Turning High-Poverty Schools Into High-Performing Schools

Learner Outcomes

- **Emerge** with a substantially enhanced knowledge of what works for underachieving students living in poverty.
- **Understand** how high-poverty schools become high-performing.
- **Be compelled to take informed action** to better meet the needs of underachieving students living in poverty.

For the PDF version of the handout: “Turning High Poverty Schools Into High-Performing Schools: Learning Together, Leading Together” please visit http://csi.boisestate.edu/ and click on the “Presentations” link.
How Are We Doing?

Validate Challenge to Improve

Collaborate / Network!

Who Are You? What Level?

- Teachers
- Instructional Coaches
- Principals
- District Office/Support
- Superintendents
- School Board Members

- Elementary Schools
- Middle Schools
- High Schools
- K-8
- K-12

Give One, Get One: BRIGHT SPOTS A "Block" Party!

Success! Efforts Worth Emulating That Illuminate The Road Map For Action and Spark The Hope That Change Is Possible.

Bright Spot Philosophy

What’s working right now and how can we do more of it?
Kids Are Smart!

Of Every 100 9th Grade Students in the Nation

67 Graduate from High School in 4 Years

38 Directly Enter College in the Fall

26 are Still Enrolled in the Sophomore Year

SOURCE: NATIONAL CENTER FOR HIGHER EDUCATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS (2000)
How High-Poverty Schools... 

Become High-Performing Schools

Part I
Learning Together

- Learning From Others: Stories of Inspiration and Hope
- Assessing What You Know About Poverty: The Importance of Accurate Information
- Constructing a Framework for Action

Part II
Leading Together

- Build Leadership Capacity—What do we do? What do we stop doing?
- Focus on Learning—What do we do? What do we stop doing?
- Foster a Healthy, Safe, and Supportive Learning Environment—What do we do? What do we stop doing?

High-Poverty / High-Performing Schools

Nationally Recognized High-Poverty / High-Performing Schools

Dayton's Bluff Elementary, St. Paul, MN
Lapwai Elementary, Lapwai, ID
Molalla High School, Molalla, OR
Osmond A. Church PS/MS, 124 K-8 School, Queens, NY

Taft Elementary, Boise, ID
Port Chester Middle School, Port Chester, NY
Tekoa High School, Tekoa, WA
Part I: Learning Together

- Learning From Others: Stories of Inspiration and Hope
- Assessing What You Know About Poverty: The Importance of Accurate Information
- Constructing a Framework for Action

William H. Taft Elementary

- 330 Students
  Grades k-6
- 72% Low Income
- 18% ELL/Refugee
- 9% Hispanic

Making Refugee Students Welcome

Kathleen Budge and William Parrett

When 58 refugee students speaking little English were transferred to this urban elementary school, the principal set up a team-building summer camp.

Taft Elementary School

Boise, ID

2003 Blue Ribbon Award Recipient

William H. Taft Elementary

Reading Scores, 3rd Grade

Port Chester Middle School

Port Chester, NY

2006 Dispelling the Myth Award Winner
**Port Chester Middle School**
- 864 students in grades 6-8
- 73% Latino
- 7% African-American
- 64% Low-Income

**Overall Test Scores Grades 6-8**

**Tekoa High School**
Tekoa, WA
- 110 Students
- 51% Low-income
- 83% White
- 12% American Indian
- 5% Other

**Reading and Writing Grade 10**

**And...At The District Level?**
Caldwell School District
Caldwell, ID

- 6,500 Students Grades K-12
- 80% Low Income
- 56% Hispanic
- 43% White
- 1% African American / Asian

From Sanctions to Success
Moving from the most severe level of state and federal sanctions to making AYP in 8 of its 10 schools in four years.

Closing The Achievement Gap Between White & Hispanic Students
Reading

Math

“How many effective schools would you have to see...
...to be persuaded of the educability of poor children? If your answer is more than one, then I submit that you have reasons of your own for preferring to believe that basic pupil performance derives from family background instead of school response to family background...

We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us.”

Ron Edmonds... 1979

“We know what works in education. The research is prolific”

Amazingly, then, the question today is not about what works, but about why we do not implement what we know works in all schools for all kids?”

**THE KNOWING-DOING GAP**

- Talk substitutes for action
- Fear prevents risk-taking and innovation
- Measurement focuses on the wrong things

"IT IS NOT THE INERTIA OF INDIFFERENCE OR IGNORANCE, BUT KNOWING TOO MUCH AND DOING TOO LITTLE?" - PFEFFER & SUTTON, 1999

**A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION:**

**Leading High Poverty Schools to High Performance**
A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION:

Leading High Poverty Schools to High Performance

Foster a Healthy, Safe, and Supportive Learning Environment

- Are we working to eliminate mindsets, policies, structures, and practices that perpetuate under-achievement?
- Have we ensured safety?
- Have we developed an accurate understanding of the influence of poverty on student learning?
- Have we fostered caring relationships and strengthened the bond between students and schools?
- Have we made an authentic effort to engage parents, families, and our community?

Foster a Healthy, Safe, and Supportive Learning Environment

Eliminate Practices That Perpetuate Under-Achievement

- School Is Unsafe
- Blaming Students / Families
- Mis-use of Suspension & Expulsion

Tools for Schools

Are we Perpetuating Underachievement: What have we eliminated?

Tools for Schools

Do we have structures and process for fostering a healthy, safe, and supportive learning environment?

Fostering a Healthy, Safe, and Supportive Learning Environment

Strategy 1

Establish a Physically and Emotionally Safe Environment

“We had to establish law and order...”

“These kids aren't going to begin school in a place where you can smell the bathrooms when you come in the front door.”

Have We Ensured Safety?
Scavenger Hunt
The Facts About Poverty

- What is the percentage of children living in poverty in the US?
- What is the percentage of children living in “low-income” families (just above the poverty line)?
- Childhood poverty has increased by what percentage in the past decade (2000-09)?
- What has happened to the income level of lowest 1/5 of the population and to the highest 1/5 in past 25 years?
- What do we “define” as poverty in schools?

Dramatic Increase in Childhood Poverty

Rates of Increase in 4th Grade Subsidized Lunches
Since 2007, the proportion of fourth graders eligible for free or reduced-price lunches through the federal government’s school meals program has increased nationwide to 52%, from 46%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change in percent from 2007-2011</th>
<th>Eligible for free or reduced-price lunch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0% (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-6% (14)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-10% (31)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥11% (4)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(Source: U.S. Department of Education, 2011)

Video Viewing Guide

As you watch the video, jot down your thoughts on these questions:

What significance does the information have for you/your school?

What questions does it raise for you?

TURN AND TALK

Hours: 00 Minutes: 02 Seconds: 41
Confronting Common Myths

**Fact or Fiction...**

- People in poverty are unmotivated and have weak work ethics.
- Education, as a way out of poverty, is readily accessible to everyone.
- People living in poverty are uninvolved in their children’s education because they do not value education.
- People living in poverty tend to abuse drugs and alcohol more than people in other socioeconomic classes.

Understanding Mental Maps/Mind-sets

- Images, assumptions, and stories carried in our minds that shape behavior and attitude
- Usually tacit until we examine
- Limit our ability to change
- Leader’s task is to “identify/expose” through reflection and inquiry

Challenging Our Mental Maps / Mindsets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mental Maps</th>
<th>Action / Strategy</th>
<th>Consequences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expose Beliefs / Assumptions: School attendance is important. Rules must be followed. Tardiness is not allowed.</td>
<td>Set policy and require parents to sign in.</td>
<td>Student still tardy and flunking class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents are responsible for excusing their child.</td>
<td>Try to call home.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earle Beliefs / Assumptions: Parents don’t care about education.</td>
<td>Send letter home via U.S. mail.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents and student are lazy.</td>
<td>Give letter to student.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents probably aren’t home or are sleeping off a hangover.</td>
<td>Warn about impending suspension.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Challenging our Mental Maps/Mindsets

They challenged their own mind-sets...

But BEHAVIOR...

CAME BEFORE BELIEFS

Foster a Healthy, Safe, and Supportive Learning Environment

**Strategy 2**

Do EVERYTHING Possible to Level the Playing Field

Have we developed an accurate understanding of the influence of poverty on student learning?

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You are a member of a leadership team in a high-poverty middle school. Your school has a homework policy that requires students to complete and submit daily homework.

If students fail to turn in their homework on time, they are allowed one more opportunity at half-credit.

If they fail to turn in their homework three times in a grading period, they are assigned to in-school suspension for one day. After failing to turn in their homework six times, students fail the course.

Based on data analysis, students in your school who live in poverty are two times as likely to not turn in homework as students in your school who do not live in poverty.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO? WHY?

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**Using the Study Guide:** Problem-Based Learning

Step 1: Skim Chapters 7 & 8
Step 2: Discuss the problem-based scenario at your table.
Step 3: Decide what you would do and provide a rationale.

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Adapted from the work of Chris Argyris & David Schön

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Step 1: Skim Chapters 7 & 8
Step 2: Discuss the problem-based scenario at your table.
Step 3: Decide what you would do and provide a rationale.
Sticks and Stones...

How do we talk about poverty in schools?

- The dangers of a deficit perspective
- Separating children's developing sense of self from their living conditions
- The words/labels we use matter

Given what we know about poverty...

Five suggestions you can begin today!

- Review your homework policies
- Analyze who is and who is not accessing higher-level curriculum and address.
- Keep stocks of supplies/basic necessities
- Continue to reach out to parents even when they are unresponsive
- Learn more / challenge your biases!

Foster a Healthy, Safe, and Supportive Learning Environment

What at-risk children want at school more than anything else...

...a caring relationship with an adult.

Develop Meaningful Student Advisories

- Faculty / Student Ratio—20:1
- 30 Minutes / 4 days per wk
- Four-year Commitment
- Reading, Math, Portfolios, Homework, Careers
- Performance-based Graduation Requirements
Uncommon Sense

• An alternative learning environment
• Not a “dumping ground” for discipline problems
• Class sizes are limited to 15
• Students wear uniforms
• No homework
• Only alternative high school to offer extracurricular sports.

Foster a Healthy, Safe, and Supportive Learning Environment

Strategy 4
Engage Parents as Authentic Partners

Have we made an authentic effort to engage parents, families, and our community?

Foster a Healthy, Safe, and Supportive Learning Environment

Build Relationships with Families

• Engage Parents as Authentic Partners
• Hold Frequent Meetings with Food/Childcare
• Offer Parent Education
• Support Learning at Home
• Conduct Home Visits / Caring Outreach
• Join the National Network of Partnership Schools
  www.csos.jhu.edu

The Critical Role of the Principal In Fostering the Needed Environment

The Principal...

• Relentlessly ensures safety
• Models positive, caring relationships
• Addresses barriers as they arise
• Organizes collaborative efforts
• Establishes effective, frequent communication

RECAP and REFLECT

#1 Establish A Safe Environment
#2 Level The Playing Field
#3 Develop Student Advisories
#4 Engage Parents As Partners
As you watch the video, jot down your thoughts on these questions:

- What does Caine teach us about learning?
- What implications does it have for teaching?

Caine’s Arcade

Turn and Talk

Talk about Caine

Focus on Learning

- Are we working to eliminate mindsets, policies, structures, and practices that perpetuate underachievement?
- Do we have a common instructional framework to guide curriculum, teaching, assessment, and the learning climate?
- Do we provide job-embedded opportunity for professional learning?
- Do we have common assessments and embrace assessment literacy?
- Have we ensured that all students are proficient in reading?
- Do we provide targeted interventions?
Focus on Learning

Eliminate Practices That Perpetuate Under-Achievement

- Tracking / Retention Pullouts
- Misassignment to Special Education
- Misassigned Teachers
- Teacher Isolation
- Ineffective Instruction

Tools for Schools

Are we Perpetuating Underachievement: What have we eliminated?

Walk and Talk

Lily (tenured) loves kids. She has wanted to be a teacher all her life. Now in her fifth year as a second grade teacher she continues to struggle with low-performing students.

Her “high-end” kids do well and achieve expected gains. Students that enter her class behind in reading and math almost always exit at comparable levels.

Lily’s organizational management skills improve modestly each year. Parents like her, as do her colleagues. Lily works hard; just doesn’t seem to progress.

Walk and Talk

West Side High School (46% Low-income)

Keith teaches Algebra; he has for 11 years at the 9th and 10th grade levels. Also, he teaches two sections of Algebra II. He knows math—has his approach down. He sets high standards, assigns daily homework, gives pop quizzes and end of chapter tests. He grades on a strict curve. Three out of four kids do well/pass. Twenty-five percent repeat.

Keith explains this problem as the result of a lack of commitment. He says, “It’s just the way it is.” He coaches football.

Tools for Schools

Do we have structures and process for focusing on student, professional, and system-level learning?

Focus on Learning

Strategy 5

Develop a Common Understanding of Excellent Teaching and Powerful Learning

Do we have a common instructional framework to guide curriculum, teaching, assessment, and the learning climate?