MISSION
The Mission of the Academy is to promote the interests of urban education in both public and private schools and universities in the Metropolitan area.

VISION
The Vision of the Academy is to create an AGORA for the exchange of ideas among educators who wish to encourage and uphold the promotion of the highest standards and ideals of Public Education in the Greater New York Metropolitan area.
It seems as if 2016 is the year for change. So many things are happening throughout the world that have never happened before or, at least, not in recent memory. Glaciers are melting across the Arctic; water levels are rising along the oceanic coasts; new sea life is being discovered in the oceans’ depths; there are both Republican and Democratic Presidential Primaries; a reversal by the Board of Regents on both testing and the Common Core; and a new section in our Professional Journal!

As an added feature this year, we are including articles that may not necessarily be research articles but have a special message for our readers and members. These articles do not contain a reference section and, as such, would not normally be included in our research journal. Consideration for this section developed after receiving a comment from a member of the Academy to include articles that might not be full research articles but do have merit in the educational world. Since they are not research-based, they have not been peer edited, as have our full length articles. They are also a bit shorter than our research articles and can be found towards the back of this Journal in the section entitled “Short Takes/Opinion”.

Each year, we seem to expand not only in size but also in demographics. For the first time, this year we have articles authored by individuals from outside the United States. It should be interesting to read about the concerns of other countries and compare them to what we, as an educational community, may take for granted.

In my message last year, I spoke about organizations. It seems that individuals of the present do not feel the obligation to become members of an organization. All organizations are feeling the results: professional, service, religious and many other types. If you are reading this Journal and are not a member of The New York Academy of Public Education, I ask that you please consider filing an application for membership. You may find an interactive application on our website, www.nyape.org. There, you will find a little bit about the history of the Academy, as well as eligibility.

Once again, I would like to thank the contributing authors of this Professional Journal and the Peer Review Team who have tirelessly devoted many hours to ensure a quality product. As I say each year, it seems that every Journal is bigger and better than the previous year’s edition. This Journal is no exception. Please read through it, devour the content and, if you wish, contact the authors for more information, or comment about your feelings. Many of our authors have provided their contact information for this purpose.

Finally, if I may, I would like to leave you with this thought. Please contact me with your comments about what we are including in the Professional Journal. If you like it, say something – if you do not, also say something. You can do this in the form of a Letter to the Editor and send it to me at the email address listed below. Also, encourage colleagues to contribute an article or two to future editions of the Professional Journal of the New York Academy of Public Education.

Respectfully,
John C. Jangl, Ed.D.
Editor-in-Chief
Triadedu@aol.com
As President of the New York Academy of Public Education I want to thank everyone who works to see that there is equity in education. Over the past few years we have been hearing a lot about school choice in education. Do all of our children have an opportunity to go to the best schools? Every family should have the opportunity to have their child go to the finest schools. The question is how we create an educational system that does this.

Public education means a tuition-free, publicly funded system that provides an education to each child in a neighborhood school within a publicly governed school system. What needs to be added to this definition is “a system that provides a great education to each child”. My hope is that we not only continue to provide a free education to all children but that we figure out how to give every family access to great schools.

In my message last year, I spoke to the changes that would be coming this school year. Change in standards, change in structures, change in supports, change in systems, change in personnel, change in evaluations, change in funding and changes in our approach to educate our children. We now have a new State Education Commissioner and a new Chancellor of the State Board of Regents. Both support changes to State testing, Common Core, funding for schools and how we help low performing schools. We are now waiting to see the result of these changes. Will these changes better serve our children? Although we are experiencing many changes again in our profession, we must not let changes distract us from keeping our focus on educating our children. Sometimes changes are necessary to improve systems. Let’s hope these changes are in the best interest of our students and help our families have better access to great schools.

On behalf of the New York Academy of Public Education and the members of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank Dr. John Jangl for his contribution to the publication of our Professional Journal.

Respectfully,
Louis Pavone
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The School Choice Movement’s Schisms, Explained

Michael J. Petrilli

As my Fordham colleague David Griffith wrote late last year in a post accompanying the release of The Best (and Worst) Cities for School Choice, resistance to the spread of parental choice in education is futile. The genie is out of the bottle, and there’s no going back. That’s not to say that political resistance from some quarters will simply die down, or that we’ll proceed without setbacks. Far from it. But as choice in general and charter schooling in particular continue to grow, they build formidable constituencies. Nobody is marching across the Brooklyn Bridge to defend Common Core or standardized testing. But parents whose children benefit from choice are not going to surrender it without a fight.

The most important questions about school choice are no longer “whether,” but “how” and “where” and “which kinds” and “how many.” And the most interesting debates are no longer waged between choice advocates and opponents, but within the school choice movement itself. Just like the raging family feuds within each of our political parties, the divisions are real. And they run deep. That’s because the movement’s “big tent” now has factions in its various folds and corners that agree on parental choice but little else. On the occasion of National School Choice Week, let me attempt to name and depict the three tribes of the school choice movement.

1. Choice Purists. These folks—mainly freedom-loving libertarians—strongly support two of the three principles that have long defined charter schooling: parental choice and school autonomy. They are all for “parent power.” But they reject results-based accountability because if conflicts with the will of parents and the right of schools to serve their customers as they think best. (It may also warp schools’ approaches to curriculum, coerced as they may be to teach to standardized tests.) Not surprisingly, they prefer the less regulated forms of school choice—Education Savings Accounts and tax credit scholarship programs especially—but are lukewarm on charters. While this clique is best represented in free-market think tanks, it is increasingly influential in our politics, thanks to gains by the Tea Party.

2. Choice Nannies. This second group supports parental choice, and accountability for results, but is only half-heartedly committed to school autonomy. Some of these folks are simply bureaucrats—one-time district officials who now find themselves working in charter school authorizing shops or state policy offices. At the first sign of trouble, their inclinations turn to micromanagement (in the guise of “greater oversight”); when screening charter applicants, they look for the safe and trusted. But a subset of Nannies comes from within the choice movement itself: advocates who espouse “parent power” but also have strong opinions about practices that should or shouldn’t be allowed in schools of choice. (Tough-love approaches to school discipline, especially.)

3. Choice Realists. This final group buys into all three principles that have long defined charter schooling: parental choice, school-level autonomy, and results-based accountability. (Many are also eager to apply these principles to vouchers and other publicly funded private school choice programs.) They understand that there are tradeoffs at play. Closing fully enrolled charter schools due to low performance is a violation of parental preferences. But because education is a public good and not just a private one, they contend that such stern actions are not only justifiable, but necessary. They don’t just want happy customers, they want better outcomes for society—especially for its most vulnerable children. At the same time, they worry when regulators cloak their impulse to micromanage in the language of “accountability,” since they’re also concerned that schools maintain true operational freedom and the ability to innovate. They defend the right of schools to engage in practices with which they might disagree, so long as they are getting good results and attracting ample families.

It should be obvious by now that I belong to the tribe of Choice Realists. (I’m also a Reform Realist on federal policy. I love realism!) Not surprisingly, I find the arguments of both the other choice factions unconvincing and even dysfunctional. Here’s why.

Start with the Purists. I’m skeptical of all utopian visions, including theirs—one imagining that a full-fledged system of choice (perhaps through universal Education Savings Accounts) will yield greater innovation, productivity, and customer satisfaction—and
produce better-educated young people to boot. But I’m also worried, in the here and now, about low-quality private and charter schools that prey on low-income families like payday lenders do. I’m happy to let schools stay open so long as they demonstrate solid outcomes for kids and basic financial responsibility with taxpayer dollars. But for the Purists, that’s a Brooklyn Bridge too far. It doesn’t help their case that some of the most unscrupulous providers in today’s marketplace hide behind the “parent power” language (and organizations) to keep their lights on and profits intact.

As for the Nannies: These folks underestimate the importance of cutting the Gordian Knot that inspired charter schooling in the first place. They seem to believe that the only reason district schools struggle is because of onerous union contracts, or a political atmosphere in which parents have too little power. Solve for those problems, they assume, and the rest takes care of itself. They don’t seem to understand that the web of conflicting mandates that advocates have placed on the schools over the years—usually under the “equity” banner—are what make it next to impossible for schools to truly run themselves, much less innovate: “Do this on special education. Don’t do that with English language learners. Here’s what’s allowed on discipline. Here’s what’s not. Don’t let any of your impacts be disparate. Here’s where you can’t.”

Great schools of choice aren’t government schools with a smidgen of autonomy and some freedom for parents to opt in. They’re truly independent nonprofit organizations that are entrusted to use their judgment about how best to deal with difficult questions of practice.

Is there anything to be done about these schisms in the school choice movement? Probably not. We’re better off with a big tent than a pup-tent, and that invariably means pulling in people with different ideologies and interests. As with any dysfunctional family, we have to live with one another, whether we want to or not. But if we can understand each other better, perhaps we can more effectively work together on common cause.

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Michael J. Petrilli is president of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute and research fellow at the Hoover Institution.

52 Character Building Thoughts for Children

Leah Davies, M.Ed.

The following quotes may be used in a variety of ways by both teachers and counselors. One idea is for a thought to be posted, read, and discussed at the beginning of each week. It could then be read daily with the students. At the end of the week ask them what they learned or how the thought applied to their lives or activities during the week. Have the children give written or oral examples, or have them draw a picture to illustrate their ideas.

1. How I look is not as important as how I act.
2. I treat others the way I want them to treat me.
3. I am a good sport; I follow the rules, take turns and play fair.
4. It is okay to laugh at funny things, but not to laugh at others.
5. I do not gossip; if I cannot say anything helpful, I do not say anything at all.
6. When I am sad, I help myself feel better by thinking of things that are good in my life.
7. In order to have friends, I must act in a kind way.
8. I believe that I am someone who can do important things.
9. What I say and how I say it tells others the kind of person I am.
10. I appreciate my family, my teachers, and my school.
11. I treat everyone with respect.
12. When I listen, I show others that I care about them.
13. I am being a good citizen when I volunteer to help others.
14. I think for myself and make smart choices that are good for me.
15. Each day offers a new start to do my best.
16. I try to understand what my friends are feeling.
17. Everyone makes mistakes, so instead of getting angry with myself, I try to do better.
18. I do not give up; I keep trying until I can do my work.
19. Sharing with others makes me feel good and makes them feel good too.
20. I work out my problems without hurting myself or others.
21. I am being polite when I wait for my turn and say please and thank you.
22. When I smile at people, they usually smile back.
23. I encourage my friends to do their best.
24. My values guide me to do what is right.
25. I am honest; I do not cheat or steal.
26. When I am angry, I use self-control and do not hurt others.
27. I am being creative when I dance, draw, paint or write a poem or story.
28. I say, “No!” to things that could hurt my body like tobacco and alcohol.
29. When I do what I say I will do, I am being responsible.
30. I am grateful for what I have, so I share with others.
31. I try to learn something new each day.
32. When things do not go my way, I stop and think of what I can do to make them better.
33. I do not make fun of other children because I don’t know what their life is like.
34. I feel successful when I do my best.
35. Everyone has good and bad feelings.
36. I take care of myself by eating healthy food, exercising and getting enough rest.
37. I am being punctual when I am on time and do not keep people waiting.
38. When I cooperate with others, I get more done.
39. I follow the rules and try to make my school a better place.
40. I like to get to know children who are different from me.
41. Since I tell the truth, my friends trust me.
42. I look for what is good in others and I say what I like about them.
43. I buy only what I need and I save my money.
44. When I use my time wisely, there is usually enough time to do what I want to do.
45. I think before I act; how I act affects how others treat me.
46. Using manners helps me keep my friends.
47. I have courage to stand up for children who are teased.
49. I am me -- I do not try to be like someone else.
50. I care about living things on earth so I recycle and do not litter.
51. When I write down what I think and feel, I learn about myself.
52. I plan ahead and think about what I want to do when I grow up.

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6 Ways to Implement a Real Multicultural Education in the Classroom

Matthew Lynch

Most American citizens are proud of our “melting pot” status. After all, how many of us refer to ourselves as one ethnicity or another, and not just an “American”? It is a source of familial pride for us. Even African Americans, who do not always have an Ellis Island story in the family history, find collective strength in the stories of their ancestors and what it means for their lives today. While this blending of cultures can most definitely be a blessing—it can also be a curse. With more diversity than ever, teachers have to adjust methods from one student to the next, and from one year to the next. Multiculturalism is about more than a classroom with varied skin color—it includes careful examination of the neighborhoods, parenting styles and general experiences that shape each and every K-12 student.

In this article, I want to take a look at several ways to encourage a real multicultural education in our schools.

1. Define multiculturalism. Multicultural education is a progressive approach for transforming education based on educational equality and social justice. The components required in educating a multicultural education are content integrations, prejudice reduction, empowering school culture and social culture. These components all connect and require attention as they relate to the efforts of conflict resolution in today’s world. What kids learn in their classroom environments when it comes to interactions with those who are different from them translates into how well they will manage life in the global marketplace.

In the last century, there has been an increase in global mutual acceptance of opposing views and different cultures—though arguably, there is still a long way to go. Specifically, when it comes to America, it is crucial that multicultural education exist with the increasing number of students who speak a second language and come from somewhere else. Diversity exists even within mainstream society and students need to have the communication life skills that multicultural education promotes.

2. Observe your students closely, and value your real-life experience of diversity over the textbook version. David Kolb created a four-step model for really understanding the needs of a particular student group. He starts with concrete experience, adds reflective observation, and then moves to abstract conceptualization and active experimentation.

In other words, multicultural education cannot be taught in a textbook. It must be developed by each educator based on a particular student group.

3. Learn your students’ learning styles. Teachers can help students discover their academic strengths by helping them discover their own learning style. In this way, students discover what method of comprehension works best for them based on their own backgrounds and personalities. If educators make this learning style quest a class project, an inherent lesson in multiculturalism is taught.

4. Encourage your students to be proud of their heritage. Educators should look for ways to emphasize the differences between students in a positive light. This might mean writing essays on family background or partnering with other students to help each other develop projects that accent the culture of the other. This can include prompts that look back on family history for generations, or could ask students to look at their
5. Be aware of your biases. In order to fully understand the significance of multiculturalism in the classroom, educators must first thoroughly examine their own cultural beliefs, values, and biases. Then prospective educators are ready to begin learning about other cultures—to become familiar with their values, traditions, communication styles, learning preferences, contributions to society, and relationship patterns of their future students. While some of this education can be achieved by simply reading about cultural diversity, it is difficult to truly substitute for genuine interaction and discourse with members of students’ cultures.

While book knowledge about diverse cultural groups can be important to a certain extent when designing lesson plans and educational materials, one of the most important reasons for truly learning about the cognitive patterns of cultural groups is that the interpersonal attitudes and behaviors of diverse students can be effectively interpreted in terms of the culture that they are entrenched in. Traditional teaching environments force students from those and other groups to modify their thought and behavior patterns to fit standard European-American norms or else face academic and behavioral consequences. In a culturally responsive classroom, the onus is instead placed on the instructor to learn about and adapt to the cultural intricacies of the students that they teach.

6. Create assignments that celebrate multiculturalism. If used cleverly, classroom assignments can provide a primary window into a student’s cultural beliefs. Writing assignments can play a significant role in gathering information about student thought patterns and tendencies. Interviews with family members, assignments asking students to write about learning experiences that occur outside of school, and assignments involving family stories and traditions all can play a significant role in unearthing information about a student’s cultural heritage. Students’ parents can often be solicited as sources of useful personal information, and visiting the neighborhoods where diverse students live can help give educators an idea about the level of social support present and the types of challenges that the student might face outside of the classroom.

There are many ways that educators can approach multiculturalism in K-12 classrooms but the first step is recognizing its importance. How do you adjust to and promote multiculturalism in your classrooms?

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**Learning Soft Skills In Childhood Can Prevent Harder Problems Later**

*Lynne Shallcross*

Academic learning is usually in the spotlight at school, but teaching elementary-age students “soft” skills like self-control and how to get along with others might help to keep at-risk kids out of criminal trouble in the future, a study finds.

Duke University researchers looked at a program called Fast Track, which was started in the early 1990s for children who were identified by their teachers and parents to be at high risk for developing aggressive behavioral problems. The students were randomized into two groups; half took part in the intervention, which included a teacher-led curriculum, parent training groups, academic tutoring and lessons in self-control and social skills. The program, which lasted from first grade through 10th grade, reduced delinquency, arrests and use of health and mental health services as the students aged through adolescence and young adulthood, as researchers explained in a separate study published earlier this year. Impact of Early Intervention on Psychopathology, Crime, and Well-Being at Age 25

This study provides evidence for the efficacy of early intervention in preventing adult psychopathology among high-risk early-starting conduct-problem children. In the latest study, researchers looked at the “why” behind those previous findings. In looking at the data from nearly 900 students, the researchers found that about a third of the impact on future crime outcomes was due to the social and self-regulation skills the students learned from ages 6 to 11.

The academic skills that were taught as part of Fast Track turned out to have less of an impact on crime and delinquency rates than did the soft skills, which are associated with emotional intelligence. Soft skills might include teaching kids to work cooperatively in a group or teaching them how to think about the long-term consequences when they make a decision. Teaching physics is an example of a hard skill.

“The conclusion that we would make is that these [soft] skills should be emphasized even more in our education system and in our system of socializing children,” says Kenneth Dodge, a professor of public policy and of psychology and neuroscience at Duke who was a principal investigator in this study as well as in the original Fast Track project. Parents should do all they can to promote these skills with their children, Dodge says, as should education policymakers.

“To the extent we can improve those skills, we can improve outcomes in delinquency and juvenile crime,”
Forgiveness, A Cheat Code for Leadership
Kathryn Fishman-Weaver

My former supervisor (and friend) Jake is a smart guy. Several years ago when I launched a large-scale retreat for high school students, I asked him to speak to the group. He gave a lecture called Cheat Codes for Life. I am not sure Jake has ever played a video game, so I appreciated the irony. Jake spoke to our students about: pursuing what brings you joy, getting enough sleep, living simply, and... the importance of forgiveness. This last item, forgiveness, caught me by surprise. Jake did not spend a lot of time elaborating on the concept. He simply said that time was too short to spend it holding grudges. “You need to learn to forgive and move on.”

After his lecture I started paying attention to the way forgiveness played out in my professional and personal life. I noticed for instance, that my husband and I had done a great job teaching our children to apologize when they made a mistake. In fact, we were pretty vigilant about this. Not only did we ask our children to apologize, they also had to own up to their mistake and offer to do something to help the situation or person involved. What we had failed to do, was talk about how forgiveness factored into mistake-making. Suddenly, this seemed like a pretty huge oversight. How can we teach our children that it is okay to make mistakes if we don’t teach them about forgiveness? What is the best way to teach any new concept? Modeling. I knew some serious self-reflection would have to follow.

Growing up in an interfaith family, my colleagues might assume that I had double the opportunities to learn about forgiveness. I probably did, but I missed it... twice. As a perfectionist, anything to do with mistake-making was (okay, is) a challenge for me. However, until Jake’s lecture, I had never thought about forgiveness as essential to happiness, community, or productivity. Since this was Jake’s idea, I watched him at work. I’ll use my own imperfections as an example (which as a perfectionist feels pretty vulnerable). I forgot to turn in a professional development form two weeks ahead of the training date. I lost the receipt for a Thanksgiving charity dinner. I didn’t copy all the right people on a planning email. All of these mistakes caused Jake more work. Here is what I noticed.

He didn’t spend any time belaboring the mistake. Instead, he was gracious. It was clear that I understood that I had made an error and could think through how to avoid that mistake next time. I am also certain, he kept no record of these shortcomings. In the grand scheme of the important work I was doing to support student achievement and student culture, these were what my
grandmother would have called small potatoes. Instead, Jake spent his energy on moving the situation forward. (e.g. “Let’s just see if we can get another receipt.”) This made the situation more productive and less stressful for everyone.

I decided to apply this philosophy to my teaching. While I had always tried to teach with an ethic of care and compassion, I had not specifically considered the ways I invited, modeled, or taught forgiveness in my classroom. This led to my forgiveness experiment. When students made interpersonal mistakes, I challenged myself to apply forgiveness to the situation. I found, the vast majority of the time, my students (just like me) knew when they had made a mistake. Sometimes they needed help apologizing. When I explored this with them, I found my students were often worried about forgiveness. This meant I needed to be more intentional in modeling it.

As I did so, I found that forgiveness was the critical vehicle that gave us permission to both make things right and move forward with grace. Forgiveness was not a free pass from consequences, but the consequences that mattered most tended to be the natural ones that emerged without much action on the part of a parent, teacher, or leader. Ultimately, the forgiveness experiment influenced the ways I taught, parented, and led.

A few years later, I moved out of the classroom and into educational administration. There, I try to apply these same lessons to my interactions with students, families, and staff. As it turns out, I have plenty of opportunities to practice. Each week, there are countless small ways we all mess up: someone is short with a colleague; someone forgets to file the right paper; someone attacks the person (verbally) instead of the idea; a parent blames a support person for an error actually made by their child; we run out of time in the meeting for someone to share all of the information they had prepared. Feelings are hurt. Projects are stalled. As a leader, there are many ways I might handle these situations. I could ignore the problems. I could lecture. I could hold a grudge. I could patronize. I could keep a score of mistakes. I could belabor the error instead of the solution. However, none of these approaches would move us forward, contribute to a positive culture in our school district, or reflect my own leadership values. So instead I try to do the opposite: I acknowledge when a project doesn’t go the way we want; I listen; I focus on moving forward; I communicate with kindness; I keep track of successes instead of failures; I offer to help us do better next time. And then, when I fall short of all of these best practices (which I inevitably do), I appreciate the ways my staff extends me this same grace.

As educational leaders consider scaling forgiveness in their schools and districts, I do want to offer a caution. Privileging forgiveness is not synonymous with condoning complacency. Sometimes (though not often) the mistakes made in our schools or organizations involve such high levels of incompetence or intolerance, that the natural consequences are significant. While this piece addresses smaller or “everyday mistakes,” my hope is that aspects of the forgiveness experiment can generalize to more macro cases. I speculate that cultivating forgiveness in everyday school interactions could be a proactive measure against some of those higher level mistakes that result in more significant natural consequences (e.g. resignation). When moving past mistakes whether in the classroom, central office, or state educational department, a culture of forgiveness requires admitting mistakes, accepting natural consequences, learning collaboratively, and focusing on moving forward with hope, healing, and grace.

I would like for my school district to make good on this practice. As we work through the small stressful, annoying, and difficult mistakes that happen in all workplaces, I challenge us to invite a culture of forgiveness into these interactions. I’ve learned that most of us know pretty quickly when we’ve messed up. However, the unknown is often how others (and particularly, our leaders) will respond to these mistakes. How can our districts keep their focus on solutions instead of errors? How can we help our staff and students move forward with grace? The answer is usually pretty simple. I find that if I plug in forgiveness, the solutions sort themselves out. I suppose, Jake was right; forgiveness really is a cheat code, and it is helping my school district level up.

Reprinted with permission from Kathryn Fishman-Weaver, Ph.D.

Kathryn Fishman-Weaver, Ph.D. is the Director of Academic Affairs and Engagement for Mizzou K-12, a global consortium of online, blended, and co-taught schools and school partnerships. An earlier version of this piece was first published in Dr. Fishman-Weaver’s LinkedIn series on educational leadership.
Perfecting Distributed Leadership in Schools

Benson Ferrari

If there’s one sentence from this post that sums it up, it’s this: “Look for the players who will pass the ball to you when you’re near the penalty box, rather than the players who’ll take a futile shot at the keeper from the halfway line.”

As a current doctoral researcher, classroom teacher and senior leader, I recognize the conflicts and dichotomies that often occur between theory and practice. The nature of the global education market, complexity of school regulatory compliance and the demands of a modern society call for effective distributed leadership in schools - that is beyond doubt in my mind. Distributed leadership in its simplest sense is leadership which is shared across a variety of members of the organization, where it is exercised across tasks rather than purely by position. It receives various names from different theorists, all with their own slightly different take on the concept. It focuses on achieving the aims of the organization, drawing on the skills of all individuals and the finding of a common agenda between people of different job roles, experience and organizational situation. It utilizes people more efficiently and develops them more rapidly, generally making use of more horizontal management structures than vertical. Leadership stems from the team rather than from individuals and therefore should unite various different groups into a harmonic chorus. Clearly, a leadership strategy which focuses on achieving the aims of the organization is an essential part of delivering success for all stakeholders, parents and pupils. It is however an approach that will only flourish when steps are taken to make it successful. There is a misnomer that distributed leadership involves blanket freewill and extended negotiation - whilst these can be aspects of the approach that are at specific times valuable, they should be applied in a measured way.

If not already in place, it is a leadership style which is most easily adopted in settings where there are already a range of effective structures, systems and people who are working in synergy. Where, in my view, it has the potential to be a disaster are settings that need urgent, sustained or immediate development and improvement. In such situations, there simply isn’t time for a highly consultative approach and sometimes the management of commercial risk calls for decisive, bold and confident decision making by leaders. For example, when implementing a new policy related to the welfare, health and safety of pupils, it is a time critical and basically essential activity - there is a need to shorten what can be protracted, committee-based scrutiny. Although theorists have largely moved on from the original theory of situational leadership as a whole, its headline that there is no ‘best’ style of leadership still carries some weight and that leadership style should vary according to the specifics of the organization in question. I would suggest that they key consideration here is how successful the organization is already.

Here’s how to make this vital leadership style successful and result in well-run, highly regarded, top performing schools:
1) Distributed leadership relies on having team members who are committed to the aims of the organization. This is a basic and fundamental requirement; those who don’t subscribe to your school’s aims should look to move on. Identify those who do support the aims by asking them what they contribute which makes the organization successful. Those who can articulate this are tuned into the overall vision.
2) Share out responsibilities according to individual strengths, track record and personal potential. Do it on a hunch and you will likely run into problems. Whilst distributed leadership is task orientated, employment law is largely position orientated, so recognize the need to do things formally and officially when it comes to reorganizing roles for success.
3) When reconfiguring or reforming an existing or traditional structure, resist the urge to act until you’ve taken sufficient time to evaluate the current situation. Acting too soon can leave you with stubborn problems by not following step 2 above!
4) Avoid rewarding good performance purely through the approaches common to transactional leadership. Although there need to be consequences for not reaching the required standard, try to understand why this has happened before giving admonishment. You might find that restrictions you have imposed yourself have caused others to not succeed. Transactional leadership alone leads to apathy, but neglect accountability at your peril.
5) Clear roles and responsibilities are a vital starting point. That’s not to say that they won’t evolve, because they should do according to organizational change, but starting out with nothing will only lead to confusion and finger pointing. Configure what is a good starting point, according to the strengths of your team and the short, medium and long-term priorities of the school.
6) Identify those motivated by your school’s cause and give them the space to grow, but relegate ruthless empire builders and those who mainly place their personal needs over those of the organization to the subs’ bench. As suggested previously, look for those who will pass the ball to you when you’re near the penalty box, rather than take a futile shot at the keeper themselves from the halfway line. Surround yourself with those who a
personally and emotionally secure enough to not get caught up in mixed priorities, but yet are prepared to acknowledge mistakes and know what to do differently next time. Teachers who cannot satisfactorily balance their priorities between school, pupils and parents are a hazard.

7) Use self-evaluation and development planning to identify how ALL can make a contribution towards the aims of the school. Is there any particular group left out? Is there a gap in the current knowledge base? Equip and empower those who need it with appropriate training and ensure those with literally a ‘burden’ of expertise share it to others. Those who doggedly hold onto knowledge are not actually in tune with your school’s aims. Corporate success is everyone’s success after all.

8) Where you’ve got a need for urgent, sustained or immediate school improvement, accept that distributed leadership will come in time, but that a more authoritative stance is needed until excellence is reached. Too many schools which need to undergo improvement flounder when their leadership strategy encourages endless negotiation, when the priorities are obvious to everyone else and there are easy wins to be achieved.

9) Ensure that, commensurate with the principles of transformational leadership, you identify how to adapt as an organization through collaboration with employees. It is critical to connect the employees’ individual identities to the organizational identity and give them a strong role model to aspire to or respect. This enables them to take more ownership and control over their work, with the leader shepherding them towards areas that they can be successful in, whilst covering any gaps which emerge. The word ‘credibility’ stems to mind, in other words providing direction which is understood, realistic, yet challenging and achievable.

10) Last of all and perhaps most critically, know when to cast the net more narrowly. There will be many projects that need targeted, precise and directive leadership in order to succeed, on time and on budget. A move towards distributed leadership does not forfeit the ability of the overall leader (Head) to specify and instruct individuals or small groups with particular projects. The greatest, silent danger of distributed leadership is group apathy, where nobody acts because the incentive to do so has passed or is too minimal. You can avoid reaching this point by again ensuring clear division of roles and not always giving out jobs at the team level. Maintain a sense of duty to the role, as in the traditional sense, but qualified by the need to respond to the tasks in hand.

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“A leader’s job is not to do the work for others, it’s to help others figure out how to do it themselves, to get things done, and to succeed beyond what they thought possible.”

-Simon Sinek
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Diverse Students & Non-Diverse Teachers

From 2001 to 2011, White students enrolled in prekindergarten through 12th grade in U.S. public schools decreased, from 28.7 to 25.6 million (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2014), from 2012 to 2023, White students’ share of enrollment is expected to decline 45%. Hispanic enrollment is expected to increase, to represent 30% of total enrollment in 2023. The Asian or Pacific Islander enrollment is also expected to increase, from 2.5 million to 2.9 million, with an enrollment share in 2023 projected to be 5%. Black or African American student enrollment, however, is expected to fluctuate between 7.6 and 7.8 million, representing a projected slight decrease from 17% in 2001 to 15% in 2023 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014).

White students are estimated to be a minority in every category of public education (Garcia & Cuellar, 2006). For several years now, statistics have predicted a minority-majority in the US as 50% of students under 18 years of age will be made up of diverse racial and ethnic groups other than White by the year 2023 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). By 2043, the U.S. Census Bureau has predicted higher birthrates among Hispanics, a slight rise in African American population growth, and a doubling in the population share of Asians by 2060 (Maxwell, 2014). Combined with the decline of birthrates among Whites, the United States will be a nation where the minorities are the majority.

Yet these students of diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds have traditionally not been served well by schools and continue to be considered at risk of dropping out or not achieving in any educational institution (Garcia & Cuellar, 2006). While the K-12 student population is increasing in diversity, however, the teaching force continues to be 84% White, female, and from middle class socioeconomic backgrounds (Fiestritzer, 2011). What will need to change to improve the academic experiences and outcomes for these students?

Closing the Achievement Gap

Rhetoric has closely tied together closing the achievement gap between majority and minority students (Goldenberg, 2014) with education reforms such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and federal pressure to accept standardized tests tied to the Common Core. Milner (2010) argued, “Focusing on an achievement gap inherently forces us to compare culturally diverse students with White students without always understanding reasons that undergird disparities and differences that exist” (p. 8). Goldenberg (2014) asserted that, instead of focusing on the achievement gap in terms of non-White students (Goldenberg is referring to urban, African-American and Hispanic students) lagging behind their White and Asian peers in educational outcomes or test scores, educators should reframe achievement as opportunity.

Viewing the achievement gap as an opportunity gap (Goldenberg, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Milner, 2010), allows considerations of not only scholastic matters, such as lack of access to quality education, but also other structures that impact success and well-being in America, such as access to health care, healthy foods, safe playgrounds, well-resourced libraries, and stable home environments. Goldenberg (2014) further argued a call for action to understand this educational disparity by examining the ways in which “students of color are consistently being denied the opportunity to receive appropriate and equitable classroom instruction” (p. 112).

It is important to note here that we find it troubling Goldenberg (2014) groups Whites and Asians together in terms of educational outcomes when much research has linked Asian students with bias, stereotypes and the Model Minority Myth, and that not all Asians and Asian Americans are the same, nor do they experience challenges and opportunity in the same ways (Lee & Zhou, 2004) “For every Chinese American or South Asian who has a college degree, the same number of Southeast Asians is still struggling to adapt to their lives in the U.S.” (Le, 2012, para 4).

As Milner (2010) stated, educators must look at the processes that lead to the outcomes, those of teaching and learning, to uncover what can be learned about the achievement gap. Then, educators can, as Goldenberg (2014) said, “renew our focus on the too often ignored salient aspects of education such as race and culture (especially cultural capital) but most importantly, do so with an open mind, an open heart, and with the utmost sense of urgency” (p. 133). In the same vein as Gold-
enberg, we call upon the conception of “habits of the heart” (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985 to inspire a vision of community life and participation, so that teachers and researchers begin thinking of all children as ours, that they have a right to be here, and they have a right to opportunities other children have enjoyed for centuries.

**Approaches to Train Teachers to Be Ready for Diverse Classroom**

How can teacher educators improve preparation of teacher education graduates to enter into diverse classrooms? After a brief review of teacher training approaches to add this question, this article offers the framework of the RICE educator, in which teachers are racially informed and culturally engaged. Previous research on developing cultural competence in teacher education for pre- and in-service teachers has informed the current framework, in which we present the importance of being racially-informed and culturally engaged (RICE) teachers.

**Cultural narratives**

In order to promote cultural sensitivity and understanding about the lives of others, cultural narratives, which are first-hand stories of authors relating their experiences and perspectives, can be used by teacher educators with their students to deepen “recognitions and understanding” (Author 1 et al., 2013c, p. 178; Author 1 et al., 2014; 2015) of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Stories that provide insight and a window into their lives that the reader may otherwise never see or know about enrich content “that might otherwise be abstract and meaningless” (Author 1 et. al., 2013c, p. 178).

Narratives, stories of our own lived experience focusing on a particular event or point in time, “capture the situated complexities” (Lyons, 2007, p. 614) that each of us go through in our lifetime. Through them we see the challenges, hardships, successes, and joys that color our existence and ascribe meaning and purpose to our life and work. When teacher candidates read the cultural narratives of an undocumented person going through the process of citizenship, they discover aspects of the legal and political process they may not have known before. When teacher candidates read of a non-native English speaker’s story of being mocked for having an accent (Author 1 et al., 2015), they can become aware of the damaging effects the mocking can have. When we allow ourselves to explore our experiences through the lenses of race, culture, language, and power, and how these may intersect with each other, whether through an investigation of our own or the experiences of others, we see the multivariate ways we are affected by our realities. Observing and reflecting on our divisions, the ways in which we differ from each other, is not so we can remain separate, but so we can see where we are similar and have common ground. Disjuncture becomes juncture, disunion becomes union, disconnect becomes a connection. The whole point of utilizing cultural narratives as a tool and teaching strategy is to make the invisible visible, to open a world and perspective that might otherwise remain closed to us. While we may never fully appreciate what it is to be a person with different experiences other than our own, it is a good start.

**Professional dispositions**

Each revelation matters toward developing a disposition that contains cross-cultural competence, a necessary 21st century skillset. Dispositional assessments may reveal in certain behaviors, attitudes, and professional countenances in pre- and in-service teachers that cause them to respond to differences in PK-12 student backgrounds in positive and affirming ways. Accreditation bodies of institutions with teacher education programs, such as CAEP (the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation), require assessments of dispositions, and it is up to university education departments to establish their own protocols for assessing them, as well as how and when to implement them (Kim et al 2013a, 2013b). A cursory look at dispositions reveals varied definitions, and in a further investigation reveals a lack of uniformity in criteria and categories for what constitutes their assessments (see Almerico, Johnston, Hewitt, & Shapiro, 2011; Borko, Liston, & Whitcomb, 2007; Diez, 2007; Shively & Misco, 2010; Sackett, 2006; Wasicko, 2007).

While assessing dispositions comes with challenges and criticisms, most faculty agree it is important to include them in teacher training programs. Notar, Riley, Taylor, Thornburg, and Cargill (2009) posited a strong correlation between teacher dispositions and the quality of their students’ learning. In this liminal era of an ever-diversifying PK-12 student population, identifying the observable and measurable behaviors, attitudes, and knowledge that are found in effective teachers “willing to exert the effort needed to ensure the classroom is a productive learning environment” (Almerico et al., 2011, p. 3) will only become more critical.

**Culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally sustaining pedagogy**

In defining her theory of culturally relevant pedagogy,
Ladson-Billings (1995) stated that it is committed to collective empowerment, that students must experience academic success, develop or maintain cultural competence, and develop a critical consciousness that allows them to be change agents by challenging the status quo. Paris (2012) furthered this idea through culturally sustaining pedagogy, in which he noted this new, expansive term requires that our pedagogies be more than responsive of or relevant to the cultural experiences and practices of young people. . . . That is, culturally sustaining pedagogy seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling. (p. 95)

Culturally sustaining pedagogy seeks an inclusive environment that goes beyond tolerance and moves the teacher toward acceptance. Michael Tyler, the author of The Skin You Live In, said in an interview (2015), “Tolerance is not a moral issue; it’s a concession of civil segregation. It’s an issue of endurance.” Acceptance, on the other hand, “requires that you actually recognize, acknowledge, and affirm someone. Only then can you fully embrace someone’s humanity. If you’re only tolerating someone’s existence, you never recognize [them], you never even have to look at them. You never have to acknowledge them, you never have to affirm them. So how do you ever get around to embracing their humanity?”

Being culturally engaged, teachers employ a worldview that means to address the issues, possibilities, and opportunities that exist in their students’ lives and their home communities. Teachers know their culture or are willing to learn about it and believe that just because non-dominant cultural practices may be incongruent with accepted norms of the dominant culture, they are no less valuable.

The RICE Educator
Above we reviewed several other approaches for teacher preparation in diverse classrooms. This paper, grounded in the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and informed by culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012), provides the framework of the RICE educator, in which teachers are racially informed and culturally engaged, to be prepared to improve the academic experiences and outcomes for culturally, racially diverse students.

Racial awareness (the state of consciousness about differences between races/ethnicities), the precursor to racial sensitivity (the condition of being sensitive toward other races/ethnicities), is a necessity for the 21st century educator to be culturally competent in increasingly diverse classrooms (Diggles, 2014). By being racially informed, the teacher is knowledgeable of how current policies, structures, and practices have served to limit or predict the outcomes and opportunities for different races. From the removal of American Indian children from their homes to boarding schools in order to “Americanize” them (Spring, 2010) to the slavery of Africans and the multigenerational oppression that followed (Banks, 1994) to the discrimination and extralegal violence toward Chinese immigrants (Rong & Preissle, 2009), certain political and social structures (e.g., lower/higher incomes per family, housing, social services, denials of bank loans) have created disparities between Whites and non-Whites, and affected the lives of some non-Whites in ways some Whites have not been affected (Bell, 2007; Leonardo, 2009; Spring, 2010; Takaki, 1993; Wu, 2002). The RICE educator is informed on how laws and structures benefit some, and how they affect others. For example, the five cases collectively known as Brown v. Board of Education (1954), in which the United States Supreme Court declared the establishment of separate public schools for Black and White students was unconstitutional, were certainly about the separate but unequal school systems that facilitated worse conditions for Black children, but it would be a disservice not also to consider the effects and outcomes segregation had on White children.

In concluding, RICE educators espouse the belief that they cannot be racially uninformed, color-blind teachers, adopting race blindness. Such an understanding is paramount to realize the potential for students and teachers to become powerful partners in game-changing ways, improving opportunities that enable successful academic outcomes.

As teacher educators who are working with future teachers, we have a responsibility to prepare students for their diverse classroom, in which a dizzying array of abilities, races, cultures, and linguistic origins may be present.

It is no longer enough to be a teacher, isolated and disconnected from issues of race, culture, and power. The 21st century teacher must attend to discussions and practices that do not skirt around racial inequity and social injustices, particularly because, by ignoring them, the problems are perpetuated.
References

Author 1 et al. (2013a), Author 1 et al. (2013b), Author 1 et al. (2013c), Author 1 et al (2014), Author 1 et al. (2015)
Introduction: The Nature of Happiness and What It Means

“I believe that the very purpose of life is to be happy. From the very core of our being, we desire contentment. In my own limited experience, I have found that the more we care for the happiness of others, the greater is our own sense of well-being. Cultivating a close, warm-hearted feeling for others automatically puts the mind at ease. It helps remove whatever fears or insecurities we may have and gives us the strength to cope with any obstacles we encounter. It is the principal source of success in life. Since we are not solely material creatures, it is a mistake to place all our hopes for happiness on external development alone. The key is to develop inner peace.”

-The Dalai Lama (“Forum 2000” Conference, Czech Republic, 1997)

“We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”


“Those who are not looking for happiness are the most likely to find it, because those who are searching forget that the surest way to be happy is to seek happiness for others.”

-Martin Luther King Jr. (Forbes Volume 110, 1972, page 86)

In these quotes from three leaders of their respective generations, we see the significance the Dalai Lama, Thomas Jefferson and Martin Luther King Jr. hold for the notion of happiness and how important it is in making people’s lives better. Not often mentioned is the fact that Jefferson substituted the word “happiness” for the word “property” that was originally used in the Declaration of Independence, feeling the latter word limited the true essence of what Americans deserved and were looking for in their newly established country. As an admirer of the philosophers Epicurus and John Locke, Jefferson’s idea of happiness was broader than the idea of the pursuit of individual gain and pleasure. This implies a response to and involvement with community further aligning Jefferson with the Dalai Lama that the individual alone cannot be as content and happy as the person who is connected to and involved with others. Furthermore, the ability and capability to connect to others only happens when a state of self-knowledge first exists. Exposed to the process of knowing “Who you are” – as students - allows them to connect with others in a more healthy way because they are learning to become comfortably centered themselves.

The essence of “Developing Successful and Happy Students” is predicated on the principle that students do not need another program to ensure their success and happiness. Instead acknowledging, developing, and nurturing them individually within the context of their prescribed course of studies is recommended to offset the over-emphasis on external performance that has compromised students’ overall integration into mature and content adults.

In our 24/7 world, the need to go stronger, faster and higher has spilled into all facets of society and education is no exception. The measurement of success “in number of widgets” as to opposed to “having peace of mind”, has necessitated the education system to respond to this cultural and economic phenomenon by training its students to perform ever more vigorously. A revealing article in the New York Times (August 15, 2015) titled “Inside Amazon: Wrestling Big Ideas in a Bruising Workplace” - The company is conducting an experiment in how far it can push white-collar workers to get them to achieve its ever-expanding ambitions – where no one cares about your work-life balance. (http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/16/technology/inside-amazon-wrestling-big-ideas-in-a-bruising-workplace.html?_r=0)

The present-day striving for success in the work world has compromised students’ emotional and social needs in the process. Twenty years ago, the integration of the whole individual was a joint responsibility of family, church, school and community anchors like scouts and 4-H Clubs. The fragmentation of the latter through cultural evolution and changing societal mores has shifted a large weight of social responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the education system – one of the last-serving bastions to our children. Let’s be clear here. There is no “wrong” or “right” in this scenario; there is simply reality. And given the circumstances, it falls to NYC educators to be leaders within this paradigm shift of social responsibility. Taking the initiative by focusing on the integral needs of students – at least balancing
those needs in tandem with the pressure to produce successful students for the work world – is crucial. Something’s got to give in the midst of this societal shift and it already has…

**Witness the Present Stats - 1**
Presently the NYC School Board oversees 1.1 million students in over 1,800 schools. (http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/default.htm)

Though students are exposed to the latest technologies, teaching methodologies, and course content updates and modifications, and for all intents and purposes should be thriving in such an enabling education setting, many of them are not. The Wall Street Journal (July 27, 2015) recently reported that there is a rise in the number of adolescents engaged in self-injury, especially cutting. School officials, from high school to elementary levels, are working with adolescent psychologists to train their mental-health staff and teachers to counsel at-risk teens and to educate all students in dealing with stressful emotions.

“The teens, girls and boys, come from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds and include good students and struggling ones. Many have obvious emotional challenges while others appear outwardly to be thriving,” says Dr. Stephen Lewis, associate professor of psychology and self-injury researcher at the University of Guelph in Canada.

Bullying and violence in schools have increased. The following statistics are alarming:

- Violent school threats have increased by 158% from 2010 to 2011.
- Only 39% of schools in the 2009-2010 school year took serious disciplinary action against a student for special offenses. Actions included out-of-school suspension, expulsion, or transfer to a specialty school.
- In the U.S., 33 school-associated violent deaths occurred in the 2009-2010 school year including homicides, suicides, and legal interventions. Eighteen of these occurred on school property.
- Some of the signs of bullying include: 1) physical marks, such as cuts or bruises, 2) fear of riding bus to school, 3) depression, anxiety, or moodiness lasting more than a couple of weeks, 4) sudden loss of friends.
- In recent years, assault by weapon, cases of intimidation and bullying, and alcohol possession have all more than doubled on school properties.

- Drug possessions at school more than doubled from 2005 to 2011. Teachers confirm that violence may not be spiking, but records are being kept much more accurately than in the past.


And only seven weeks into the job as Chancellor last year, Ms. Farina told educators at Stuyvesant High School that suicides among NYC high school students had increased to a rate of a child a week over the two months of her tenure. As reported by The Post, stats from the City Health Department show suicides are increasing. It is now the third leading cause of death for New Yorkers ages 15 to 24. In 2010, 58 people in that age group took their lives, and that number grew to 64 in 2011 and 66 in 2012.

- (http://observer.com/2014/03/schools-chancellor-reveals-startling-suicide-trend-among-new-york-students/)

**Build on The Framework for Great Schools**
The Framework for Great Schools is a holistic, research-based approach to school improvement endeavoring to “meet the needs of the whole child.” Though student achievement is at the center of this model, that is, to “advance educational attainment by preparing every New York City public school graduate to compete in the 21st century workplace”, there is no direct reference to focusing on the integral (read emotional, social, and spiritual) needs of the individual student.

By mirroring The Framework for Great Schools introduced by Chancellor Farina in 2014 with the “Success and Happiness” integration process, it is anticipated that a balance will be restored to what constitutes a successful and happy student – inside and out. There is no need to remove or fragment the good work already taking place in NY schools. Some of the present supports that address aspects of student psycho-social needs include the reference Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools; the handbook Behavior Interventions in a Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) Model; general counseling for mental health issues; and the Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support Workgroups (PBIS). The key is to leverage this good work by consciously paying more attention to the emotional and social needs of every student to “meet the needs of the whole child”.

Why Bring Happiness into the “whole child” Equation?
At one time happiness was perceived to be nothing more than a fluffy emotional state firmly associated with the Pollyannas of the world – those naïve and possibly out-of-touch individuals who had no sense of the “real” world and therefore conveniently left it to reside in clouds of positivity and optimism. Fortunately, present-day thinking, research and scientific measurement have convinced leading thought leaders, behavioral scientists, psychologists and psychiatrists that being happy, that is, “the experience of joy, contentment, or positive well-being, combined with a sense that one’s life is good, meaningful, and worthwhile.” (Lyubomirsky, 2007) affects personal mental and physical health, productivity and an individual’s connectivity to others. When someone is happy, they are not only of benefit to themselves, they are of benefit to others - echoing the words of the Dalai Lama, Thomas Jefferson and Martin Luther King Jr. at the outset of this article.

Witness the Present Stats – 2
When the Kingdom of Bhutan, a landlocked country in Southeast Asia at the eastern tip of the Himalayas made international headlines as the happiest country in the world, and created the GNH – Gross National Happiness index – that measures the quality of life of its population, happiness took on new significance by the fact that it was now being measured. An extensive analysis of the GNH index can be found here: http://www.grossnationalhappiness.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/An%20Extensive%20Analysis%20of%20GNH%20Index.pdf

Furthermore, the following scientific facts contribute to the importance of happiness in a person’s life: “If you can raise your level of positivity in the present…your intelligence rises, your creativity rises, your energy levels rise…Your brain at positive is 31 per cent more productive than your brain at negative, neutral or stressed.”

-Psychologist Shawn Achor (The Happy Secret to Better Work, TED Talk, 2012)

“Happier workers help their colleagues 33% more often than unhappy ones, and 36% are more motivated in their work.”

-Joint Research by Wall Street Journal and iOpener Institute, 2012

“Obesity and mental health are intertwined. Because fat tissue is biologically active, it produces cortisol, a stress hormone, as well as inflammatory chemicals, both of which have been linked to mental illness. Cortisol is neuro-toxic. It can act on the brain of vulnerable people – putting them at increased risk for depression. Conversely, people with depression produce excess cortisol. One of the effects is a propensity to accumulate fat round the abdomen.”

“62% of the nation’s adult population is either overweight or obese, a trend that’s tracking at an even faster pace among children and adolescents.”

-Dr. Valerie Taylor, Psychiatrist, Toronto’s Women’s College Hospital, Canada and Dr. Arya Sharma, Professor of Medicine/Chair of Obesity Management, University of Alberta, Canada (Mental Health and Obesity Conference, Toronto, 2014)

“When we are elevated by other people, it causes us to feel better, to feel happier. It also causes us to behave more virtuously ourselves.”

-Louisa Jewell, President of the Canadian Positive Psychology Association (The Positivity Principle, Ottawa Citizen, 2014)

“Over the last decade, neuroscientists have identified a 10-section “empathy circuit” in our brains which, if damaged, can curtail our ability to understand what other people are feeling. Evolutionary biologists like Frans de Waal have shown that we are social animals who have naturally evolved to care for each other, just like our primate cousins. And psychologists have revealed that we are primed for empathy by strong attachment relationships in the first two years of life. The good news is, empathy can be developed beyond childhood as an attitude that improves our lives and others’.”

-Dr. Roman Krznaric, Founding Faculty Member, The School of Life, London, U.K. (Six Habits of Highly Empathic People, 2012)

“What is particularly reassuring is that children do respond strongly to the needs of others…And this tendency should be nurtured. [W]e could build on the natural inclination of young children to help others and their sensitivity to distress.”

-Dr. Keith Jensen, School of Psychological Sciences at the University of Manchester, U.K. (Restorative Justice in Children, 2015)

The Happiness Cycle Complementing The Framework for Great Schools
Drawing on the facts presented in sections Witness the Present Stats – 1 and Witness the Present Stats – 2, it can be concluded that introducing The Happiness Cycle in a viable way to NYC schools would be beneficial to their students specifically and beneficial to their administrators, teachers and parents generally. Using The Framework for Great Schools as a foundation, The Happiness Cycle complements and completes the approach to address the needs of the whole child.
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT
Extrinsic + Intrinsic

As the Happiness Cycle suggests, developing successful and happy students involves an intentional intervention from those who lead to acknowledge and affirm those who learn before any knowledge exchange takes place. Saying “Hi, Sam, how’s it going?” before asking “Did you get your homework done?” is the first step in the process. The act of reaching out and connecting in this way shows a teacher who is “self-aware” – is thinking beyond self. They are then capable of nurturing their students to achieve not only a sense of personal well-being but academic improvement and success as well. In this way, NYC teachers contribute to their school culture and community as a whole, are role models for those they teach, and moreover they benefit personally. As Martin Luther King said, “…the surest way to be happy is to seek happiness for others.”

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“I’ve missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I’ve lost almost 300 games. 26 times I’ve been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I’ve failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.”
- Michael Jordan
Abstract
Children’s aggression has become a significant problem in the U.S., and is typically addressed in childhood. However, aggression levels have shown to develop during the first years of life and remain stable after the third year, pointing at the first three years of life as windows of opportunity to prevent aggression. This review explores the central role of quality of parent-child interactions and attachment security in the development of aggression. In addition, this review explores contemporary issues American parents face during the first years of their children’s lives and the need for social supports in the form of social policies that can relieve parental stress and help parents negotiate their work-family balance. Lastly, this review urges the U.S. to join the industrialized world when it comes to family policies supporting the process of parenting during the first three years of life.

Understanding Contemporary Sources of Young Children’s Aggression in the United States
Children’s aggressive behaviors have become a significant problem in the U.S., and in recent years, school districts and mental health systems have been coping with addressing this challenge (Levac, McCay, Merka, & Resson-D’Arcy, 2008). About two thirds of children referred within the mental health systems in the U.S. are diagnosed with conduct or oppositional disorders. The cost to families and society is estimated to be 70,000 U.S. dollars a year per child so diagnosed when including school and health expenses (Levac et al., 2008). Aggression is a significant problem even in the absence of a diagnosed disorder, and exploring ways of understanding and preventing aggression has clear importance for public health because of the serious costs to individuals, family, and society (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2001). Although aggression is typically seen as a problem that prevails in middle childhood and adolescence, research points at the importance of looking at the first years of life in order to fully understand the sources of aggression in children.

Early childhood constitutes a key developmental stage in the development of aggressive behaviors, and at the same time, early childhood might be considered a window of opportunity for preventing aggression. For example, aggression in the preschool years places children at higher risk for delinquent behaviors, risky behaviors, and behavioral disorders in later stages (Stoltz, Londen, Deković, Prinzie, Castro, & Lochman, 2013). There is a strong association between aggression during the preschool years from ages 3 to 5 and psychopathology, with aggressive behavior being a central feature of conduct disorders. Because aggression in the preschool stage predicts aggression in the subsequent stages, it is important to look at the stage before preschool and explore the antecedents of aggression in preschoolers.

Definition of Aggression During the First Three Years of Life
Aggressive behavior is part of normative development in the first three years of life, and most children exhibit aggressive behaviors during this time (Stoltz et al., 2013). Since aggression levels remain stable after the first years of life, it is important to understand and define aggression during the years between one and three. This period is characterized by developmentally appropriate limitations in motor, communication, and cognitive abilities and age-specific play behaviors that might resemble aggression (such as pushing, pulling, throwing, and grabbing). To differentiate between these behaviors and aggression, Mesman and colleagues propose a developmentally appropriate definition of aggression in the first years of life as “behavior that is aimed at and may cause harm to people, animals, or objects, and is not because of motor limitations, or part of age appropriate play and exploration” (Mesman, Alink, van Zeijl, StolteK, Bakermans-Kranenburg, von IJzendoorn, & Koot, 2008) (p. 540). The difficulty in assessing intent and intention in the youngest children make it challenging to decide which behaviors constitute aggression and which do not. Physical aggression increases during the first three years of development, but by the third year the level of aggressive behaviors declines sharply in most children.
For a reasonable amount of children (5% - 10%), aggression does not decline, but remains stable after the third year of life and into the preschool years, and the continuation of aggressive behaviors beyond the third year of life is a strong predictor of later antisocial behavior (Brotman, O’Neal, Keng-Yen, Gouley, Rosenfelt, & Shrout, 2009). Thus, the first years of life should be considered a key stage for understanding and preventing the development of aggression.

Exploring Sources of Aggression in the First Years of Life: The Role of Parent-Child Interactions

Much research has been devoted to understanding the cause of aggressive behaviors during the first three years of life. A significant body of research points to the central role of parenting in the development of aggressive behaviors in young children. The research consistently finds that negative and harsh parenting puts young children at risk of developing aggressive behaviors (e.g. Brotman et al., 2009; Crockenberg & Litman, 1990).

Despite the potential roles of genes and personality on aggression, research with adopted twins confirms the central role of parenting in shaping children’s aggressive behaviors (Smith-Stover, Connell, Leve, Neiderhiser, Shaw, Scaramella, & Reiss, 2008). Intervention studies support the causal relationship between negative parenting and young children’s aggressive behaviors, and randomized control trials have shown that parenting interventions designed to decrease harsh parenting and increase parent involvement had both short and long term effects in reducing preschoolers’ levels of aggression in at-risk samples (Brotman et al., 2009).

The quality of parent-child interactions is essential to understanding aggression because parent-child interactions are central in the social and emotional development of the child. In particular, sensitive care-giving with interactions characterized by appropriate levels of involvement during the earliest stages of development is associated with positive emotional development (Gibson-Davis & Gassman-Pines, 2010). Parent-child interactions during the first three years of life have been found to be related to emotional regulation, empathy, and positive interactions later in life (Raikes, Robinson, Bradley, Raikes, & Ayoub, 2007).

Parent-child interactions are the process by which infants are initiated into the social world and social norms. Through this attunement, parents penetrate the child’s inner rhythms, read and respond to emotional signs, teach children rules of communications and social exchange, and promote the child’s development of the social self (Feldman, 2007). Lei, Dodge, Schwartz, and McBridae-Chang (2003) propose that harsh parenting might promote higher levels of aggressive behaviors because it compromises children’s capacity for emotional regulation. Positive parent-child interactions promote emotional regulation because sensitive parental interactions help children deal with negative feelings and states and help infants gradually internalize effective ways of coping with distress (Raikes et al., 2007). Feldman (2007) proposes that the opportunity to share emotional experiences and emotional coordination with a significant adult during infancy is central to the child’s ability to empathize with the emotional states of others later in life and, thus, to prevent aggressive behaviors. In contrast, parents who exhibit hurtful and hostile negative emotions model dysregulated behaviors for the children to imitate. Children’s emotional dysregulation leads to problems in social development and in their social interactions with others. Aggressive physical and emotional interactions between parents and children form the basis for children’s interactions throughout their lives.

Most research about parent-child interactions has been conducted between mothers and children and the findings show that quality of mother-child interactions develops early in life and remains stable across development. Bigelow, MacLean, Proctor, Myatt, Gillis, and Power (2010) found that the quality of mother-child interactions was stable across the first two and a half years of life. Similarly, Weinfield, Ogawa, and Egeland (2002) found that the quality of mother-child interactions showed continuity from the preschool age to the middle childhood years. Feldman (2007) found that higher levels of synchrony in mother-child interactions at three months and at nine months of life predicted capacity for empathy during adolescence. Similar to the quality of mother-child interactions, a child’s level of emotional regulation is established in early childhood and remains stable after this stage.

Exploring Sources of Aggression in the First Years of Life: The Role Attachment Security

Another body of research contributes to the understanding of aggression by exploring the role of secure
attachments. Attachment security is central to the understanding of social competence and emotional regulation in early childhood and has consistently found to be a predictor of positive development (Oppenheim, Sagi, & Lamb, 1988). Attachment is a special emotional relationship that involves an exchange of care, nurture, and pleasure. A central role fulfilled by that attachment figure is to provide the framework for the development of the internal working models (Bowlby, 1988), which are the internalization of early experiences that form a pattern in the infant’s mind. These models are like blueprints for future relationships and constitute a set of coping skills that provide organization and coherence in the infant’s mind. Eventually, working models are guidelines for interactions that the infant generalizes to other relationships in the course of life. When an infant experiences protection and comfort, and at the same time is given the opportunity to explore independently, the infant develops an internal working model of self as independent, lovable, worthy, and self-reliant, prompting feelings of confidence and emotional regulation. In contrast, when a child experiences rejection and the needs for comfort and exploration are ignored, the infant is likely to develop internal working models of the self as less worthy, less lovable, and less self-reliant, prompting feelings of rejection and hostility. At the same time, when infants develop internal working models of the caregiver as inconsistent, they might manifest ambivalent or resistant reactions towards the caregiver prompting feelings of anxiety and emotional dysregulation. Therefore, attachment experiences with the primary attachment figures can be described as generating a set of expectations of self, others, and of relationships.

Similar to the quality of parent-child interactions, the quality of attachments between children and parents is established very early in life. Bowlby (1988) has proposed that by nine months the quality of the attachment bond to a primary caregiver is established, and by 12 to 14 months the quality of attachment to the primary attachment figure is finalized (Bowlby, 2007). Research shows that the quality of attachments remains stable after the first year of life through childhood (Gloger-Tippelt, Gomille, Koenig, Juergen, 2002), adolescence (Hamilton, 2000), and adulthood (O’Connor, Collins, & Supplee, 2012).

There is a strong association between attachment quality and aggression in the first years of life and in later stages. Infants who are securely attached to their parents are more socially competent and display higher levels of empathy during preschool. In addition, securely attached preschoolers score lower than insecurely attached children on measures of hostility, impulsiveness, and negative affect. Similarly, securely attached children exhibit lower levels of problem behaviors and externalizing behaviors in childhood (O’Connor et al., 2012). Parens (2012) found that higher levels of attachment security in infancy correlated with lower levels of aggression in seven-year olds, and this association was also present at a ten-year old follow up. In contrast, insecure attachment has been shown to predict adolescents peer bullying including physical and relational violence in schools (William & Kennedy, 2012).

The research on the effects of attachment security on aggression in later stages points once more at the strong link between parenting and early experiences to later aggression.

**Contemporary Sources of Aggression in the First Years of Life**

The research reviewed points at the central role of parenting in preventing aggression. Yet, contemporary American parents find themselves under multiple work related pressures and constrains. For example, the work environment of Western parents has changed in the past decades. One significant change that affects young children is that parents today are working significantly longer hours than a few decades ago (Dew, 2009). Economies are shifting from industrial to post-industrial to service economies, which some have called “24-7” economies (Li, Johnson, Han, Andrews, Kendall, Strazdins, & Dockery, 2013). Accompanying these economies is a demand for services round the clock, and a rise in work schedules in evenings, nights, and weekends. In developed economies there is a high prevalence of nonstandard schedules particularly among parents. Parents with young children are more likely to work non-standard schedules due to child care needs and cost, and the most recent data shows that about 30% of American parents worked nonstandard schedules (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014a).

Another significant pattern that affects young children is the growing number of mothers of young children who have joined the workforce. In 2012, approximately 70% of all mothers with young children in the
U.S., and 75% of all single mothers were part of the labor force. In general, more than 70% of mothers with children under the age of three work 35 hours or more a week (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014b). This reality stands in sharp contrast to mothers’ work patterns observed a few decades ago (Kamerman, 2000).

Similarly, family-work conflicts place a high level of stress on contemporary parents in the U.S. For example, women make up the majority of the American workforce, the majority of university graduates in the OECD countries, and the majority of professional workers in several rich countries (Economist, 2009). Yet, in the U.S. women drop out of the workforce in dramatic numbers in their 30s when they become parents. The reason for this pattern in U.S. women was found to be high levels of work-family conflict. In the U.S. women identify motherhood and work-family pressures as a greater difficulty to advancing their careers than sexism (Economist, 2009).

While demanding working schedules do not necessarily increase aggression in children, high levels of parental stress are related to children behavioral problems in the first years of life (Levac et al., 2008) and are seen as a factor influencing dysfunctional parenting and negative parental behaviors (Spinelli, Poehlmann, & Bolt, 2013). For example, parenting stress is associated with parents who are less reliable and less responsive to their infants (Rousseau, Grietens, Vanderfaeillie, Hoppenbrouwers, Wiersema, & Van Leeuwen, 2013) and parenting stress prompts ineffective parenting practices, which exacerbate childhood aggression (Levac et al., 2008). In a sample of low-income mothers, Coyl, Roggman, and Newland (2012) found that increases in maternal stress predicted increases in frequency of maternal spanking when infants were 14 months. Similarly, maternal stress has been associated with increases in spanking when infants were 14, 18, and 20 months (MacKenzie, Nicklas, Brooks-Gunn, & Waldfogel, 2012). Furthermore, interventions that are successful at reducing parental stress are often successful at reducing aggressive behaviors in children (Levac et al., 2008), which points at the association between parental stress and aggression in children.

Similarly, work schedules may not necessarily directly affect aggression in children, but there is evidence to believe that long hours in child care experienced early in life puts children at risk of increased aggression levels. Longer hours in child care were consistently associated with more problem behaviors in the preschool classroom (Belsky, 2001). In a study exploring the effects of early and extensive care on the transition to kindergarten, the National Institute of Child Health and Development Early Child Care Research Network (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2005) compared different periods in which children were exposed to extensive child care. The authors found that greater amount of care during the first years of life in any variety of non-maternal care positively correlated with externalizing behaviors and conflict with adults even when quality, type and stability of care, and family backgrounds were controlled. This was especially true for extensive time, defined as more than 20 hours a week, spent in non-parental care between three and six months of age, and the effects of extensive time in child care were found to predict problem behaviors in the early school grades. Furthermore, Vandell, Belsky, Burchinal, Steinberg, & Vandergrift (2010) found that long hours in child care in the first years of life had an effect on levels of aggression, impulsiveness, risk taking, and problem behaviors when children were 15. This points that demanding work schedules, parental stress, and extensive use of child care in the first years of life as putting young children at risk of developing aggression.

The Need for Social Supports for Contemporary Parents

The importance of the first years of a child’s life and the role of parenting in providing high quality positive interactions, promoting emotional regulation, and establishing secure attachments in preventing aggression in children is thus well supported by research. However, parenting demands high levels of energy and time commitments and requires appropriate social supports. Parenting is the most physically and mentally demanding social role people experience during their lives (Janisse, Barnett, & Nies, 2009). Parenting is described as highly taxing, and as placing physical, cognitive, and emotional demands on mothers and fathers; few other social roles carry such time and energy requirements and can be said to be so crucial. In addition, contemporary parenting has become an increasingly demanding task. Parents find that they expect more from themselves than in the past decades in order to prepare chil-
Children to live in an increasingly complex world (Dew, 2009). Parents feel more pressured than in the past to spend time with their children, and many parents indicate that they spend insufficient time with their children (Dew, 2009). Parents also find that they are expected to invest more in their children than in the past generations.

In addition, contemporary parents find themselves under higher levels of work related pressures, with expectations to work longer hours than in previous generations. Many parents feel guilty for working too much, not spending enough time with their children, and for using excessive child care (Dew, 2009). These concerns are especially deeper during the first years of a child’s life, as the transition into parenting is considered a highly stressful event and a developmental crisis (Zigler & Hall, 2000). For parents in professional careers, the transition to parenting and the most time-intensive period of child rearing coincide with the make-it-or-break-it phase of their careers (Economist, 2012).

Although the first years of a child’s life are central to developing quality parent-child interactions, emotional regulation, and attachment, these years also constitute a major adjustment for parents. How successfully parents meet the demands of parenting is highly related to parental resources and supports, and positive outcomes for parenting and children are consistently associated with availability of social supports. For example, adolescent mothers with multiple sources of support at the community level are more likely to graduate from high school and lower levels of psychopathology and better attitudes towards parenting than adolescents with lower levels of social supports. Likewise, social supports for homeless mothers are associated with maternal positive affect, and maternal positive perception of her children (Marra, McCarthy, Hsiu-Ju, Ford, Rodis, & Frisman, 2009). Consistently, social supports were found to be associated with lower levels of stress and better interactions between mothers and children (Huang, Costeines, Kaufman, & Ayala, 2014).

In contrast, lack of social support is associated with disengaged and poor parenting and high psychological distress (Marra et al., 2009). For example, Rensch, Benz and Elliot (2012) found that when parents of children with disabilities experienced low levels of resources and environmental social supports, they felt lower levels of emotional wellbeing, life satisfaction, and family satisfaction. These findings held despite the effects of socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, and the impact of social supports exceeded the effects of the severity of the child’s disability and level of children’s functional impairment. Social supports can include financial assistance, physical assistance, and supports of family and friends to buffer stress (Huang et al., 2014). Parents differ in the levels of resources and supports they have available. Despite differences in individual resources and access to support, societies can provide social supports to parents in the first years of their children’s lives in the form of social and family policies that help families balance work and parenting. Policy-based social support and resources, when available, have been shown to enhance the role of parents and parenting at the society level (Moss & Deven, 2006).

Implications for U.S. Family Policies

Quality mother-child interactions and secure attachment, social supports, demanding work schedules, parental stress, and long hours in child care all play a role in children’s levels of aggression. One way societies support parents in their demanding roles and alleviate demands and work related stress is through family policies. Many countries in the industrialized world have taken notice of the demanding task of parenting, the changing trends in the workforce, and the need to support parents with social policy (Kamerman, 2000). These countries have enacted policies that are helpful to parents and support their role. In contrast, in the U.S., there is a gap in policy when it comes to supporting parents in their taxing roles during the first year of children’s life. The research reviewed points at the need for the adoption of such policies in the U.S.

Some of these policies are paid maternity and parental leave, which are the most basic form of support for families when transitioning into parenthood. Other similar policies are child care leaves, sick-child leave policies, and the ability for parents to take off from work to take a child to the doctor, visit a school or help a child adjust to child care. These policies can make an important difference in the life of children and families and are policies that have an overwhelming international presence. For example, more than 128 countries provide an average of 16 weeks of paid leave (International Labor Organization, 2001) with most countries providing 100% of salary reimbursements. In contrast, in the U.S. the only form of maternity, parental, and family
leaves are covered by the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993, which requires employers with 50 employees or more to guarantee a 12 week unpaid job-protected parental leave to qualifying workers. Only 55 percent of the workforce is eligible for this job-protected leave (Kamerman, 2000). Yet, a smaller amount of employees can afford an unpaid leave. This makes the United States an outlier among developed and developing countries, the only other countries with unpaid leave are Lesotho, Papua New Guinea, and Swaziland.

Given that the first years of parenting are seen as a critical period for establishing quality of parent-child interactions, emotional regulation, attachments, and decreasing aggression, implementing these polices can help establish positive parenting for the very beginning of a child’s life and can be considered preventive practices (Zigler & Hall, 2000). The United States should join the rest of the industrialized world in adopting some of these policies to support parenting in the first years of their children’s lives.

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Professional Learning Communities:
Causing it to Happen or Making the Garden Grow
Andy Greene, Ed.D. and Sy Roth, Ed.D.

What Are They?
Professional Learning Communities are not natural constructs. They do not happen by accident. They are like gardens in the hands of master farmers. These gardeners know that to bear a bumper crop of vegetables, they cannot permit the plants to wither. Deprived of water and nutrients and tender loving care, their garden cannot flourish. In the similar fashion, schools require persistence and tending from all members of the client system. All members must know what will make their system work.

How Does that Happen?
This is accomplished through ongoing discussion, reflection, and refinement of the school’s guiding principles.

As principal of a mid-sized suburban middle school, I feel that building a “learning community” culture is a necessary adjunct to our growth as a system. To achieve greater success, I feel that the mission, vision, and values of our school need to be aligned, clearly stated, and “doable”. It is also critical that everyone in the system accepts those mutually agreed tenets.

Faculty, my administrative team, staff and members of our community work constantly to make PLC a reality. Remember, tending the garden requires weeding and feeding it the nutrients it requires.

The components of this approach in our PLC contain these vital elements:
• the development of a continuous-learning mindset
• and the concept that all players in the system “play well with each other”.

By focusing on these two overarching values, we extended and refined the ability to meet the needs of our students.

What Can Be Learned From Our Efforts?
What we learned during our journey is that you are never “there”…you are always in a state of “becoming.” To make the journey successful, trust and mutual respect must be established. This is achieved by maintaining an open-door policy where all teachers and staff can comfortably float ideas and believe that credible change can be affected as a result of their input.

How to make a community of learners
Establish a culture where the instructional and social/emotional needs of all constituents are met. At the same time, retain the belief that students’ learning is the core of the system. It is probably the most challenging aspect of the endeavor.

The roads that lead to an effective system are varied. We chose these paths:
• Develop effective faculty meetings where significant learning takes place.
• Conduct informal, but ongoing, conversations in hallways and classrooms.
• Make informal, but frequent, classroom visits and provide useful feedback after formal observations.
• Maintain an open door policy to all administrative offices—a two-way street --- to express freely educational and emotional needs.
• Have formal, open, frank conversations behind closed doors about fulfilling the mission, visions, and agreed upon values.
• Make sure that faculty can tell the difference between providing “input” and the reality that, after all their input, a decision has to be made by someone in a position of authority. They must trust that all points of view were taken into consideration.

A Persistence of Vision
Based on the precepts enumerated by Arthur Costa in Habits of Mind, I recognize that persistence is a critical factor in this process. Costa (Costa and Kalick, 2000) said in Habits of Mind, Discovering and Exploring, that “Efficacious people stick to a task until it is completed” (22). The Mission, Vision, Values and Goals is an oft-repeated refrain and is contained in all conversations. This ensures that eventually there is some degree of systemic automaticity.

As part of the process, we cultivated the notion of continuous learning, reflection and assessment of progress. We could not permit weeds to overrun our garden. To keep them at bay and be successful, we employed an “over-communication” by a power of “ten” methodology. We weeded out the elements that would have overtaken the garden. Before getting into some specifics related to the strategies, we incorporated in our PLC, one philosophical point critical to success with PLC was that any behavior that goes against the agreed upon norms must be confronted. Although this may sound counterintuitive to promote a philosophy that uses a term like “confront”, in a collaborative culture, it is essential to deal with inappropriate behavior in order to
create a positive environment. It permits the good plants in the garden to thrive.

Stephen Covey would say, leaders must always have their “center” pointed “true north.” One cannot continually change his/her view when there are those who are unwilling to abide by the agreed upon goals set by the system. Chaos can be the only result.

Collegiality, sharing, solutions and best practices In practice, a PLC has the feel of a teaching hospital. In a teaching hospital, medical professionals work together, share ideas related to their patients, brainstorm solutions to health problems, and consistently share best practice to improve patients’ health. Like a teaching hospital, educators also require collegiality, sharing, solutions and best practice. Staff must understand that adding tools to their instructional toolkit is a key characteristic of a PLC.

As an outgrowth, observable reactions to these discussions can readily be detected. We observe that teachers respond to students’ deficits in a systemic way--from discussions in departmental and team meetings about student progress, to providing extra help, or developing of common formative assessments.

In addition, there is an understanding that change does come from “new learning” and that we can determine the need through a data-driven system. We recognize that data drive the decisions that we make. Plants wilt you water them. Healthy plants choked by weeds, you pull the weeds. Teachers are encouraged to field-test new techniques and look critically at their practice and monitor and adjust as needed. In this type of environment, teachers understand that examining data and making changes based on the results is not a remedial model. Like weeds, you pull the weeds. Plants wilt you water them. Healthy plants choked by weeds, you pull the weeds.

What Can a Principal Do? As a principal, there are several specific things that I have done to help move the process along. First, every faculty meeting is seen as a staff development opportunity. The focus of those meetings is to explore their collective thinking related to best practices. We avoid long, prosaic discussions related to “hat policies” and the like. Since I only get to see them as a group for that one-hour-a-month, I commit a great deal of energy to providing structure and instruction—the fertilizer and water of the gardener—at those meetings. Nuts and bolts administivia can be handled in other ways. This time needs to be used in effective dialogue about instruction. I place my faculty in cooperative groups, and we either review information related to a district focus, UbD for example, or spend time investigating new programs and practices.

To deal with management issues, we have also created other avenues for faculty to discuss educational concerns through site-based management teams, principal’s council and through ongoing dialogue with building representatives. The expectation is not that the teachers will implement everything they see, but where applicable, they will add the ideas into their “toolkit.”

Secondly, with the advent of the APPR legislation, we have refined our systematic performance appraisal system, which is centered on the Framework for Teaching model espoused by Charlotte Danielson. This system provides a vocabulary for discussion common to all.

In addition, we have emphasized differentiated instruction and Understanding by Design as a support of our instructional programs. We continue to tweak the process to incorporate those, as well as other district initiatives, into the process. The pre/post conferences serve as a doorway to conversations on the techniques that support our mission. Teachers also have the opportunity to work on a self-directed plan. These plans contribute to the “continuous learning” paradigm intrinsic to our PLC effort.

Additionally, my administrative team uses a rotating, informal, observation schedule to drop-in to teachers’ classes for 5-7 minutes on a weekly basis. Feedback is always provided whether through e-mail, a note, or a quick face-to-face meeting. Although sometimes hard to follow a rigid schedule, we try to make getting
into classrooms a priority. The ongoing educational conversations enhance the professional environment in the building. We have also used many of the ideas espoused by Richard DuFour to help move the process of developing a clear statement of mission, vision, goals and values. To make certain that this occurs, I provide teachers with many opportunities to exchange ideas throughout the process, from the initial conversations, to written input, to compiling and editing their shared ideas. Each person has an opportunity to have his/her voice heard.

The ground rule we established for faculty would be that the final product would act as our “roadmap”, and that we would hold ourselves accountable for what is included in the document. The challenge for my administrative team and me is to ensure that we persist in referring to that body of work repeatedly. Old habits tend to die hard, and like the keel of a boat, we need to make constant “on-board” corrections as we ply the waters.

One of the most important yet overlooked aspects of a PLC is the learning that the principal has to do on an ongoing basis. I spend at least 3-4 hours a week reading books, articles, and journals that address topics current in the field, from brain-based teaching to the use of technology in classrooms. On a weekly basis, I compile and disseminate something I call “The Weekly Plant” in which I include articles or links that support our mission, vision, values and goals.

A World of Practicality
From a practical standpoint, I do not expect that my faculty will read those materials religiously, but I do expect that the cumulative effect of all that we do will filter into the collective consciousness of the building and find a permanent home. Leaders must possess a knowledge base so they can work with their faculty in a dual role as manager of the building and a knowledgeable staff developer. Having the knowledge base enhances my conversations with faculty, and enables me to formulate pointed suggestions while engaged in conversations on best practices.

Three things are clear in the final analysis:
• in a PLC, there must be an agreed upon set of values;
• there must be an unwavering commitment to continually improving one’s craft;
• and the dialogue with faculty must be open, frank and informative for the organization to be successful.

Although seemingly easy, but difficult to implement, a PLC is the path that will most benefit students, staff, and the community.

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Currently, Andy Greene is the principal at Candlewood Middle School in the Half Hollow Hills School District. He is past president of LIASCD and is the current Co-President of the Suffolk County Middle Level Principal Association. In addition to those positions, he acts as a middle level liaison with the New York State Education department, and is an adjunct professor at Stony Brook University. He is also the Co-President of the Administrators Association in the Half Hollow Hills School District.
**Introduction**

So much has been written about change. In the midst of some of the most pressing times, educational leaders continue to strive by pushing themselves and their entire organizations in pursuit of public expectations for achievement. They push towards full implementation of the current reform efforts, following the long list of those reforms that preceded them. Impossible frustration is evident in the face of exhausting challenges to implement new practices, curriculum, and approaches to teaching and learning in the face of mostly modest to slight improvements in outcomes that those at the center of change have witnessed over similarly conceived efforts of the last half century. In this paper, the authors hope to revisit some of the more salient ideas emerging in leadership for change today and isolate three important factors that the authors believe are crucial to building a foundation for change.

What is change and what is the best way to make meaningful change in difficult settings or in any setting? Change is something that doesn’t come easy to people. Many contemporary researchers underscore the work of Lewin (1951), Fullan (2009) and others that note that most people are averse to change, even while recognizing that changing would benefit their cause. In a time of need for dramatic change in schools, we find we run counter to logical movement in new directions, as we are inclined to elect to stay the same instead of changing. Fullan (2001) explains that change cannot be managed, but it should be allowed to just happen. Why is there this strong disdain and concern when thinking about change? Why is the unknown such a troubling idea to most people and how does an organizational leader help them through this process? Depending on who you ask, you will get a different answer in regards to what change is, but those who have studied change are clear as we see the following.

**Grounding Personal Vision with a Clear Understanding of What Change is About**

Leaders at the center of change efforts must have a personal vision for change that is grounded in understanding what change is about. Here is what some of the experts say about change. Fullan (2001) describes change as a double edged sword. Combe (2014) talks about change and change readiness. She describes the three key drivers of change readiness which are cultural readiness, commitment readiness and capacity readiness. Burke (2011) describes change as the law of nature which we see in every part of our life and in everything we do. Bolman and Deal (2008) utilize the four frames of organizations to help people see the similarities and differences of organizational change. So what is change and why is it so difficult for most people? The change process is described by Fullan, Cuttress, and Kilcher (2005) as “the process for establishing the conditions for continuous improvement in order to persist and overcome inevitable barriers to reform” (p. 55). Change is also referred to by Gruenert & Whitaker (2015) as a slow process which is similar to evolution and takes many years to accomplish. The interesting thing about change is that, when people have an option to make change because it will make the situation better, or would make the work load easier, or it would benefit them and their clients, most people will choose to keep things exactly the same (Lorenzi & Riley, 2000). Some might speculate about why we are so married to the status quo and not open to new ideas and new thoughts. Others will question why we are simply not ready to relinquish what is known and what we are comfortable with and take a risk of the unknown. Unless we proactively work on changing the status quo, and push people past simply saying “all children can learn” but having them actually believe it, change will be very difficult (Louis, 2007). Unless we work on addressing the resistance to change that occurs at the ground level and with small groups and teams, the change effort will be very difficult (Glisson, 2007; Weick & Quinn, 1999).

What is the fear and apprehension that comes with change that makes it so difficult for most people and makes them proactively resist it? What rings clear in terms of the challenge of change emerges in Fullan & Quinn’s (2016) newest work about the need for creating coherence in pursuing change efforts. He calls attention to understanding that leaders for change must get
in the right mind-set for action. Success is not a matter of working your way through components of a framework, his or others. According to Fullan & Quinn (2016), “you have to have the right mind-set. You have to respect what we know about the change process recognizing that effective change processes shape and reshape good ideas as they build capacity and ownership among participants” (p. 14). Before we can tackle the work of change, it would seem only logical that we need first to understand the deepest workings and inclinations of human nature to stay the course and build our own capacity as leaders, to lay out strategies that guide a deliberate plan to bring change that is substantive and powerful in its promise. The take away for all leaders needs to be focused on giving personal meaning to the nature of change through continuous efforts to pull together what we know and are even at this moment learning about change, making sense of it in the context of our individual settings. We need to challenge ourselves to think deeply about what we need to know and to let big ideas raise essential questions, the answers to which can serve to position leaders of change efforts for success. Often leaders of change fail to realize the rewards of their hard work when for many reasons their efforts are seen as reactive and redundant, not proactive or focused, and when the work in their settings fails to build the capacity of their followers to engage fully in producing the desired outcomes for all students.

**Making Change That Works is Often More than Meets the Eye:**

Here are some ideas to support exploration of our thinking about how to make lasting change that works. Researcher Waks (2007) differentiates change into 5 categories, the entity undergoing the change, the feature that is changing, as well as the scope of the change, the rate of the change, and the magnitude of the change. The entity undergoing change is defined as: individuals, groups, organizations, etc. that the change will be affecting. The feature that is changing is the specific element in a school or organization that is being altered, such as a school’s schedule, or an organization’s procedures etc. The scope, rate and magnitude of the change all impact how the rollout of the change occurs. Researcher Glisson (2007) refers to change in the sense of the availability, responsiveness, and continuity (ARC) specialists. First, change agents focus on developing collaborative working relationships with key stakeholders, both within and outside the organization. Next, they facilitate broad participation in the change effort, both within and outside the organization. Finally, they encourage the adoption of innovation and change that address barriers or deficits in service (Glisson, 2007). Glisson et al. (2006) talks about ARC change agents who are trained to work with teams, administrators, leaders, and community stakeholders to remove all the red tape and regulations created to maintain the status quo (p.861). Leaders struggling to make change that works must have a game plan that balances perspectives about approaches to initiating change, with recognition of what and how the leader conducts the business of change. These must be compatible with the way the leader delivers his/her message, how the leader communicates about the work and in what ways does the work of leading for change present a clearly articulated message to all stakeholders. Successful change efforts are never the work of one leader, they are at best facilitated by leaders with the wisdom and vision for leading, who speaks strongly to the what, who, how and desired or intended results for efforts intimately connected to a limited number of key objectives. Clarity of purpose begins with the leader understanding that change that works is much more than meets the eye. And that understanding reaches beyond initiatives seemingly akin to a forced match where process takes precedence over product or purpose and people become easily overwhelmed by too many goals, too many initiatives, and too little clarity and no defined timelines. In order for change to be sustainable, Buchanan et al (2005) explain that there needs to be a process that allows new working methods, performance goals and improvement trajectories that are maintained for an appropriate time and context. How we make change manageable and therefore more palatable is a second and critical factor for promoting change and building a foundation for change.

**Ideas for Making Change Work in Schools:**

Bringing the conversation back to where it should always be is the key step in the change process. The conversation should always be about the children. When the children are at the center of the discussion and the reason for the change, it sets the stage for people to better understand what kind of change is needed. The
language of increased accountability often brings the conversation back to discussing students and student work and will be critical for meaningful change. Given et al. (2010) talk about “The Act of Going Public”. They utilized student work and documentation as a transformation tool. By doing this, Given et al. (2010) utilized the implementation and documentation process to change the nature and dynamics of teams and groups. By looking at a student’s work and its implications for classroom practice, Given explains that this process allows for the formation of communities of change, who are willing to change in order to improve student performance. The teacher plays a key role in this change effort because his/her approach to change can make or prolong the change process. Based on ideas derived from the business literature, Susan Rosenholtz concluded that teacher commitment to change was less a psychological characteristic than a reflection of the school’s culture (Rosenholtz, 1991). These are highly important ideas in advancing change efforts in schools as they go to the heart of the matter. Knowing this, what can school leaders do to change a culture that doesn’t want to be changed? How do we as educational leaders move our schools in a direction that is more flexible with change? One thing that helps is what Fullan (2008) describes as “connecting peers with purpose” which is similar to what Little (1990) describes as colleagues learning from each other in a school setting. In their most recent work, Fullan & Quinn (2016) connect more strongly to this focus on students by tying it directly to deepening their learning, in order to make it better in connecting and engaging students, and to turn back the tide of increased loss of interest and declining enthusiasm young people have for school by the time they get to high school. The literature is replete with ideas and strategies for improving teaching and learning and so often professional development efforts in schools are geared towards updates or exposing teachers to these strategies. The perception is that these strategies implemented with fidelity would achieve noticeable gains for students. The lost item is the absence of a concentration of understanding who our students are, what they bring to their schools and the needs they have that may overshadow their aspirations. Absent a focus on student needs as captured above, we miss a very crucial opportunity to tap into and reconnect to the beliefs and energy that bring teachers into schools in the first place. Lost is the opportunity to honor their potential and reengage them as the best individuals positioned to implement genuine change that works. To build on this concept is the model of Organizational Learning (OL), which assumes that learning takes place in groups and not in isolation (Louis, 1994). By learning taking place in groups within the organization, students in that organization achieve higher results (Marks, Louis, & Printy, 2002). The more teachers begin to shift the focus onto the students and their needs, the better the chance they will be willing to make changes that would support their students. When we fail to reconnect to that which makes each student group special, we miss an important step in making change work in schools. This is the third critical factor crucial to building a foundation for change. Successful change is characterized by notions of strong school communities, where there is a shared ownership among all stakeholders for taking on the work of improving schools. It is inconceivable that substantive change of the level needed to promote performance gains for all students can be realized in settings that lack a culture and climate that reflects the ideals of professional learning communities. As with professional communities, there is evidence to show that schools that engage in more active organizational learning also have higher achieving students (Marks, Louis, & Printy, 2002). There are many factors that one might attribute to schools that have achieved high performing results for their students. They have no doubt created a record of success that included tackling the challenge of change. The story of their success likely differs dramatically in each instance, but in all likelihood the critical factors that helped them to succeed would be evident in the ideas shared in this article. In some schools, the collaboration that allows for student improvement revolves around small group collaboration periods, regular faculty meetings that are focused on discussions and building of lateral communication networks, and providing an organization structure or design that helps in the acquiring of information (Cohen, 1991).**

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, this paper summarizes some of the more salient ideas emerging in educational leader-
ship for change today. The authors examine current findings from research and publications of leading theorists that serve to underscore critical factors necessary in sharpening the perspectives of leaders seeking to build a foundation for change. Leaders operating in challenging school settings, striving to put in play strategic initiatives supportive of school improvement, are well served and better positioned to enact strategic efforts when they construct a personal vision and focus about change that reflects a clearly grounded understanding of the literature about change. The actions leaders take must begin with setting this focus that has the potential to influence the attitudes, dispositions and work of all stakeholders in the pursuit of performance gains for all students. Larger more complex ideas that shape the magnitude of this work suggest that simply working on behalf of student success is not all it takes, and as such conversations and actions of leaders in facilitating change demand that we recognize that making change requires that leaders cultivate understanding reflecting levels of depth and breadth about work that is much more than may first appear to be the need. It goes to the heart of critical thinking about the nature of creating collaborative school communities that engage the challenges of this work and bring new meaning and definition in reshaping traditional understanding about the work schools do from professional development to assessment and accountability. First, leaders in pursuit of change focus on developing collaborative working relationships with key stakeholders, both within and outside the organization. Secondly, there needs to be a mechanism that facilitates broad participation in the change effort by all who have a vested interest in the school. Finally, it is imperative that there is an adoption of innovation and change that address barriers or deficits in service (Glisson, 2007). In our ever-changing field, as we continue to identify and implement reforms which strive toward improved student achievement for all students, it is imperative that we carefully consider not just the change itself, but how we as educational leaders can implement the change to make it lasting and effective.

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The Efficacy of Teacher Evaluations in New York City: A Tale of Two Districts
Kenneth Forman, Ph.D. and Craig Markson, Ed.D

Abstract
The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship among New York State’s APPR teacher evaluation system, poverty, attendance rates and student achievement. The setting of this study was two of New York City’s largest school districts with over 120,000 students. The data included reports on 102 schools that resided in New York City Districts 2 and 31, with reporting on 4,047 educators and 66,601 students compiled from the New York State Education Department’s Data website. The results of this study showed that poverty had a strong negative correlation with performance on the New York State English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics assessments among students in grades 3-8. Poverty accounted for over 67 percent of the variance on the English Language Arts assessments and over 56 percent of the variance on the Mathematics assessments. The schools’ APPR teacher evaluation ratings had weak to conflicting correlations with results on the State assessments. Attendance rates had strong positive correlations with student achievement on both State assessments and poverty had a negative correlation with attendance rates. The implications of this study suggested that legislators, State education departments, and school districts would best serve students by allocating resources toward programs that alleviate the detrimental effects that poverty has on student achievement.

I. Purpose
New York State implemented a revised teacher evaluation system, the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) during the 2011-2012 school year. The APPR has been controversial since its implementation (“APPR Paper - New York Principals,” n.d.; National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, 2014; New York State Education Department, 2011). Proponents and critics debated the impact that the APPR would have on student achievement (Futscher, 2014; Leonardatos, & Zahedi, 2014). Prior studies found the APPR teacher evaluations of suburban school districts had weak to conflicting correlations with student achievement and that poverty was the most important determinant of student success on State assessments (Forman & Markson, 2015). As a result, the purpose of this study was to examine the relationship among New York State’s APPR teacher evaluation system, poverty, attendance rates, and academic achievement in New York City school districts, to see if prior studies of suburban school districts were consistent with findings in urban schools districts.

II. Theoretical Framework
Since section 3012-c of New York State Education Law was approved by the legislature and signed into law in 2010, controversy has been at its forefront. This law required classroom teachers to receive an annual professional performance review (APPR) rating with a score range: “highly effective,” “effective,” “developing,” and “ineffective.” A composite score was to be determined: (a) 20% based on student growth on State assessments or other comparable measures of student growth (increased to 25% upon implementation of a value-added growth model), (b) 20% based on locally-selected measures (for NYC: MOSL-Measures of Student Learning) that were rigorous and comparable across classrooms (decreased to 15% upon implementation of value-added growth model) and (c) 60% based on supervisory measures of teacher effectiveness, including observation of teaching performance using a State approved evaluation rubric. Early in 2015, the New York State legislature passed a revised evaluation law, section 3012-d. The governor signed the law into effect so that student performance counts for 50% of teachers’ APPR rating and supervisory observation the other 50% of teachers’ rating. (NYSED, 2015).

There are a variety of concerns with using student achievement data to evaluate teachers. One of the main problems in tying test scores to teacher evaluation is determining if some teachers are simply more effective at helping students achieve or if some teach-
ers happen to have more able students in their classroom. Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley, Haertel, and Rothstein (2012) found that student achievement was influenced by much more than simply a teacher’s effectiveness. Class size, curricula, availability of learning materials and technology resources, staffing of specialists, challenges in students’ home life, family income, issues within a community, school attendance, and student health could all influence student achievement. (Darling-Hammond, et al. 2012).

Teacher effectiveness has been linked to instruction by combining effectiveness into a single index to balance out differences in student background. However, there has been little empirical evidence to indicate how this combined index might weigh each measure toward a composite teacher evaluation. Landmark research, the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET), maintained that a balanced approach was most sensible when assigning weights to form a composite teaching measure, as too much emphasis on any one piece of a teacher’s composite score could be misleading. The researchers found that an optimal teacher’s composite rating was inclusive of student achievement gains on State tests, student survey responses and observations using Danielson’s Framework for Teaching rubric (Danielson, 2007). Additionally, they reported that there were a variety of challenges in using test scores to evaluate teachers and found a correlation of student achievement with teacher ratings that was weak and quite low. (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2013).

Berliner (2013) reported that there were many intrinsic problems with value-added evaluation of teachers, especially issues with the testing process itself. In his discussion on the lack of instructional sensitivity of test items, Berliner reaffirmed that higher social class students had higher passing rates per item and lower social class students had lower passing rates per item, independent of the teacher’s ability to teach (Berliner, 2013).

Haertel (2013) explained that no statistical manipulation was able to assure fair comparisons of teachers working in very different schools, with very different students under very different conditions. Marshall (2013) could not support the relationship of teacher ratings with student achievement and standardized testing. Additionally, he indicated that since standardized test data were only available for 20% of teachers, evaluations failed to take into account work done by “pullout” teachers, specialists, tutors, or previous grades (Marshall, 2013).

Studies by Darling-Hammond et al. (2012) and Darling-Hammond (2015) revealed that students’ achievement and measured gains were influenced by much more than any individual teacher. A multitude of factors were identified and included the effects of poverty, such as: home and community supports or challenges, individual student needs and abilities, health and attendance, peer culture and achievement, differential summer learning loss which especially affected low-income children, and the specific tests used which emphasized some kinds of learning and not others and which rarely measured achievement that was well above or below grade level (Darling-Hammond, 2015; Darling-Hammond, et al., 2012).

Hershberg et al. (2004) indicated that it was impossible to fully separate out the influences of students’ other teachers as well as school conditions on students’ reported learning. No single teacher accounted for all of a student’s learning. Prior teachers had lasting effects both positive and negative on students’ later learning. By following individual students over time, value-added assessment was influenced by student background characteristics over which schools had no control and that tended to bias test results (Hershberg et al., 2004).

Newton et al. (2010) found that although three of the five growth models examined controlled for student demographics as well as students’ prior test scores, teachers’ rankings were nonetheless significantly and negatively correlated with proportions of students who were English language learners, free lunch recipients or Hispanic. Even in models that controlled for student demographics as well as students’ prior test scores, teachers’ rankings were nonetheless negatively correlated with the proportions of students who were English language learners, free lunch recipients or Hispanic. Correlations indicated that even in the most complex models a substantial portion of the variance in teacher rankings was attributable to selected student characteristics (Newton et al., 2010).

Finally, the Forman and Markson (2015) study of pupil performance, teacher ratings, and demographics indicated that poverty had a strong negative correlation with performance on the New York State English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics assessments among students in grades 3-8 in 124 Nassau and Suff-
folk County school districts. As poverty went up, performance on the State assessments went down. Poverty accounted for over 60 percent of the variance on student performance on both State assessments. The school districts’ APPR teacher evaluation ratings had weak to conflicting correlations with student achievement (Forman and Markson, 2015).

III. Data Sources

The data for this study were obtained from the New York State Education Department data site (2015) for the 2013 to 2014 school year. State reporting on two New York City school districts, Manhattan School District 2 and Staten Island School District 31 were included in this study. These districts were selected because they were the two most populous, with a student population over 120,000, and above average performing in New York City (“Largest School Districts in New York - Niche,” n.d.). The New York State Education Department data site (2015) was the source of following data: (a) the number and percent of students collecting free and reduced lunch; (b) the percent of average daily student attendance; (c) the numbers of educators and their APPR teacher rating percentages; and (d) grades 3-8 student achievement as indicated by levels 3 and 4 on State English Language Arts and Mathematics examinations.

IV. Method

Student achievement was measured by performance on the New York State assessments in English Language Arts and Mathematics, grades 3-8. There were 4 reporting levels: Level 1 - below grade level expectations, Level 2 - approaching grade level, and Levels 3 and 4 - on grade level and above. Student achievement was the dependent variable and measured by the percent of students obtaining Levels 3 and 4 on the English Language Arts and Mathematics State assessments. Poverty was identified as the percent of students receiving free and reduced lunch. Attendance was indicated as the percent average daily attendance for the school. Teacher performance included the percent of teachers rated on each category on the school’s Annual Personnel Performance Review: Level 1 - “ineffective,” Level 2 - “developing,” Level 3 - “effective” and Level 4 - “highly effective.”

Two correlation analyses were conducted to determine if the schools’ free and reduced lunch percentages (aligned with poverty), attendance rates, and teacher ratings were related to the percent of students scoring Level 3 and 4 on the English Language Arts and Mathematics examinations. A Pearson Product-Moment correlation analysis, with a two-tailed test of significance with alpha set at .05, was used to analyze the relationships between the variables.

V. Results

Table 1 illustrates the results for the correlations with ELA Level 3 and 4 achievement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ELA Level 3 and 4</th>
<th>Free &amp; Reduced Lunch</th>
<th>Attendance Rate</th>
<th>Highly Effective APPR</th>
<th>Effective APPR</th>
<th>Developing APPR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Free &amp; Reduced Lunch</td>
<td>r -0.824**</td>
<td>r^2 67.90%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance Rate</td>
<td>r 0.627**</td>
<td>r^2 39.31%</td>
<td>-0.413**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly Effective APPR</td>
<td>r 0.167</td>
<td>r^2 0.59%</td>
<td>0.077</td>
<td>0.204</td>
<td>0.106</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective APPR</td>
<td>r -0.191</td>
<td>r^2 0.112</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>-0.978**</td>
<td>-0.978**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing APPR</td>
<td>r 0.174</td>
<td>r^2 3.03%</td>
<td>0.085</td>
<td>-0.208</td>
<td>-0.467**</td>
<td>0.506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ineffective APPR</td>
<td>r 0.651</td>
<td>r^2 42.38%</td>
<td>0.542</td>
<td>0.437</td>
<td>0.497</td>
<td>0.506</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The percent of students receiving free and reduced lunch had a statistically significant relationship with the percent of students achieving Level 3 and 4 on the English Language Arts assessment. There was an inverse relationship, accounting for 67.9 percent of the variance: as the percent of students receiving free and reduced lunch increased, the percent of students achieving Level 3 and 4 achievement substantially decreased. The attendance rate also had a statistically significant relationship with the English Language Arts assessment rate. Here, there was a positive correlation, accounting for 39.31 percent of the variance on the percent of students receiving Level 3 and 4 on the English Language Arts assessment. The “highly effective,” “effective,” and “developing” APPR ratings did not have statistically significant relationships with English Language Arts.
Arts assessment, p > .05. The “ineffective” APPR rating had a statistically significant and negative correlation with the English Language Arts assessment, accounting for 42.38 percent of the variance.

Table 2 displays the results for the correlations with Level 3 and 4 achievement on the Mathematics assessments.

Table 2
Correlations with Mathematics Level 3 and 4 Achievement Percentage (N = 11 - 102)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Math Level 3 and 4</th>
<th>Free &amp; Reduced Lunch</th>
<th>Attendance Rate</th>
<th>Highly Effective APPR</th>
<th>Effective APPR</th>
<th>Developing APPR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Free &amp; Reduced Lunch</td>
<td>r = -0.751**</td>
<td>r^2 = 56.40%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance Rate</td>
<td>r = 0.717**</td>
<td>r^2 = 51.41%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly Effective APPR</td>
<td>r = 0.276*</td>
<td>r^2 = 7.62%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective APPR</td>
<td>r = -0.278**</td>
<td>r^2 = 7.73%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing APPR</td>
<td>r = 0.057</td>
<td>r^2 = 2.46%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ineffective APPR</td>
<td>r = 0.711*</td>
<td>r^2 = 50.55%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

VI. Conclusions
The “ineffective” teacher category was the only noteworthy variable, among the APPR teacher evaluation system, that had the strongest relationship with student achievement. It accounted for 42.38 and 50.55 percent of the variance on the English Language Arts and Mathematics State assessments respectively. Not surprisingly, it had a negative relationship with performance on both State assessments. However, with only 11 of the 102 New York City schools in this study having any percentage reporting in this category, the “ineffective” variable was not a viable statistic. These particular findings and conclusions were very similar to those in the Forman and Markson (2015) study of suburban schools. The other APPR teacher evaluation categories had no statistically significant relationship with results on the English Language Arts assessment. The “highly effective” teacher category had a statistically significant relationship with performance on the Mathematics assessment and almost 80 percent of the schools had various percentages of its teachers in this category. However, the strength of this relationship was very weak, accounting for only 7.62 percent of the variance on the Mathematics assessment. Teachers who fell under the other positive APPR rating of “effective” also had a statistically significant relationship with performance on the Mathematics assessment. However, “effective” teachers had a negative relationship with the Mathematics assessment and only accounted for 7.73 percent of the variance. Meaning, as the percent of effective teachers in a school went up, assessment scores trended down. “Developing” teachers had no statistically significant relationship with results on the Mathematics assessment. As was the case with the findings and conclusions of the Forman and Markson (2015) study, “effective” has become the new “ineffective” in relation to student achievement on the Mathematics assessment.

Poverty, as measured by the percent of students receiving free and reduced lunch, had by far the stron-
gest relationship with performance on the English Language Arts and Mathematics assessments, accounting for 67.9 and 56.4 percent of the variance respectively. Furthermore, poverty had a statistically significant and inverse relationship with student attendance rates. Poverty accounted for over 17 percent of the variance on attendance: as poverty went up, student attendance went down. Attendance, in turn, had statistically significant and positive relationships with performance on the English Language Arts and Mathematics assessments, accounting for 39.31 and 50.55 percent of the variance respectively. In short, the downward pressure that poverty put on student attendance was to the further detriment of student achievement. As concluded in the Forman and Markson (2015) study, the real tragedy with the New York State APPR teacher evaluation system was that its controversy overshadowed the most important variable in relation to student achievement and that variable was poverty.

VII. Implications of the Research

If the results of this study remain consistent with future studies, legislators, State education departments, and school leaders throughout the country should focus more of their attention on developing programs that alleviate the detrimental effects that poverty has on student achievement. A variable that accounts for over 56 percent of the variance on student achievement should never be ignored. New York State education commissioner, MaryEllen Elia, in a recent speech called for the expansion of the community schools approach to provide wraparound services to students and their families, especially in underachieving schools and districts to address this issue. Moreover, given the weak to conflicting correlations among the APPR teacher evaluation system and student achievement on the State assessments, either the teacher evaluation system should be modified or the State assessments or perhaps both.

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How to Help Teachers Become Inspiring

Dr. Kenneth Forman is the off-campus program coordinator and lecturer in the School of Professional Development/Educational Leadership Program at Stony Brook University. He served as an administrator and teacher for the New York City public schools for 27 years and as a school building leader on Long Island for 12 years. He is the author of two educational leadership books: Preparing for Educational Leadership, 2nd Edition, a guide for emerging school and district leaders to successfully complete SBL/SDL New York State licensing examinations and Diving into Data, a resource to help move schools or districts to become highly-effective data-driven organizations. Additionally, he has published a number of articles and columns on efficacy of school leadership and the teacher evaluation process. He also serves as an advisor to a New York State Regent.

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Meaning is about value and significance. These are both shaped by a person’s understanding of a thing’s purpose. Is it the primary purpose of a school that students successfully pass standardised examinations and gain nationally recognised qualifications? Does the value of teaching depend on the extent to which students learn to pass these exams? Probably, these questions are too simplistic because they imply shared assumptions about learning within school education and about the role of teachers in stimulating or producing learning. However, it is important to address the question of what teaching qualities are likely to increase its educational significance and what factors may contribute to teachers being able to inspire students’ learning. Whatever the primary purpose of school education may be thought to be, one thing is sure, it can only be achieved through this activity.

According to educational philosopher Gert Biesta, there are strong influences in contemporary educational discourse which foster a confusion between learning and education. He describes this as ‘learnification’: “The translation of everything there is to say about education in terms of learning and leaners.” This he sees as problematic because people learn things through their experiences and engagement with the reality around them. Much of this learning is tacit; much of it is relational. Also, when school learning is talked about, it’s primarily in terms of curriculum learning, measured through standardised tests, classified as the key educational outcomes of a school, and produced by suitably qualified, regularly monitored, teachers.

However, students learn many things about what society values, what makes a teacher upset, what makes their friends laugh, what their parents think about their time in school, all without learning anything about a curriculum subject. Teaching a class is not just about helping students to learn subject knowledge and core topics, skills and competencies. Often teachers are obliged to teach topics which, if they had time to think about it, they would conclude were mostly irrelevant to their students’ lives. Even more frequently they are required to help students learn how to pass tests, which requires as much focus on techniques for timed assessment as it does for gaining insight and knowledge about a subject.

Recently, Emeritus Professor Michael Young (Institute of Education, University of London) has presented his own critique of school learning in relation to the ‘loss of object’ in curriculum theory. He describes how a fear of knowledge often pervades schools which results in an absence of conviction about what curriculum knowledge is actually for. In response to this, Young advocates a knowledge-based curriculum, where “the curriculum must start not from the student as learner but from a student’s entitlement or access to knowledge” (2013) and, in an earlier paper, he distinguishes this idea of ‘knowledge’ from its use within the concept of the ‘knowledge society’:

“The purpose of (formal) education is to ensure that as many as possible of each cohort or age group are able to acquire the knowledge that takes them beyond their experience and which they would be unlikely to have access to at home, at work or in the community.” (Young, 2010, italics as in original)

In order to help students engage with knowledge in the ways advocated by Young, many teachers will need see their own relationship to the curriculum and responsibilities to students in a new light.

Lifelong learning, grit, relevance and something more

It is true that educational research over the last decade or so has increasingly addressed the importance and value of schools teaching students how to learn independently, become lifelong learners, flexible, adaptable, curious and resilient (Claxton, 2007; Bolhuis & Voeten, 2010; Crick et al., 2014). There is clearly much value in these approaches. There is also research demonstrating how young people’s engagement with education (Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Klem & Connell, 2004), stimulating their creativity (Scott et al. 2004) and providing them with a clear sense of values enhances both their academic performance and their appreciation of school (Lovat et al., 2010; Lovat, 2011). But it’s easy to miss how fundamental it is that teachers see their role in a broader perspective, if we want to see them helping...
students to build these capabilities. Teaching cannot just be about training students for examinations, not even just about transferring knowledge and skills related to the curriculum. Teaching involves educating the whole person through meaningful interactions, by example and with genuine responsiveness to the students’ needs.

The relationship between teacher expectations and student performance has been much discussed in the popular press, as well as explored and critiqued in academic articles (Jussim & Harber, 2005). What has been given less attention is the relationship between teachers’ own learning dispositions and their students’ learning. However, a study by Thoonen et al. explored the interdependence of students’ learning motivation and their teachers’ sense of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy was described as a teachers’ sense of being able to influence the learning of their students and make decisions about their teaching practices aimed at helping students’ learning. Understood in this way, self-efficacy reflects learning autonomy, adaptability and purposeful engagement, all factors associated with learning power (Claxton, 2007; Deakin Crick, 2007a). Thoonen et al. reported:

“Finally, the results lend credence to the argument that teachers’ sense of self-efficacy has an impact on both teachers’ practices and students’ motivation to learn. The findings show that teacher efficacy had significantly positive effects on all aspects of their teaching.” (Thoonen et al., 2011)

There has also been research by van Daal et al. (2014) which examined the influence of goal orientation, personality traits, and self-efficacy on high school teachers’ participation in learning activities while at work in school. Their statistical analysis of these factors, using multivariate regression analyses, indicated the potential importance of teachers’ learning dispositions:

“Learning orientation and self-efficacy are better predictors of participation in experimentation, informal interaction and self-regulation than personality is. Teachers who are learning oriented, experiment more, have more informal discussions with their colleagues and regulate their own practice more strongly.”

However, there are limitations in establishing these kinds of relationships between factors without being clear on the situated role of teachers within the complex environments of school and without first seeking to define teachers’ responsibilities in a way which encourages their own learning agency.

Towards authentic teaching

There is a danger of going round in circles, the circle of techniques which work, dispositions which are effective, but individual’s sense of themselves remaining unchanged. In order to prevent dizziness, we need to re-assess the value of organised education and the profession called ‘teachers’. My mother and father were instrumental in me learning to use language (the most precious of learning outcomes); they were teachers without knowing it. How many more life lessons have they and others who were not ‘teachers’ taught me. Is it unreasonable to hope that school teachers could help children discover their talents and understand how these may be of use in the world? If this was an aim of school education, it may be helpful for students to be introduced to a broad curriculum but specific subject knowledge as measured by standardised exams would not be the only goal. The qualifications which formal examinations lead to are, perhaps, necessary besides to the greater task of bringing someone out into the world more fully developed and inspired to make a difference for good. Current educational priorities, in contrast, run the risk of creating environments where children are taught by individuals who have lost the sense of a more meaningful and expansive vision school learning.

“Schools become truly inspiring places when their teachers are as concerned to develop their own learning power as their students.”

Meaningful teaching requires teachers having an educational vision with a clear sense of their own values. Values which can help transcend the pressures of examination targets, on the one hand, and help them see the unusual connections between different aspects of school life and curricula, on the other hand. These values run deeply through the seven dimensions of learning identified in the Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory (ELLI) research at the University of Bristol (Crick et al., 2004). These learning dimensions are seen as key to a person’s ability to develop their potential and fully engage their understanding (Deakin Crick et al., 2007). It is for this reason that one of the priorities for teacher development must be their own continued growth in lifelong learning capabilities. In
this way they can authentically model what it is to be learning, allowing the creation of relationships characterised by openness and trust. The importance of this was drawn out in the findings of the Learning Futures project back in 2011 (Crick et al., 2011). Analysing data from 150 hours of student interviews, 75 hours of teacher interviews, as well as quantitative data (N=3000), researchers identified two important factors which affected students’ learning outcomes: first, that students see themselves as knowledge-generators and, second, that they gain learning agency through their participation in school. However, the findings also made clear the inseparable relationship between how students engage with learning and how their teachers do too: “Time and again the students referred to these qualities in their teachers and their environment, and there was evidence that if there was not consistency in the school as a community around these themes, then it created difficulties. For example, the degree to which teachers felt able to develop their own agency in their pedagogy appeared to have an impact on the quality of student experience.”

It is for this reason that encouraging teachers to reflect on their learning dispositions needs to be at the heart of teacher training programmes and professional development.

Finally, although the idea of being an inspiring teacher is hugely attractive, it often remains more of an aspiration than a goal. But this is because inspirational teaching is seen as either a magic gift of charisma some teachers have and some don’t, or as a highly talented use of successful techniques, the mastery of which beyond the energies of most. However, when teachers are fully engaged in their own learning and growth as people, they are able to inspire their students. It is learning itself which is inspiring. When students see that their teachers are committed to their own professional learning, this creates an environment of authentic learning energy – something truly inspiring.

References


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“Leadership is solving problems. The day soldiers stop bringing you their problems, is the day you have stopped leading them. They have either lost confidence that you can help or concluded you do not care. Either case is a failure of leadership.”

- Colin Powell
Change efforts are common in education. School leaders constantly face important decisions when implementing change. The rapid intensification of expectations from outside forces in the community, state, and federal governments coupled with systemic changes occurring with the Common Core State Standards have placed a premium on making lasting change happen within a school. School leaders must understand change in order to lead others through the process (Calabrese, 2002). The change process can stall the moment there is even one sign that a new initiative tagged with being part of the overall change falls below expectations. Consequently, strategically planning for change in a school is vital for meeting the needs of all stakeholders through evidence demonstrating that the change will have a positive impact and is a vehicle for sustained improvement of practice.

Change is learning (Hall & Hord, 2011). Learning that results in performance improvement cannot occur unless people receive feedback while doing something more, less, or differently (Daniels & Bailey, 2014). Every leader is in a position to have tremendous influence on factors impacting change. In education, it is fair to say that the effective operation of a school typically rests on the shoulders of its leader. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) conducted a meta-analysis on school leadership studies involving 2,802 schools. Results of the meta-analysis revealed “principals can have a profound effect on the achievement of students in their schools” (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 38). According to Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) and Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003), there is direct evidence that effective school leadership accounts for up to 25% of positive change to students’ learning. Having the right type of leader is critical in moving a school toward sustained success (Bossidy, 2001; Brenneman, 1998; Buchanan, 2003; Hamel, 2000; Hirschhorn, 2002; Joyce, 2004). Leadership is essential to creating change and improving performance. A student’s chance of academic success hinges upon the effective operation of a school (Marzano et al., 2005). Marzano (2003) wrote, “Research in the last 35 years demonstrates that effective schools have a profound impact on student achievement” (p. 8). This impact on student achievement was documented by Rosenthal and Rubin (1982), who found a 31.6% difference in passing rates on assessments between students in effectively managed versus ineffectively managed schools.

To be an effective leader, it is not enough to simply do something different. A leader must step in and connect the dots for people to see how and why the change effort will lead to achieving a goal; moreover, the leader must help stakeholders understand the particular ways in which the change efforts will be meaningful to them. This must be accomplished without ignoring the present and the past. Sustainable change cannot take place without regeneration. Regeneration in a school is a series of changes that lead to a systemic disruptive transformation (Christensen, Horn, & Staker, 2013) that challenges the status quo in a school. Small changes in a school may impact or improve current systems. However, if those systems are not producing desired results under today’s more rigorous standards for teaching and learning, then the change is merely making the status quo function more efficiently. Regeneration provides a new definition of what is effective by producing results in teaching and learning that have not been experienced before. Disruption of the status quo occurs when the new changes in practice produce unprecedented results that cannot be ignored. These results lead others taking notice and inquiring about how the results were achieved. Thus, change in practice and learning begins to spread throughout the vicarious experiences of people within a school (Bandura, 1997).

While planning for and initiating change is critical for gaining momentum, many leaders’ attempts to implement change either fall short of the intended goal or only demonstrate flashes of short-lived success because they fail to focus on strategically nurturing the change process (Jacobs, 2013). Cultivating change requires effective analysis, planning, and, most importantly, progressively building the knowledge, skills, and confidence of those involved in the change efforts. Here are five steps to ensure change happens and leads to sustainable practice.

Assess

A variety of factors can keep a school from reaching its goals. Lack of staff buy-in, limited resources, and limited time are issues preventing school leaders from implementing the changes necessary for success. Unfortunately, many school leaders take a surface-level approach toward implementing change. This occurs as a result of avoidance or lack of awareness regarding the underlying issues preventing lasting change from occurring. As a result, members of a school staff refrain from looking in the mirror and facing the possible reality that one of them may be the obstacle to goal attainment; similarly, they might refuse to believe that factors existing outside the school, such as poverty, crime, and a student’s neighborhood, can actually be overcome as
an obstacle to student achievement with the right people, resources, plan, and support in place. To be effective and efficient, school leaders should conduct an objective assessment of their current state to ensure the change they want to implement is focused on factors that will accelerate organizational growth. Many school leaders begin to implement change initiatives based on hunches or what they think should be changed, without ever speaking to anyone who is going to be impacted by the change. It is imperative that school leaders involve those who will be impacted by the change when conducting a needs assessment. Engaging these stakeholders fosters buy-in, while allowing for the most comprehensive and objective analysis.

There are two sources of data that should be used when assessing: leading indicators and lagging indicators. Leading indicators are like formative assessments where the data match up more closely to the day-to-day activities, behaviors, and perceptions. This type of data allows for more strategic and less reactive decision making (Supovitz, Foley, & Mishook, 2012). Measures such as student and staff attendance, discipline data, and climate surveys can serve as leading indicators. Lagging indicators are akin to summative assessments as data are collected after the fact and tend to be more historical by nature. School leaders typically utilize lagging indicators as the main source of data for making decisions. State test scores, referral data from the past school year, and annual school climate surveys are examples of lagging indicators. These are all good sources of data. However, they are limited in their effectiveness when making real-time adjustments because of the timing of results. Data have a short shelf life in the 21st century.

Leaders are most effective when feedback and information are provided in real time. Making a decision based on data from three, six, or even nine months prior can be inaccurate as a result of changes in student and teacher populations. Relevance to the work of teachers and students is also lacking as they forge ahead to keep pace with the demands required by state standards. Leading indicators are data generated in real time. Let’s look at an example of student achievement data. Providing a student with feedback from an assessment that was administered on what the student learned that week or day is more effective than feedback from an assessment that was administered six months prior. Leading indicators should also be linked to staff performance. The more feedback provided to staff is delayed, the less likely leaders will observe improvement in performance. Performance must be progressively shaped through ongoing feedback. To assist staff with improving tomorrow, a leader must know how staff are doing today. A leader waiting on results (lagging indicators) is like a physician attempting to improve a patient’s health using an autopsy. It’s too late to take action. Leading indicators are more effective as they give the leader the ability to provide real-time feedback while making midcourse adjustments as needed.

Leading and lagging indicators provide a leader with measures of the past and present to effectively create a needs assessment to guide the focus of an action plan that will positively impact the future. It is important to analyze lagging indicators along with leading indicators when conducting a needs assessment. While cultural change in terms of shared staff behavior is the ultimate goal for sustainability, climate—or shared staff perceptions—can serve as a leading indicator for progress toward this goal. Both leading and lagging indicators play an important role when conducting a root cause analysis to determine the areas to focus on for the change effort. A root cause analysis is a method of problem solving to help school leadership teams determine structures, processes, or school climate matters that may be impeding progress toward goal attainment (Wilson, Dell, & Anderson, 1993). Getting to the root causes can help leadership teams uncover any past successes or failures the team experienced when attempting to reach a goal. Root cause analysis should also be used to assess exemplary performance (Daniels & Daniels, 2007). For example, why is one teacher or grade group performing better than another? How and why do their behaviors differ from the norm? Are there environmental influences that can be identified and replicated? Such information provides important data that assist a leader in building off the strengths existing within the organization while navigating around mistakes of the past. Lagging indicators provide the historical data and trends that may have created obstacles to success. These, coupled with leading indicators, can provide a deeper look into past and present performance that is impacting the ability of staff and students to reach goals. Beware . . . the root cause holding you back from success could point to the leader as the obstacle to obtaining a goal. Leaders should be self-reflective during this process and model the behavior of self-inquiry for other staff. They should avoid being defensive and should be open to accepting change in their practice as well. This is an opportunity for growth, so leaders should stay open to the feedback and make a concerted effort to change their ways based on the data. Leaders who model change will get others to change much sooner.

Create
Creating a plan for how the change will be implemented and sharing it with the stakeholders who will be impacted by the change is critical to ensuring success. Do not shoot for the stars with your opening goal. Think about smaller, incremental goals that are measured in weeks, not months or years. Data are your friend here. Use the data generated from the root cause analysis to inform your strategic plan. The root cause data are
considered your current state and can be used as a baseline as this is where performance at the school currently stands. Move the conversation toward what you want the desired state to be. It is important for stakeholders to be directly involved in this process as this will likely directly impact their buy-in and future motivation. What will success look like? Utilize this vision to establish goals. We recommend utilizing the SMART Goal acronym: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-oriented, and Time-bound. Using SMART Goals helps to keep the team focused on data-driven results and provides a timeline for action. Be purposeful in setting your plan in motion, from how you will move from the current state to your desired goal, by setting clear measures of success that will indicate that progress toward the goal is being made. Use those measures to break down percentages into clear targets. Numbers tend to seem more achievable than percentages. What would seem more achievable to a teacher: “Improve your class performance by 30% in nine weeks” or “Move an additional seven students to a designated proficiency target by the next four-week milestone with additional support personnel”? Identifying leading and lagging indicators will provide clear measures of progress toward established goals. Find ways to collect and provide data to demonstrate progress early on to build momentum and achieve a series of quick wins. Quick wins serve as new and visible evidence of positive changes supported by the team (Van Buren & Safferstone, 2009). Quick wins strengthen the belief in the collective efforts of those involved and build confidence that the action steps of the plan are producing positive results as stakeholders observe signs of success early on. Seeing is believing. A quick win can be as simple as a change to supervision in a hallway during student dismissal that leads to reduced student misbehavior and a more orderly process when students exit the building. Data and communication are critical to a quick win’s value. Let’s use the example of increasing supervision in the hallway during dismissal. The problem could have been numerous fights and student injuries during this time. Data indicating the change in supervision decreased or eliminated incidents immediately demonstrate to people that a change in practice led to a desired result. People will also directly observe changes during dismissal and wonder what has changed. Communicating how that change was linked to the collective efforts of those involved in the plan will provide immediate evidence that the plan and those acting upon it are creating positive results. This will lead people to want to contribute more to the greater good of the school. Demonstrating measurable growth fosters collective belief in leadership, in the process, and the collective ability of the team to achieve a task or goal, where prior success was fleeting. Success begets success. Observing positive change linked to their efforts will increase the likelihood that stakeholders will pursue future goals, even during adversity.

When creating the plan, be strategic by identifying obstacles before they happen, to keep people from losing their faith at the first sign of trouble. A leader must remind stakeholders that, even with the most thoughtfully developed plans, setbacks will happen. Taking a proactive approach to setbacks can help to lessen the effects on momentum. Start by being transparent about how setbacks and missteps are inevitable. Create a plan at the start to send a message that when a setback happens, specific problem-solving actions will occur as balance and continuity are maintained to avoid sidetracking progress. This plan should enable people on the team to mobilize and address issues head-on without waiting for a leader to give permission to do so. This will empower people to solve problems on their own. Make sure everyone is clear as to what their role is within the plan and clearly identify what problem solving and success look like for each stakeholder group. This will help the team maintain its course, even during challenging times. Proper preparation for potential setbacks will prevent people from abandoning the plan, while providing clear focus on steps for mitigating obstacles as they occur.

As a leader, it is important that a few key actions be pinpointed to help get the plan off the ground (Ayers, 1995). More actions can be targeted as the plan begins to move, but requiring too much on the part of those involved in the plan’s implementation will likely stall the process. If everything is important, nothing is important. Leaders should resist the temptation to throw too much at staff at one time. Focusing on a few strategic actions at a time will actually accelerate growth (Daniels & Bailey, 2014) and keep staff from feeling overwhelmed.

In addition, leaders must identify a few key actions required by leadership team members to help them effectively lead and manage others in a way that will enable them to launch the plan. This is critical to the success of the plan. It should not be assumed that all members of the leadership team will know what they should be doing. For example, if improving school climate is a target of your plan, a couple of behavioral expectations the leader might set for the leadership team could be smiling at staff, greeting them in the morning, providing positive feedback for any growth, and asking staff if they need help. As the climate improves, other leadership actions can be targeted.

**Implement**

Although developing a plan is necessary, it is insufficient for growth and sustainability. Once you have a
Finally, leaders must not forget to help their leaderable achievement. Building a positive culture characterized by sustaining feedback to reinforce growth is fundamental to demonstrating improvement can serve as a meaningful misbehavior as a goal, simply providing measures that initially moved stakeholders’ behavior to quickly stall as leaders omit strategies for managing human performance, which is the most critical element for change to occur (Daniels & Daniels, 2007). Laipple (2012) argued that focusing on instructing followers on what to do without examining the ways in which the daily behaviors are actually changing is not enough. To be successful, leaders must follow their great speeches and plans with positive reinforcement of desired behaviors. Utilizing positive reinforcement as a means of creating discretionary performance, characterized by followers possessing “want to do” attitudes as opposed to “have to do” attitudes that result from coercive leadership (Braksick, 2007), helps to keep change efforts in motion without supervision. While some leaders use a “you’d better to do it or else” strategy to move teacher behavior, many experts agree this command-and-control approach has an erosive effect on climate and culture and a diminishing return on investment (Braksick, 2007; Daniels & Daniels, 2007; Jacobs, 2013; Laipple, 2012; Owens & Valesky, 2010). Schools characterized by positive climates positively impact culture and achievement (Thapa, Cohen, Higgins-D’Alessandro, & Guffey, 2012). In schools in which stakeholders “have to” perform, leaders are typically using coercion, or what Northouse (2007) described as an authority-compliance model of leadership. This type of leadership has a heavy emphasis on job requirements and less of an emphasis on people. Under these conditions, followers tend to meet the minimum requirements for maintaining their jobs in order to avoid some aversive consequence. Leaders must remember this: People first, process second. Implementing the plan takes the concerted efforts of a leader and his/her team to provide reinforcing and constructive (not coercive) feedback about performance while constantly communicating the status of the plan to stakeholders. Since stakeholders were directly involved in the development of the goals, feedback related to progress toward the goals can serve as natural reinforcement (Goltz & Hietapelto, 2003). For example, if stakeholders targeted decreased misbehavior as a goal, simply providing measures demonstrating improvement can serve as a meaningful consequence that will fuel future action. Providing feedback to reinforce growth is fundamental to building a positive culture characterized by sustainable achievement.

Finally, leaders must not forget to help their leader-ship team perform well. If they are following the plan as intended, their collective performance will accelerate growth across the campus. The leader cannot be everywhere. But the leader can focus on helping members of leadership perform well through reinforcement and constructive feedback targeted to the specific leadership behavioral expectations established during the Create phase.

**Measure**

To some leaders, measurement can be a daunting task; however, simply put, measurement is comprised of either counting or evaluating something. Measurement is needed for any change to be successful. However, one must be careful to not get bogged down by an abundance of data as this can result in overanalysis, which has the tendency to stall change (Daniels & Daniels, 2007). Measurement such as leading indicators established during the Create phase will provide in-the-moment opportunities to reinforce staff or make midcourse adjustments based on the implementation of the plan. These measures can be used to make the link between action and results. Lagging indicators such as established benchmarks would provide opportunities to celebrate success and opportunities for deep reflection of practice. Utilizing short-term goals established with stakeholders during the Create phase, such as quick wins, will provide the leader with opportunities to celebrate success more often. These celebrations can have a profound and positive impact on climate while maintaining or even increasing momentum toward long-term goals.

Leaders frequently offer quantitative examples when asked how they will measure the incremental success of a change effort. Assessment data, discipline referral data, etc., are examples of commonly used quantitative data points. Reviewing quantitative data is important. It’s necessary to know if you are moving the needle toward your goal. However, qualitative data are just as important. Leaders must provide ongoing measures of the stakeholder climate through surveys, focus groups, etc. Leading indicators can be used by the leader to check the temperature of the climate during the change effort and provide targeted support where it is needed most. In fact, climate surveys might also serve as upward feedback and a measure of a leader’s approach. Staff and student perceptions, though sometimes not rooted in facts, can lead to a false sense of success or failure. It is important to combine the qualitative data with the quantitative data to inform the decision-making process that impacts future change efforts. For this reason, a leader must know what stakeholders are collectively thinking. It provides a deeper look into how stakeholders perceive the change process and how it is impacting them on an individual level. Acting on these measures in a supportive fashion will help to meet
stakeholder needs through the process of obtaining a goal while sending a message that their needs are being met through the process; moreover, it helps to build and maintain momentum throughout the change effort.

Reflect
Reflecting is often neglected in schools due to time constraints. It is tough to make a change sustainable without taking time for deep reflection of practice (Calabrese & Zepeda, 1997). The best time for deep reflection of practice is following a major milestone. Milestones offer natural pauses throughout the school year for intense review of lagging indicators. An easy way to build in a milestone at a school would be to target a time following an interim assessment or the end of a quarter. Time should be built in to allow teachers to have a full day to review student trend data. Such data serve as a catalyst for deeper conversations regarding which instructional practices are working to serve students’ learning needs and where pockets of student misconceptions are in need of further instructional adjustments. Time should be set aside for celebrations of students’ and teachers’ accomplishments as well as time for conversation focused on adjustments that must be made based on the lessons learned from the immediate past. This reflection time should include all key stakeholders involved with implementing the plan. Each stakeholder should have an opportunity to voice their perceptions of needed adjustments and how those adjustments might impact their time and workload as the team moves toward the next milestone. Support for staff members should be differentiated as the needs of the students change according to the data. Leadership is often best served by providing transparency of data while taking an inquiry-based approach to leading the reflection time with guiding questions that ask, What are the data telling us? What can we learn from the data? How will we adjust our practice based on what the data are telling us? This will provide clarity as to what parts of the plan are having the largest impact on improving the school and what lessons can be learned. Periods of deep reflection generate space for ongoing, job-embedded professional learning (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2006).

Change requires focused management in order to be sustainable. The more the change effort is supported, the higher the probability of improved results and sustainability of change efforts. Collectively, educators are forced to continuously learn to meet the challenges of an ever-changing environment. As such, leaders must invest in their personal growth with the same vigor they invest in developing the human capital. Leaders who do not grow attempt to solve today’s problems with yesterday’s tool set. Personal growth includes a reflection on one’s personal values and behaviors as a means of increasing self-awareness, and can be most effective when practiced individually and with a group of peers (Conger, 1992).

References


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What if teens with learning disabilities could read and enjoy books of the same quality and engagement-level as their non-disabled peers? What if they could reorganize their brains by creating new neural connections through increased reading? Could increased literacy engagement give teens with learning disabilities new opportunities for life success?

As much as educators may want to provide hopeful answers to these questions, statistics for the learning disabled can often be viewed as grim. Students with LD experience course failure at a much higher rate than their non-disabled peers. Sixty-nine percent of students with LD have failed one or more graded courses in secondary school, compared to 47 percent of students in the general population. One third of students with LD have been held back in a grade at least once. One in every two students with LD faced a school disciplinary action in 2011. The mean GPA in graded courses for students with LD was 2.2, compared to 2.7 for students in the general population, pointing to a high risk for dropping out of school. (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2014).

The incidence of LD in those over 18 is inadequately reported, since many do not acknowledge their disability—or they compensate for it in a variety of ways. In the 2010 U.S. Census, 4.6 million Americans reported having LD—far more than the number who disclose their disability in college and the workplace. Those with learning disabilities have a reduced chance of success in the work force with 46% of working-age LD adults being employed, as compared to 71 percent of adults without LD (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007). Sixty seven percent earned $25,000 or less per year within eight years of leaving high school (Morin, 2014).

The National Center for Education Statistics reports that in 2011 only 34% of eighth graders were rated “Proficient” in Reading, with 24% rated “Below Basic.” National 12th-grade reading scores were lower in 2009 than they were in 1992 (NCES, 2011). Scores on the SAT critical reading portion declined to a record low in 2011. A compilation of the top 40 books teens in grades 9-12 are reading in school shows that the average reading level of that list is 5.3 -- barely above the fifth grade (Renaissance Learning, 2013). A report by Common Sense Media (2014) indicates that 33% of 13-year olds and 45% of 17-year-olds say they “seldom or never” read for pleasure during one year. One study shows a drop of 24% in daily readers among 15-17 year olds (Scholastic, 2013).

If, however, we can find a way to re-engage LD students in the reading process, there is a real opportunity for them to make the neural connections that continue to expand their brain capacity and increase their potential for learning. Elementary school was once thought to be a line of demarcation for language learners, where they peaked in their ability to form new neural pathways. Our growing understanding of neuroplasticity helps us to understand that literacy can improve throughout life. “There are a few broad principles that we can state come out of neuroscience,” says Kurt Fischer, education professor and director of the Mind, Brain, and Education Program at Harvard University. “Number one? The brain is remarkably plastic,” Fischer explains. “Even in middle or old age, it’s still adapting very actively to its environment” (Edutopia, 2010).

Neuroplasticity is the brain’s ability to reorganize itself by forming new neural connections throughout life. Recent research in neuroscience is leading to new insights into the ways in which the brain changes in response to experience, demonstrating that the brain is not static, but rather is dynamically changing and undergoes such transformation throughout one’s entire life.

The Arrowsmith Program, started by Barbara Arrowsmith Young, has proven successful with LD students in elementary, secondary, and post-secondary schools, and with adults. Arrowsmith Young bases her program on evidence that there is neuroplasticity over an individual’s life-span (Doidge, 2007). Another study on the brain’s reading network revealed widespread changes in functional connectivity of the brain’s reading network as a result of intervention with autistic children (Murdaugh, et al, 2015).

However, it is necessary for brain stimulation to stay constant or increase in order for students to make these neural connections. If adolescents give up on reading once they get to middle school, the brain’s reading network will cease to develop. “When we reach adolescence, a massive “pruning back” operation begins in the brain and synaptic connections and neurons that have not been used extensively suddenly die off—a classic case of ‘use it or lose it.’ It is probably best to strengthen weakened areas while all this extra cortical real estate is available” (Doidge, 2007). In addition, when adolescents stop reading or try to compensate in other ways for their lack of comprehension, it can
intensify the loss of neural connections in the brain, thus making LD more difficult to overcome. “...[I]n any situation where brain function is lost or on the wane, a person may be understandably tempted to find ways to work around the deficit—and thereby unintentionally exacerbate the loss of this circuitry” (Doidge, 2015).

However, the good news is that in cases where LD readers have learned that their brains can improve, the results have been positive, not only in their improved performance, but in their attitudes and self-image. A study found that both morale and grade points took a leap forward when students understood the idea that intelligence is malleable. Not only did those students who already believed this do better in school, but when researchers actively taught the idea to a group of students, they performed significantly better than their peers in a control group (Blackwell, Trzesniewski & Dweck, 2007).

Educators must now address not only the precipitous reading decline among older LD students but the grim projections for brain development as a result of it. To change outcomes for this group, the answer must lie in motivating them to read more. Fortunately, there are two promising resources to explore and develop further in order to address this issue: illustrations and digital media.

One theory for the diminishing interest in reading among LD students is the general absence of illustrations in their reading materials. Younger children with reading difficulties often find support in books with pictures that reinforce the text. Illustrations help young readers create mental images of simple story lines and well-defined characters. In many ways, pictures serve as the key to reading enjoyment for children who have difficulty turning abstract concepts into concrete thoughts.

However, there are scant resources for older readers in the form of the picture book. This audience has long outgrown the juvenile story lines and characters that mark many of the choices in this category. Illustrated books for older readers, although they do exist in the form of “Hi-Lo” readers (high interest, low reading level), are limited in number and scope. Graphic novels offer illustrations, but sometimes in an frenzied format with multiple panels on one page and dialogue bubbles advancing the story, which some LD readers find confusing. Digital literacy solutions specifically for LD teens and young adults are growing, but they often reflect learning strategies that are dated and unengaging, such as traditional multiple choice questions, and require extensive teacher training and intervention to be used with students. Therefore, many in this audience give up on reading, relegating it to a chore that is simply too difficult and unpleasant to master. In the words of one learning disabled student, “Reading makes my brain hurt.”

Van den Broek, Rapp and their colleagues suggest that in order for students to comprehend what they are reading, they must make coherent mental representation of the information in the text. To understand a story, students have to make appropriate and meaningful connections among the ideas that are presented, and this requires higher order cognitive processing (Rapp and van den Broek, 2005); van den Broek, Kendeou, and White, 2008).

The relationship of imagery to the ability to think is one of the preeminent theories of human cognition. Allan Paivio, author of the Dual Coding Theory (DCT) and a cognitive psychologist, stated, “Cognition is proportional to the extent that mental representations (imagery) and language are integrated” (Paivio, 1981). Dr. Paivio believes that in order to think and understand, humans must be able to simultaneously generate imagery and corresponding language to describe that imagery.

Research also points to the importance of stimulating visual and auditory acuity to improve comprehension. Lindamood, Bell, and Lindamood have established a successful and long-standing learning program on the theory that concept imagery is critical when remediating reading. They conclude that we must focus on “stimulating the sensory-cognitive functions of concept imagery if we want to successfully remediate for children and adults” (Lindamood, Bell, Lindamood, 1997).

Gestalt imagery — the ability to create imagined wholes — is a critical factor in oral and written language comprehension. Despite good decoding, good vocabulary, and adequate background experiences, many individuals experience weak gestalt imagery, thus processing “parts” rather than “wholes,” from verbal stimuli, spoken or written. This contributes to a Language Comprehension Disorder that may be accompanied by a commonality of symptoms: weak reading comprehension, weak oral language comprehension, weak oral language expression, weak written language expression, difficulty following directions, and a weak sense of humor (Bell, 1997).

Therefore, publishers of literary materials for LD teens and young adults could serve this population well by offering a broad range of richly illustrated products, both print and digital, that provide the kind of imagery these readers need to support their comprehension. Digital illustrations can offer the same comprehension support as print, but can also provide two distinct advantages: the innate appeal of digital platforms to young people, and the ability for interactivity which can enrich the teaching potential of the product.

The elements of digital reading that enhance comprehension have long been documented. According to numerous studies, electronic books can be highly motivat-
Perhaps the most critical advantage to the digital platform is its ability to offer the reader an opportunity to interact with the text and art of the book itself as well as with other readers. Research shows that interactive digital children’s books are significantly better than paper books in keeping a student’s attention and fostering interest in reading (Hsu, Chen, 2013). Studies also demonstrate that interactive strategies produce greater success than the use of “computerized workbooks” that march students through material they learn through rote or algorithm. “Interactive CBI systems can diagnose students’ levels of understanding and customize the material they engage with, offer a more interactive set of instructional activities, and provide feedback to students” (Warschauer and Matuchniak, 2010). In a study with low-achieving students, an interactive learning strategy produced more positive effects than a traditional approach. The authors concluded that the positive results “are deeply embedded in the core of the learning process and the necessity to create an environment that involves all students in high level thinking skills and to promote problem solving versus a drill-practice approach” (Bos, 2007).

The most innovative digital platforms also offer the benefit of encouraging socialization, long a problem among those with disabilities. “We now recognize that the social problems experienced by these children are the direct result of the learning disorder. Learning disabilities actually cause social rejection in many cases. Even if a child is enrolled in a responsive, individualized academic program and is progressing well in school, he still might have significant problems with peer and adult relationships” (Lavoie, 2007). Special education parent groups are replete with stories of young adults who have difficulties socializing. Digital resources can offer a “cyberspace” where students can compare scores and share ideas about the reading material, offering them the opportunity to interact about a common experience. This will, in turn, motivate them to read.

The 2013 Kids & Family Reading Report from Scholastic (Scholastic, 2013), supports the use of increased digital reading resources. Highlights of the report include the following findings:

i. The percent of children who have read an ebook has almost doubled since 2010 (25% vs. 46%).
ii. Among children who have read an ebook, one in five says he/she is reading more books for fun; boys are more likely to agree than girls (26% vs. 16%).
iii. Half of children age 9–17 say they would read more books for fun if they had greater access to ebooks – a 50% increase since 2010.
iv. Seventy-five percent of kids who have read an ebook are reading ebooks at home, with about one in four reading them at school.
v. Seventy-two percent of parents are interested in having their child read ebooks.

Thus, the answers to the questions first presented in this article can be resoundingly positive if publishers and developers explore innovative changes to the literacy solutions that are currently offered to LD readers. An increase in age-appropriate reading material in an illustrated, interactive digital format may offer these students more encouraging prospects for their futures. Educators and parents will serve these teens and young adults well by seeking out, requesting and utilizing these types of resources and assessing their outcomes. The learning-disabled continue to require intelligent and informed advocates to increase their opportunities for life success.

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Dr. Maria Cleary is President and CEO of Tiplitt, LLC, and is currently developing a reading app for learning disabled teens and young adults. She is an experienced school superintendent, principal, and teacher and has taught on the elementary through post-graduate levels. She has written and produced award-winning programs for WNBC-TV, Connecticut Public Broadcasting, Cablevision of Connecticut, the Archdiocese of NY and a variety of Fortune 500 companies. Higher education experience includes teaching at Montclair State University, Seton Hall University, Boston College, New Jersey City University, as well as piloting new media formats at Fairfield University.
Feedback and Feeding Up: Purposeful evidence-based observation practices that serve to improve teacher pedagogy - A guide for administrators.

Don Sternberg, Ed.D.

What I thought would serve as a great preamble for this article about evidence-based observation and evaluation of teachers was to try and delineate how many observations I have completed during my 36 years as a principal. How impressive that number would appear within the first paragraph of an article about an administrator’s role in improving teacher pedagogy. As I started to calculate the number it became oppressive as I tried to factor in full-time staff members, part-timers and the shared staff between different schools.

I came to realize the that shear number of observations paled in comparison to what I learned from each experience; what I walked away with in terms of learning how great pedagogy, when skillfully applied, moved student learning forward. How what I learned from one experience added to the richness of the next observation I performed; and how the next one added to the subsequent one and how these observational ‘Lego Blocks’ came to support and influence my becoming an experienced and highly effective advocate of quality educational practices.

How these observations created an assembly of best practices, pedagogical concepts, and basic understandings of how students learn best and created my ability to apply those practices, understandings, and concepts – utilizing ‘evidence’ garnered during the observation -- toward improving the instructional capability of others.

During the countless hours spent sitting in small wooden or plastic chairs in the rear of the classroom -- chairs that were easier to get into than out of as the years progressed -- I always felt I grew a little as an educator from every observation I performed. I had the opportunity to observe some outstanding, master teachers who would create learning environments so conducive to learning that I felt even the class pet gerbil stood a better than average chance of acing the subsequent exam than a gerbil in a classroom of a lesser teacher. Because, truth be told, not every teacher is a master teacher and not every child (or gerbil, for at matter) will have the benefit of spending 182 days or so in a highly effective educational environment….and that is where our job becomes so important as principals try to level-up the educational exposure that each youngster will encounter through improving pedagogy via effective, evidence-based feedback to teachers.

Hoyle, English, & Steffy (2005) contend that in order for teacher evaluations to work, teachers have to view them as a positive process for achieving the intrinsic rewards of professional growth. They argue, “True professionals need open, threat-free workplaces that nurture self-expression and respect” (p. 106). This is where you, as principal, enter the picture. What can you do to create an effective classroom environment -- translation: a highly effective teacher where both kids (and possibly gerbils) benefit? That is your goal! What can you do to support your most outstanding educator and also the ones who should be out standing in the parking lot and not in the classroom. Then factor in all of the teachers who occupy the slots between the best and the not so best.

THREE TIMES SIX CARRY THE TWO AND DIVIDE BY YOUR WEIGHT

One cannot assume that teachers in your school are each extraordinary professionals. As in every profession, there are exemplary professionals and those who are apathetic and ineffective. It is my estimate that between nine and eleven percent of the teachers in any school in America are incompetent or bordering on incompetence. Quickly, think of all of the teachers within your school that you would not want to have your own child in their class.

Due to tenure laws in many states, you are permanently joined at the hip with those nine to eleven ‘percenters’ who have been granted tenure by some asleep-at-the-wheel principal - not you of course. The only moral issue is a question that you should ask yourself - have I done everything I can as a principal to enhance the productivity of the classroom teacher. For absent that effort, you are not fulfilling your own job description. I once had a superintendent who boldly stated that he never considered it his job, when he was a principal, to train and teach teachers. In whatever capacity they came to him, he would determine their effectiveness and subsequently act accordingly. He had no intention of devoting hours of effort to support and/or seek to improve each teacher’s pedagogical ability.

At first blush that might seem fine. Seek out only the
most qualified, give them a chance, and measure with a thumbs-up or thumbs-down at an appropriate yard marker in their first to third year of teaching. Cut. Dry. Simple. Effective? No, not effective at all because there are so many faculty members that go unnoticed, under-improved and left questioning their own effectiveness. This superintendent left the effective and highly effective teachers alone. As a principal, you cannot let those effective and highly effective teachers meander through their careers under-supported, under-supervised and under-appreciated. Glickman et al. (2014) argue that we ought to shift towards a collegial model, “characterized by purposeful adult interactions about improving school-wide teaching and learning” (p. 6). Your role will be to make these competent and highly competent individuals even better with the key also being getting them to assist you in bringing all pedagogical practices in your school to a higher level - because you will never be able to accomplish this exploit alone. My growth as an educator, as a leader of educators, was enhanced ten-fold each time I sat down and reviewed best practices with highly effective teachers who were employing these best practices right before my eyes. Each time I culled out the specific ‘evidence’ that made the lesson highly effective, I grew as an administrator as well.

JUST GET OVER IT
One of the first things you will hear from teachers is their concern about the subjectivity of your response to their work -- your written response to their efforts during an observation. They need to get over it! Yes, it is subjective because you are the one in the classroom making decisions about what you are seeing and hearing. I have sat through countless attempts both on the school district and state levels to calibrate inter-rater reliability between principals observing the same lesson; all of these attempts, in my opinion, having failed miserably. No two people can or will see the same thing although they are observing the same event -- at the same time, from the same angle, and with all the same players. The factor that negates inter-rater reliability is that each administrator has biases that enter into the observation. I am not concerned at all about pedagogical biases. A bias is why someone drives a lime-green Volkswagen and the next person an arctic white BMW. It is why someone puts ketchup on his or her eggs and others wear black socks with sandals. One cannot legislate good taste or for that matter what tastes good. Therefore, how can one get every administrator to all agree on what is effective within the classroom.

To counter-balance this inevitability, two components are a must for every observation in an attempt to level the playing field for the teacher being observed by the administrator sitting in that rear of the room. One is assessment at the conclusion of the lesson. Did the teacher conduct some degree of assessment prior to the end of the class? The second is the logical next step; did the students learn the main point of the lesson and can they apply what they learned? Regardless of how that end result was met, did how the teacher engage the students with the information work? These are the only two things that really matter.

In the spirit of fairness and to remove the stigma of subjectivity, you gather ‘evidence’ from the lesson to prove your points about the effectiveness of the lesson and its related set of activities. Period! End of story! These are the only two things you need to prove and you will remove most of the negative ethos built up around less effective observational practices. Regardless of how the teacher argues that their kids love him or her, they are all happy, the parents love them, they come to school early and stay late, they are the faculty advisor for the student government -- and of course, I am the winningest football coach in the history of the school -- poppycock! What are you doing in the classroom and where/what is the evidence to prove it successful or not successful?

“If they like you because you’re fair, consistent, empathetic, or a positive person, that’s great” (Cottrell, 2002, p. 20), but how effective have you been at raising the quality and amount of productive learning and where is the ‘evidence?’ If the entire staff feel that some individuals get special privileges for any reason other than their productivity, the integrity of the new administrator is compromised. This is why you have pre- and post-observation conferences with everyone -- from your most productive teacher to your most needy. It is important to be liked or hated for the right reasons. As a leader, one must always do what is right and avoid the gray areas. “To know what is right and not do it is the worst cowardice.” – Confucius

So what is ‘evidence’ that will support your conversations with teachers you have observed? ‘Evidence’ can be what the teacher said and/or what the teacher did. It can be handouts, information presented in any part of the lesson by either teacher or student. It can be results of assessments. It can be teacher comments/directions and/or student comments and/or actions. It is extremely important that what you utilize as ‘evidence’ be tangible.
CAN YOU TOUCH IT OR SEE IT?
That elicits the next logical question dealing with what is tangible ‘evidence?’ Because the lesson will not be recorded, neither the oral part nor the physical part, ‘evidence’ needs to be the reasonable and logical notations by the observer of what transpired during the observation, period. It should not be and could not be expected to be every word and action that the teacher or students do. However, there needs to be a high degree of clarity that allows the observer to view and hear what is taking place and, at the same time, take notes, either written out or utilizing an electronic device, to record what has happened. Force yourself from having the “I would have done it this way” bug creep into your thought patterns. You are solely looking at what was the teacher’s action and what was the impact on the learning process.

Look at ‘evidence’ as what you will be using to establish your credibility with the teacher. While there will be times when the teacher will disagree with your interpretation of the ‘evidence’, there will be factual ‘evidence’ of what was said and done and while interpretations may vary, the facts cannot be reasonably disputed. It is this ‘evidence’ that you will constantly be referring back to time and again to make points about what pedagogical practices are present or not present...and by extension based upon evidence, which ones were effective.

‘Evidence’ frankly is your friend! Think of going to a party and you are not sure who will be there but you do know at least one person will absolutely be present – evidence; and to gain a degree of comfort, you will seek that person out as soon as you get to the party. That “person” is ‘evidence.’

References


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“People are like stained glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in, their true beauty is revealed only if there is light from within.”

- Elizabeth Kubler Ross
Call for Manuscripts

The New York Academy of Public Education is announcing a Call for Manuscripts for its Sixth Annual Professional Journal. Articles are to be no less than 1,000 words and typed double spaced in # 12 Ariel font. Manuscripts are to be submitted to the editor at - Triadedu@aol.com - no later than December 15, 2016, in order to be considered for publication in the May, 2017 Sixth Annual Edition. All manuscripts will be read and reviewed by the Academy’s Peer Review Committee and returned to the author with any editorial comments/corrections/suggestions and further instructions. Kindly indicate your interest in writing an article by contacting the editor at the above email address no later than October 31, 2016, with the proposed title of your manuscript.

Topics to be addressed can include (but are not limited to): the Cultural Arts; Core Content Standards; school building administration; teacher education; standardized assessment; budgeting; higher education; effects of class size; parent involvement; should a teacher internship be required; ELLs and/or Bilingual Education; impact of charter schools on public education; the impact of parochial schools on public education; effects of closing parochial schools; the new teacher/supervisor evaluation system; school restructuring; changing the culture of a school; the new Ed TPA process; and other areas dealing with the educational sphere. All articles must include a listing of references.

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Should you have any questions, kindly contact Dr. John Jangl at 914-320-7877 or at Triadedu@aol.com.

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