Standards Are Not Enough: Leadership and Learning Imperatives for the 21st Century

Dr. Reeves is the founder of The Leadership and Learning Center. He has worked with education, business, nonprofit, and government organizations throughout the world. The author of more than 20 books and many articles on leadership and organizational effectiveness, he has twice been named to the Harvard University Distinguished Authors Series. Dr. Reeves was named the Brock International Laureate for his contributions to education. He also received the Distinguished Service Award from the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the Parents Choice Award for his writing for children and parents.

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How can YOU have a greater impact on student achievement?

NEW! Building Blocks for Change Conference

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<th>Location</th>
<th>Dates</th>
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<tr>
<td>PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA</td>
<td>July 30-August 1, 2009</td>
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<tr>
<td>TORONTO, CANADA</td>
<td>September 30-October 2, 2009</td>
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<tr>
<td>CHICAGO, ILLINOIS</td>
<td>October 12-14, 2009</td>
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Join Dr. Douglas Reeves, English Language Learning expert Bonnie Bishop, Linda Gregg, and other educational leaders at this unique conference designed to give participants deep implementation strategies to make your programs work more effectively!

Content for this conference has been carefully chosen to provide participants with the tools and strategies to effect lasting change, make explicit connections between research-based best practices, and put into action the latest, most effective strategies to impact student achievement.

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All seminars include new research, powerful interactive content, and dynamic tools for immediate implementation in the classroom. Choose to attend one of the following:

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<th>Seminar Title</th>
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<tr>
<td>Common Formative Assessments</td>
<td>How to use assessment to inform instructional decision making</td>
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<td>Decision Making for Results/Data Teams</td>
<td>How to use data effectively to improve achievement and equity at the classroom, school, and district levels</td>
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<tr>
<td>Five Easy Steps to a Balanced Math Program</td>
<td>How to develop mathematically powerful students who can solve real-life problems, communicate their understanding, and perform well on standardized tests</td>
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<tr>
<td>Power Strategies for Effective Teaching</td>
<td>How to use powerful strategies to activate knowledge, engage the learner and support literacy and critical thinking across the curriculum</td>
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<td>Power Strategies for Response to Intervention</td>
<td>How to determine and implement effective approaches to ensure that every student succeeds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accelerated Academic Achievement for English Language Learners</td>
<td>How to meet the needs of English language learners via an English as a Second Language (ESL) curriculum and sheltered instructional strategies</td>
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**Douglas B. Reeves**
Doug is the founder of The Leadership and Learning Center. He has worked with education, business, nonprofit, and government organizations throughout the world.

**Ainsley Rose**
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How Will You Use Lessons of Today?

Two choices of risk . . .

Oregon Leads in Standards

- Standards for the right reasons
- Leaders and teachers, not just kids
- Far beyond math and reading tests

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Oregon Leads in Data Analysis
- The Oregon Data Project
- Causes, not just effects
- Continuous process, not an event
- Capacity building – Oregon responses to Oregon challenges

The Oregon Data Project
- 122 districts
- 842 educators
- 149 certified trainers

The Big Ideas for 2009
Leadership Matters

- Goodlad – 1980’s
- Marzano, McNulty, Waters – 1990’s
- Reeves, White– 2000’s

- Different researchers, different methods, different decades
- SAME CONCLUSIONS

Changing the Debate in Oregon

- 13,500 dropouts in Oregon
- $3.5 billion lost wages and productivity in ONE CLASS
- $185.2 million in medical care
- $51 million PER YEAR SAVINGS from a FIVE PERCENT REDUCTION IN MALE DROPOUT RATE

H.O.P.E. Matrix

Hope and Optimism

- Bewildered Happiness
- Joy, Peace, Meaning

Despair and Depression

- Grim Determination

Purpose and Empathy
What’s New for 2009?

Renewal Coaching

What makes coaching powerful as a tool for change?

Renewal Coaching

- Multi-dimensional Assessments – 7 scored and open-ended assessments – free at www.RenewalCoaching.com
- Clear distinction from consulting and traditional coaching
- “Moon Shot” focus on meaning and purpose

Extracurricular Activities

On the Chopping Block
Center research says they HELP achievement and discipline

Extracurricular Activities and Grade Point Average


Teacher Leadership
Teacher Leadership

- It’s a fact, not a choice – like gravity
- More powerful than hierarchy
- Dramatically accelerates speed and accuracy of communication
- Beyond the usual suspects

What Influences Teacher Professional Practice?

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<th>Learning Activity: What do we really know?</th>
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<td>Select JUST ONE area of expertise</td>
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<td>Write THREE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS required for effectiveness</td>
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Teacher Stress and Anxiety

What else could go wrong?

Teacher Stress and Anxiety

- Efficacy
- Stress, anxiety, and burnout DECREASE
- Focus on GREATER GOOD builds efficacy

A Better Way: Implementation Audit

- Review of 600 programs, including urban, suburban, and rural schools
- The variable is not brand name, but IMPLEMENTATION
- EASIEST BUDGET CUTS:
  - Programs with costs and low implementation
  - Programs with costs and minimal impact
Is Change Really Possible in Large Complex Systems?

Core Research Findings

Results

Antecedents of Excellence

Lucky
Leading
Losing
Learning
90 90 90

- Free, not a program
- Persistent over time
- Collaborative scoring
- Multiple opportunities for success
- Nonfiction writing
- Laser-like focus on achievement

Collaboration

- The essence of PLC’s
- Measureable - improves with practice – 19 to 92% agreement
- SAVES TEACHERS TIME – 45 minutes to 9 minutes

Nonfiction Writing

- Free, not a program
- Persistent over time
- Key to reading comprehension
- Multi-disciplinary impact
- Multi-year impact
- Particularly for ELL students
Bell Curve to Mountain

■ Why standards?
■ Fair, effective, and THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE to the bell curve

Pygmalion Effect

■ The research behind “high expectations”
■ Ask, “What causes student achievement?”
■ THREE TIMES GREATER gains when you attribute causes to factors we control

Critical Mass

■ 200 Schools, 15 programs
■ The variables is IMPLEMENTATION, not brand name
■ 90% implementation levels had 2-3 times higher achievement than 10% implementation with the SAME INITIATIVE
Monitoring

- Adult actions
- Constructive
- Frequent
- THREE TIMES HIGHER gains with high monitoring scores

Time

- Doubling time:
  - HELPS electives
  - HELPS advanced coursework
  - HELPS funding by reducing dropouts
  - HELPS teacher engagement by improving discipline

Power of Accurate Feedback

- Immediate impact on results
- Lower failures
- Better attendance
- Fewer suspensions
- Failure here undermines EVERY OTHER EFFORT in curriculum, assessment, and teaching
Closing Arguments
Before the Jury

- Standard of evidence
- Hung Juries
- Choice of Mistake

Discussion and Questions

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Leading to Change / How Do You Change School Culture?

Douglas Reeves

Consider the following laments that I have heard recently from school leaders: “We can't change the grading policy—it's part of our culture.” “Public displays of data won't work here—the culture won't allow it.” “The parents just don't understand—you can't change the culture by passing a law.” Each of these statements includes the word culture, but the meaning of the term ranges from policies and procedures to personal preferences to deeply embedded belief systems.

Cultural change, although challenging and time-consuming, is not only possible but necessary—especially in organizations in which stakeholders use the word "culture" as a rhetorical talisman to block leadership initiatives, stifle innovation, and maintain the status quo. In the last decade, the education standards movement has taught us that policy change without cultural change is an exercise in futility and frustration.

How do you change the culture of schools? When it comes to lasting cultural change, four essentials are consistent across many leadership contexts.

First, define what you will not change. Identify specific values, traditions, and relationships that you will preserve. Rather than make every change a battle that exhausts political capital and diminishes trust, effective leaders place change in the context of stability. They take care not to convey the message, “Everything you have been doing in the past was ineffective, and your experience and professional judgment are irrelevant.” A more thoughtful message is, “I am only going to ask you to engage in changes that will have meaning and value for you and every stakeholder we serve.” For example, many schools have cherished traditions of excellence in athletics, music, or art—traditions that can be threatened when the leader says that academic achievement must be the top priority. Effective change leaders identify and build on traditions rather than compete with them. The trophy case bursting with evidence of athletic championships can share space with exceptional student artwork, outstanding science projects, and superb essays.

Second, recognize the importance of actions. Speeches and announcements are not enough. To lead challenging reform efforts, you must be willing to make personal changes in decision-making policies (Who has the authority to decide what?); personal time allocation (Which
meeting invitations do you accept and which do you decline?); and collegial relationships (Do you make time to listen to the personal stories of your colleagues?).

The greatest impediment to meaningful cultural change is the gap between what leaders say they value and what they actually do. Staff members are not seduced by a leader's claim of "collaborative culture" when every meeting is a series of lectures, announcements, and warnings. Claims about a "culture of high expectations" are undermined when school policies encourage good grades for poor student work. The "culture of respect" is undermined by every imperious, demanding, or angry e-mail and voice mail coming from the principal. Leaders speak most clearly with their actions. When staff members hear the call for transformation from a leader whose personal actions remain unchanged, their hope turns to cynicism.

Third, use the right change tools for your school or district. Christensen, Marx, and Stevenson (2006) differentiate culture tools, such as rituals and traditions; power tools, such as threats and coercion; management tools, such as training, procedures, and measurement systems; and leadership tools, such as role modeling and vision. Leaders must choose the appropriate change tools on the basis of a combination of factors, including the extent to which staff members agree on what they want and how to get there. Leaders who approach reform determined to apply a particular change method are making the mistake of the person holding a hammer who therefore sees only nails.

Fourth, be willing to do the "scut work." In Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, a Man Who Would Cure the World, Tracy Kidder (2004) describes a renowned infectious disease specialist and leader in international health care. Farmer has revolutionized the beliefs and practices of stakeholders ranging from the poorest rural villagers in Haiti to the faculty of Harvard Medical School to policymakers at the United Nations. Combining his extensive field experience with sophisticated research and medical analyses, Farmer has upended traditional notions of health care. What does Farmer cite as one of his secrets? The willingness to do "unglamorous scut work."

Although education leaders must make speeches and attend board meetings, leaders aspiring to change school cultures will take the risk, as Superintendent Stan Scheer of Murrieta Valley Unified School District in California has done, of taking a turn as a substitute teacher or spending time with bus drivers at 5:00 on a frosty morning. When the school leader puts down the briefcase and picks up a stack of trays in the cafeteria or a pile of writing portfolios for personal review, then everyone knows that the leader takes every job in the school seriously. If you believe that every job has value and there is no such thing as unimportant work in schools, then demonstrate that belief through your actions.

Meaningful school improvement begins with cultural change—and cultural change begins with the school leader.

References


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Leading to Change / Effective Grading Practices

Douglas B. Reeves

If you wanted to make just one change that would immediately reduce student failure rates, then the most effective place to start would be challenging prevailing grading practices. How can I be so sure? Try this experiment in your next faculty meeting. Ask your colleagues to calculate the final grade for a student who receives the following 10 grades during a semester: C, C, MA (Missing Assignment), D, C, B, MA, MA, B, A. I have done this experiment with thousands of teachers and administrators in the United States, Canada, and Argentina. Every time—bar none—I get the same results: The final grades range from F to A and include everything in between.

As this experiment demonstrates, the difference between failure and the honor roll often depends on the grading policies of the teacher. To reduce the failure rate, schools don't need a new curriculum, a new principal, new teachers, or new technology. They just need a better grading system.

Ineffective Grading

The results of my experiment are not surprising. Guskey and Bailey (2001) and Marzano (2000) have synthesized decades of research with similar findings. Neither the weight of scholarship nor common sense seems to have influenced grading policies in many schools. Practices vary greatly among teachers in the same school—and even worse, the practices best supported by research are rarely in evidence.

For example, the most effective grading practices provide accurate, specific, timely feedback designed to improve student performance (Marzano 2000, 2007; O'Connor, 2007). In the best classrooms, grades are only one of many types of feedback provided to students. Music teachers and athletic coaches routinely provide abundant feedback to students and only occasionally associate a grade with the feedback. Teachers in visual arts, drafting, culinary arts, or computer programming allow students to create a portfolio to show their best work, knowing that the mistakes made in the course of the semester were not failures, but lessons learned on the way to success. In each of these cases, "failures" along the way are not averaged into a calculation of the final grade.
Contrast these effective practices with three commonly used grading policies that are so ineffective they can be labeled as toxic. First is the use of zeroes for missing work. Despite evidence that grading as punishment does not work (Guskey, 2000) and the mathematical flaw in the use of the zero on a 100-point scale (Reeves, 2004), many teachers routinely maintain this policy in the mistaken belief that it will lead to improved student performance. Defenders of the zero claim that students need to have consequences for flouting the teacher's authority and failing to turn in work on time. They're right, but the appropriate consequence is not a zero; it's completing the work—before, during, or after school, during study periods, at "quiet tables" at lunch, or in other settings.

Second is the practice of using the average of all scores throughout the semester, a formula that presumes that the learning early in the semester is as important as learning at the end of the semester (Marzano, 2000; O'Connor, 2007). Interestingly, when teachers and administrators have been students in my graduate courses, they routinely insist that they should be evaluated on the basis of their understanding at the end of the semester rather than their work throughout the term.

Third is the use of the "semester killer"—the single project, test, lab, paper, or other assignment that will make or break students. This practice puts 18 weeks of work at risk based on a project that might, at most, have consumed four weeks of the semester.

A small but growing number of school systems are tackling the issue head-on with comprehensive plans for effective grading practices. (The policy developed by one such district, Grand Island Public Schools in Nebraska, is available at http://wikiassessments.editme.com/files/GradingandReporting/G%26R%20Guiding%20Docs.pdf.)

But even in districts that have attempted to put effective grading policies in place, enforcement is often inconsistent. Grading seems to be regarded as the last frontier of individual teacher discretion. The same school leaders and community members who would be indignant if sports referees were inconsistent in their rulings continue to tolerate inconsistencies that have devastating effects on student achievement.

**High-Stakes Grading**

The Alliance for Excellent Education estimated that the annual cost of high school failure exceeds $330 billion ("An Economic Case," 2007). Some of these failures are no doubt caused by excessive absences and poor student performance. But, as the experiment at the beginning of this column clearly indicates, many failures are caused by the differences in teacher grading policies.

Do another experiment: Randomly select 30 course failures from the last semester, and determine the cause for failure. Two common causes are missing homework and poor performance on a single major assignment—a term paper, lab, or project. What would it mean to your school if you could reduce the number of failing grades resulting solely from uncompleted homework?

The stakes of grading practices are not limited to student failure. When grading policies
improve, discipline and morale almost always follow. For example, Ben Davis High School in Indianapolis, Indiana, achieved a remarkable reduction in course failures through focused attention on improved feedback and intervention for students (Reeves, 2006). I recently checked in with the school, and Principal Joel McKinney reported that the success of this challenging urban school (74 percent free and reduced-price lunch, high mobility, and increasing numbers of English language learners) did not stop with reducing 9th and 10th grade failures. As of fall 2007, enrollment in advanced placement classes had increased 32 percent; suspensions had declined 67 percent; elective opportunities in music, art, and technology had increased; class cuts and tardiness had fallen significantly; teacher morale and school climate had noticeably improved—and the course failure rate had continued to decline (personal communication, December 5, 2007). When schools take steps to reduce failures, lots of good things happen.

The Steps to Take

Although changing grading systems is a challenging leadership task, the benefits are so great that it's worth doing.

First, create a sense of urgency. Identify the exact cost of inconsistent grading practices. How many failures can we prevent this semester if we improve our grading practices?

Second, identify teacher leaders who are already improving policies. Chances are that some teachers in your school have already eliminated the use of the average and the zero on a 100-point scale and created meaningful opportunities for corrective feedback outside of grades. Provide a forum for these teachers to share their insights with colleagues and lead the effort to develop improved policies.

Third, get the facts; gather evidence that will create a rationale for decision making. At the end of the day, your choices about teaching practice must be guided by evidence, not opinions. For example, although many people sincerely believe that giving poor grades as a punishment is effective, Guskey (2000) has marshaled 90 years of evidence to the contrary.

Fourth, reassure parents, students, and teachers that certain things will not change. Students will still have letter grades, transcripts, honor rolls, individualized education plans, and everything else that they have counted on as part of their grading system. What they won't have is irrational grading policies that give students widely different grades for the same work.

The benefits of effective grading practices are not limited to a reduced failure rate—although that benefit alone is sufficient to justify change. When student failures decrease, student behavior improves, faculty morale is better, resources allocated to remedial courses and course repetitions are reduced, and resources invested in electives and advanced courses increase. When was the last time a single change in your school accomplished all that?

References


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The Case Against the Zero

Even those who subscribe to the “punishment” theory of grading might want to reconsider the way they use zeros, Mr. Reeves suggests.

BY DOUGLAS B. REEVES

This is not a trick question. If you are using a grading scale in which the numbers 4, 3, 2, 1, and 0 correspond to grades of A, B, C, D, and F, then what number is awarded to a student who fails to turn in an assignment? If you responded with a unanimous chorus of “zero,” then you may have a great deal of company. There might be a few people who are familiar with the research that asserts that grading as punishment is an ineffective strategy, but many of us curmudgeons want to give the miscreants who failed to complete our assignments the punishment that they richly deserve. No work, no credit — end of story.

Groups as diverse as the New York State United Teachers and the Thomas Fordham Foundation rally around this position. Let us, for the sake of argument, accept the point. With the grading system described above, the failure to turn in work would receive a zero. The four-point scale is a rational system, as the increment between each letter grade is proportionate to the increment between each numerical grade — one point.

But the common use of the zero today is based not on a four-point scale but on a 100-point scale. This defies logic and mathematical accuracy. On a 100-point scale, the interval between numerical and letter grades is typically 10 points, with the break points at 90, 80, 70, and so on. But when the grade of zero is applied to a 100-point scale, the interval between the D and F is not 10 points but 60 points. Most state standards in mathematics require that fifth-grade students un-
nderstand the principles of ratios — for example, A is to B as 4 is to 3; D is to F as 1 is to zero. Yet the persistence of the zero on a 100-point scale indicates that many people with advanced degrees, including those with more background in mathematics than the typical teacher, have not applied the ratio standard to their own professional practices. To insist on the use of a zero on a 100-point scale is to assert that work that is not turned in deserves a penalty that is many times more severe than that assessed for work that is done wretchedly and is worth a D. Readers were asked earlier how many points would be awarded to a student who failed to turn in work on a grading scale of 4, 3, 2, 1, 0, but I’ll bet not a single person arrived at the answer “minus 6.” Yet that is precisely the logic that is employed when the zero is awarded on a 100-point scale.

There are two issues at hand. The first, and most important, is to determine the appropriate consequence for students who fail to complete an assignment. The most common answer is to punish these students. Evidence to the contrary notwithstanding, there is an almost fanatical belief that punishment through grades will motivate students. In contrast, there are at least a few educators experimenting with the notion that the appropriate consequence for failing to complete an assignment is to require the student to complete the assignment. That is, students lose privileges — free time and unstructured class or study-hall time — and are required to complete the assignment. The price of freedom is proficiency, and students are motivated not by threats of failure but by the opportunity to earn greater freedom and discretion by completing work accurately and on time. I know my colleagues well enough to understand that this argument will not persuade many of them. Rewards and punishments are part of the psyche of schools, particularly at the secondary level.

But if I concede this first point, the second issue is much more straightforward. Even if we want to punish the little miscreants who fail to complete our assignments — and I admit that on more than one occasion with both my students and my own children, my emotions have run in that direction — then what is the fair, appropriate, and mathematically accurate punishment? However vengeful I may feel on my worst days, I’m fairly certain that the appropriate punishment is not the electric chair. Even if I were to engage in a typically fact-free debate in which my personal preference for punishment were elevated above efficacy, I would nevertheless be forced to admit that giving a zero on a 100-point scale for missing work is a mathematical inaccuracy.

If I were using a four-point grading system, I could give a zero. If I am using a 100-point system, however, then the lowest possible grade is the numerical value of a D, minus the same interval that separates every other grade. In the example in which the interval between grades is 10 points and the value of D is 60, then the mathematically accurate value of an F is 50 points. This is not — contrary to popular mythology — “giving” students 50 points; rather, it is awarding a punishment that fits the crime. The students failed to turn in an assignment, so they receive a failing grade. They are not sent to a Siberian labor camp.

There is, of course, an important difference. Sentences at Siberian labor camps ultimately come to an end, while grades of zero on a 100-point scale last forever. Just two or three zeros are sufficient to cause failure for an entire semester, and just a few course failures can lead a student to drop out of high school, incurring a lifetime of personal and social consequences.

This issue is as emotional as anything I have encountered since the phonics versus whole language debate. Scholars regress to the persuasive tactics of professional wrestlers (no offense intended to wrestlers — this article will generate enough hate mail as it is), and research and logic are subordinated to vengeance masquerading as high standards. Because the emotional attachment to the zero is so strong, I have given up advocating that 50 points should represent the lowest grade. What I do think we can do to preserve some level of sanity in our grading system is to return to a four-point system. A’s no longer equal 100 points, but four points. If there is a need for greater specificity, then we can choose an infinite number of digits to the right of the decimal point and thus differentiate between the 3.449 and 3.448 to our heart’s content. But at the end of the day in such a system, the F is a zero — one point below the D. It is fair, accurate, and, some people may believe, motivational. But at least the zero on a four-point scale is not the mathematical travesty that it is when applied to a 100-point system.