Richard Elmore

YOU CAN'T **EXPECT** WHAT YOU DON'T **INSPECT**

Peter Senge

PRIMARY TASK: Improve WHAT and HOW we teach

- I. REPLACE “IMPROVEMENT PLANNING” WITH TEAM-BASED EFFORTS TO IMPROVE **WHAT IS TAUGHT** and **HOW WELL**
- II. **“GUARANTEED & VIABLE CURRICULUM”** (“WHAT”)
- III. SIMPLIFY **“LEADERSHIP”**
- IV. RADICALLY REDEFINE **LITERACY INSTRUCTION**

I. FIRST: TYPICAL “STRATEGIC” or “IMPROVEMENT PLANNING” MODELS...

SUCK

organizations into

- superficial; time-consuming
- counterproductive, distracting actions that **PREVENT**

the emergence of authentic professional learning communities (by that or any other name)

I. LEARNING COMMUNITIES: AN ASTONISHING CONCURRENCE

“The **most promising strategy** for sustained, substantive school improvement is building the capacity of school personnel to function as a **professional learning community.**”

Milbrey McLaughlin (cited in *Professional Learning Communities at Work* by Dufour and Eaker)

AUTHENTIC TEAM-BASED

PLCs:

plan lesson/unit → teach it → assess its impact → adjust instruction

- **Amphi High:** Thesis statement/introduction
- **Adlai Stevenson:** Physics: how a rainbow works
- **Lake Havasu High School:** Operations with negative & positive integers

II. “GUARANTEED & VIABLE CURRICULUM”

How important is this?

The **NUMBER ONE FACTOR**

for increasing levels of learning

Marzano; Porter; Lezotte

II. GUARANTEED...?

- Do America's schools now ensure that a "guaranteed & viable curriculum" **actually gets taught?**

II. GUARANTEED & VIABLE CURRICULUM? BRUTAL FACTS:

- ROSENHOLTZ: teachers provide a "self-selected jumble" of standards
- BERLINER/WALBERG: **wild variation** from teacher to teacher; no alignment with agreed-upon, viable curriculum standards or assessments
- LITTLE; SIZER; ALLINGTON; CALKINS: "**curricular chaos**" in English & language arts

II. GUARANTEED CURRICULUM: MAP the STANDARDS*

- 1st quarter: NUMBER SENSE
DATA ANALYSIS & PROBABILITY
- 2ND quarter: PATTERNS, ALGEBRA & FUNCTIONS
GEOMETRY
- 3rd quarter: MEASUREMENT & DISCRETE MATH
MATHEMATICAL STRUCTURE/LOGIC
- 4th quarter: **REVIEW: for YEAR END ASSESSMENT**

END OF EACH QUARTER: common assessment...with ample **intellectually rich, college-prep component**

III. LEADERSHIP in the Professional Learning Community

- “No institution can survive if it needs **geniuses or supermen** to manage it. It must be organized to get along under a leadership of average human beings.”

Peter Drucker

MONITORING 1. INSTRUCTION and 2. GUARANTEED & VIABLE CURRICULUM

- **LEADERS** (administrators, dept. heads) must
 - 1.** Conduct at least one **unannounced classroom walk-through each month**, looking for schoolwide patterns of strength/weakness with regard to...
 - Clear focus on **essential** standards
 - College prep: critical reasoning/higher-order reading, writing, thinking
 - Essential elements of an effective lesson

September: “4 of 15 classes teaching essential standards”

October: “__ of 15 classes...” (SMART goal)

LEADERSHIP: Team Management for “GUARANTEED & VIABLE CURRICULUM”

(D. Reeves; R. Marzano; R. DuFour)

QUARTERLY CURRICULUM REVIEW: Leaders & Teams discuss...

- **quarterly assessments** (success rate; areas of strength/weakness)
- **grade books** (lowest-scoring assessments)
- **scored work samples** (weak/strong areas)

IS THIS A FAIR, REASONABLE REQUIREMENT?



PURPOSE OF MEETINGS: to strategize & then celebrate SMALL WINS

- ___ schools with a "steering committee"
- ___ presentation to faculty/depts: case for WHAT & HOW
- ___ teams that are using meeting norms/are "productive"
- ___ # of courses for which there are 1.) quarterly "standards maps" full of intellectually-rich, college prep content and 2.) common end-of-quarter assessments (which assess intellectually-rich college-prep content)
- ___ of our 25 course-alike teams have created a **SUCCESSFUL LESSON*** (e.g. 87% succeeded)
- MARCH: 6 of 15 classrooms—essential standard being taught
- APRIL: **13 of 15** classrooms—essential standard taught!

RECOGNIZE & CELEBRATE
measurable "SMALL WINS" to overcome resistance & promote MOMENTUM

The #1 LEVER FOR IMPROVING MORALE AND EFFECTIVE PRACTICE
Nelson; Blasé and Kirby

- **The single best, low cost, high-leverage** way to improve performance, morale, and the climate for change is to *dramatically increase the levels of meaningful recognition for educators*

Robert Evans

RESULTS of Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum; Effective Teamwork; Frequent Recognition & Celebration

ADLAI STEVENSON HIGH SCHOOL

- 10+ years of record-breaking gains on **every** national, state & **end-of-course** assessment
- 800% increase in AP success
- Average ACT score: 21 to 25*

IV. UNPARALLELED OPPORTUNITY: LITERACY INSTRUCTION

“Under-developed literacy skills are the number one reason why students are retained, assigned to special education, given long-term remedial services and why they fail to graduate from high school.”

Ferrandino and Tirozzi: presidents of NAESP and NASSP

BRUTAL FACTS; GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY*

- “Reading and Writing vs. ‘stuff’ ratio”
- Lucy Calkins: **1/15** reading to “stuff” ratio
- “Literature based Arts and Crafts”:
 - dioramas; game boards; **worksheets**;
 - posters; presentations**; coats-of-arms;
 - mobiles; movies; cutting, pasting; designing book jackets; skits; collages

The CRAYOLA CURRICULUM

"I can only summarize the findings by saying that we've been stunned...

kids are given **more coloring assignments than mathematics and writing assignments...**

I want to repeat that, because I'm not joking, nor am I exaggerating."

Katie Haycock

HIGH SCHOOL English

■ **9th grade:** *To Kill A Mockingbird* (100 points total)

□ Draw "head or full body shot" of any character—use "crayons, colored pencils" (20 points)

□ Create a model of Maycomb (wood, plastic or styrefoam) (20 points)

A BETTER WAY: READ, WRITE and TALK

■ After **close reading** of innumerable books and articles, students

"wrote and talked, wrote and talked"

their way toward understanding.

Mike Rose: *Lives on the Boundary*

WRITING: IMPORTANT?

- Writing is the **litmus paper of thought** ...the very **CENTER OF SCHOOLING**

Ted Sizer

*Writing aids in cognitive development to such an extent that the **upper reaches of Bloom's taxonomy could not be reached** without the use of some form of writing .*

Kurt and Farris 1990

WRITING: in Math

I can no longer imagine teaching math without making writing an integral aspect of students' learning

Marilyn Burns

WRITING: in Math

Students write explanations and descriptions for any math concept they are taught, e.g.

- 3rd graders: write explanation for the concept of "equally likely"
- 4th graders: write about how multiplication and division are similar and different
- 5th graders: at certain junctures in fractions unit, students write short essay on "What I Know About Fractions So Far"

Marilyn Burns

WRITING: in Math

ANY GRADE LEVEL

- I think that the answer is _____ .
- I think this because _____.
- I figured this out by _____

SIMPLE STEPS → MAJOR REVOLUTION: EACH QUARTER

DEVELOP ARGUMENTS/PROPOSALS:

- **SCIENCE:**
 - PRO/CON: Drill in Arctic National Wildlife Refuge
 - Environmental sustainability
- **HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES:**
 - Immigration reform
 - Evaluation of two presidents
 - Case for liberal/conservative policy/politics

THE YELLOW BRICK ROAD

- Coherent, common **curriculum**
- Reasonably good, mostly whole-class **lessons** every day
- Sufficient quantities of **purposeful**
 - **Reading**
 - **Discussion:** in pairs, groups and seminars
 - **Writing**
