Tucson Outlooks

“What Works in Education”

Dr. Cathy Minckberg
The Center for Reform of School Systems
The Center for Reform of School Systems - CRSS

- Train governance teams for high student achievement.
- Help districts develop measures to drive improvement.
- Conduct audits for instructional, operational and technology effectiveness and efficiency.
- Worked with over 100 of the largest urban districts in the US.
- Trained half of the Broad Prize for Urban Education winners.
First, some good news...

After more than a decade of fairly flat achievement and stagnant or growing gaps, we appear to be turning the corner.
4th-Grade Reading: Record Performance with Gap Narrowing
(with acknowledgement to Ed Trust for the graph slides)

9-Year-Olds – NAEP Reading

Source: NAEP 2008 Trends in Academic Progress, NCES

* Denotes previous assessment format
4th-Grade Math: Record Performance with Gap Narrowing

9-Year-Olds – NAEP Math

Average Scale Score

150 160 170 180 190 200 210 220 230 240 250


African American
Latino
White

Denotes previous assessment format

Source: NAEP 2008 Trends in Academic Progress, NCES

Slides from the Ed Trust
Bottom Line:

When we really focus on something, we make progress!

But now the bad news...

At our current progress, how long will it take us to close the achievement gap?
Closing the Hispanic/White 4th Grade Reading Achievement Gap

• At this rate it will take over 70 years to close the gap—2080, assuming that the White performance stays the same.

• Gaps between groups in high school are mostly wider today than in the late eighties, early nineties.
African American and Latino 17-year-olds do math at the same levels as White 13-year-olds.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, NAEP 2004 Trends in Academic Progress

Note: Long-Term Trends NAEP
African American and Latino 17-year-olds read at the same levels as White 13-year-olds

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, NAEP 2004 Trends in Academic Progress
Why do these gaps matter?

- All children deserve equal opportunity, and
- The future well-being of our nation, our state, and our communities depends on the ability of public schools to provide all children with an education that will prepare them for postsecondary success.
Projected Proportion of Population by Race/Ethnicity in U.S., 2000-2040

Projected Percent of Public School Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity in U.S. in 2000 and 2050*

Consequences of Not Closing Achievement Gaps

Widening disparities in America between…

• Rich and poor
• Well educated and poorly educated
• Skilled and unskilled workers
• Enfranchised and disenfranchised citizens
Of 34 OECD Countries
U.S.A. 12th in Reading Literacy

2009 PISA

Ed Trust

“Highlights from PISA 2009,” NCES, 2010
Of 34 OECD Countries
U.S.A. 17th in Science

2009 PISA

Average scale score

Ed Trust

“Highlights from PISA 2009,” NCES, 2010
Of 34 OECD Countries
U.S.A. 25th in Math

2009 PISA

Ed Trust

“Highlights from PISA 2009,” NCES, 2010
What can we do?

An awful lot of Americans have decided that we can’t do much.
Do we believe that what we do makes a difference?

Then...do we act on that belief?

I believe!
The Answer is YES!
How many of us take a baby aspirin every day based on the belief that it will prevent heart attacks?

This means that there is a 3.4% correlation between taking a baby aspirin/day and not having a heart attack.

Based on the data... millions take 1 baby aspirin/day!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE DATA</th>
<th>Heart Attack</th>
<th>No Heart Attack</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aspirin</td>
<td>48.3%</td>
<td>51.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>No Aspirin</td>
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We are motivated by what the research tell us about aspirin and heart attacks.

So, what does the research tell us about what works in improving student achievement?
The research literature tell us that…

The actions of the district and the school can have a powerful effect on INDIVIDUAL student achievement!
The Proof: A Meta-analysis by McREL

- Analyzed 27 studies
- 2,714 school districts
- Over 3.4 million student scores
- 4,434 ratings of superintendent leadership
What do we know about the effect of district-level leadership (BLOB) on student achievement?

The average correlation between district-level leadership (BLOB) behavior and achievement is 24%!!!
Findings from McREL’s Study on District-Level Leadership

1. District leadership matters.
2. There are six district leadership (BLOB) responsibilities with a statistically significant effect on student achievement.
What Works:

#1 Collaborative Goal Setting = 24%

The superintendent involves the board members and principals in the process of setting goals.
What Works:
# 2 Non-Negotiable Goals = 33%

Goals for student achievement and the instructional program are adopted and are based on relevant research.
What Works:
# 3 Board Alignment & Support = 29%

Board support for district goals for achievement and instruction is maintained.
What Works:
# 4 Use of Resources = 26%

Resources are dedicated and used for professional development of teachers and principals to achieve district goals.
What Works:
# 5 Monitoring Goals = 27%

The superintendent monitors and evaluates the implementation of the district instructional program, the impact of instruction on achievement, and the impact of implementation on implementers.
What Works:

# 6 Defined Autonomy = 28%

The superintendent provides defined autonomy to principals to lead their schools, but expects alignment on district goals and use of resources for professional development.

*** Site-based management is negatively correlated in districts without goals for instruction and achievement.
Yet, instead of doing what works…we hear many people say:

- They’re poor.
- They come to school without breakfast.
- Their parents don’t care.
- There aren’t enough books.
- There aren’t enough parents.
But…

If they are right, why are low income students and students of color performing so much higher in some schools?
Low-income* students do better in some districts. NAEP Math 8th – 2011

There is a 31-point gap between Detroit and Houston.

*Based on eligibility in the National School Lunch Program.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2011, Trial Urban District Assessment
Low-income* students do better in some districts. NAEP Reading 8th – 2011

There is a 26-point gap between the District of Columbia and Hillsborough County.

*Based on eligibility in the National School Lunch Program.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2011, Trial Urban District Assessment
All over the country, there are high-performing schools and school districts...
They concentrate on what they can do…

not what they can’t.

EdTrust
They don’t leave anything about teaching and learning to chance.

- Most teachers are left to figure out on their own what to teach at what level of rigor.
- They’re supposed to teach standards but…
- A sample language arts standard for grades 9-12 reveals a problem.
Sample Language Arts Standard: Grade 9
“The student will develop and apply expansive knowledge of words and word meanings to communicate.”

Sample Language Arts Standard: Grade 10
“The student will develop and apply expansive knowledge of words and word meanings to communicate.”

Sample Language Arts Standard: Grade 11
“The student will develop and apply expansive knowledge of words and word meanings to communicate.”

Sample Language Arts Standard: Grade 12
“The student will develop and apply expansive knowledge of words and word meanings to communicate.”
Instead, high performers...

- Have clear and specific goals for what students should learn in every grade, including the order in which they should learn it
- Provide teachers with common curriculum and assignments
- Have a regular vehicle to assure common marking standards
- Assess students every 4-8 weeks to measure progress
- Act immediately on the results of those assessments

EdTrust
They set high goals.

African American and Latino students are not making gains at the advanced level at the same rate as white students.

**NAEP – Grade 8 Math**

Source: NAEP Data Explorer, NCES
Provide a rigorous high school curriculum to **ALL** students.

The single biggest predictor of post-high school success is the **QUALITY** and **INTENSITY** of the high school curriculum.

EdTrust
They know that principals are hugely important, but NOT the only leaders in the school.

• Teachers regularly observe other teachers.
• Teachers have time to plan and work collaboratively.
• New teachers get generous and careful support.
• Teachers take on many leadership tasks at the school.
They Know How Much Good Teachers Matter and ACT on It

Cumulative Teacher Effects On Students’ Math Scores in Dallas (Grades 3-5)

At every level of education, what we do matters!

But how do we manage all this in an era of declining resources???
Strategic Abandonment

We must stop doing many of the things we have always done to create time and funds for this effective work.
The Strategic Abandonment Tool at CRSS.org

- **Common sense rethinking.**
- **Rate programs according to 8 criteria.**
  - Ex. - Has a clear metric for measurement
  - Ex. - Program supports teaching and learning
- **Rubric: Found, Questionable or Unacceptable**
- **Add up the points and eliminate low-point programs.**

Source: Ector County School District, Odessa, Texas – Dr. HT Sanchez
Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of district operations.

- Operations includes: transportation, HR, technology, facilities maintenance, food service, construction, security, finance…
- Collaboratively within each department develop goals and metrics:
  - To support the core mission of teaching and learning – focus on the teacher & student
  - For key functions
  - Track metrics over time
  - Track metrics in comparison to similar districts
  - Post metrics publicly and review regularly
Operations Division Example: Develop measures that support teaching and learning!

• Guiding Principle #1: Create seamless business practices that maximize schools’ capacity to focus on instruction.

• Each department develops goals and metrics to make this a reality.
Food Service Goal: Ensure that hunger is not a distraction to learning.

Metric: Ave. # of meals served/day

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HR Goal: Support learning by having a teacher in every classroom on 9/1.
Metric: Teacher fill rate by HR manager

Hiring as of August 18, 2003

- Vacancies
- Hires

Pena, Fimble, Gims, Lindsey, Luman, Rodriguez
Maintenance Goal: Eliminate facility distractions to learning. Metric: Staffing vs. work orders
In Summary

• Be assured that what we do matters.
• Focus on teaching and learning.
• We know what works because some districts are achieving results every day with the most challenged students.
• So… do what works.
• Strategically abandon work that robs you of time and funds.
• Measure, compare and publicize performance for schools, departments, and districts.
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