

Leadership Focus: Doing the Right Things, Right Now

By Douglas B. Reeves

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Dr. Douglas Reeves is the founder of The Leadership and Learning Center. As part of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, a global educational leader, the Center serves school systems around the world. The author of 30 books and many articles on leadership and organizational effectiveness, Dr. Reeves 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. He is the 2010 recipient of the National Staff Development Council's Contribution to the Field Award. In writing the foreword to Doug's most recent book, Michael Fullan wrote, "Reeves doesn't just tell us what not to do. His research is so carefully documented and so clearly argued that we see precisely what should be our focus. . . Reeves takes us further and deeper into the critical territory of whole system reform. He does it with such elegance and relentless insistence that we are drawn – indeed, compelled – to want to take action."

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By Douglas B. Reeves*

Dr. Reeves welcomes your questions and comments. If you would like a complete copy of today's slides or other research articles discussed in today's presentation, please e-mail DReeves@LeadandLearn.com or call (303)504-9312, ext. 512.

Today will be a success if . _____

The Big Ideas

- Moral imperative
- Implementation
- The essentials: focus, monitoring, and efficacy
- Change leadership
- Evidence
- Sustainability
- 21st century skills
- Grading, assessment, and student performance

1. The Moral Imperative

Essential Goals	Present Reality	Moral Imperative
Student achievement		
Faculty morale		
Administrative stress		
Community support		
Recruiting and developing the best new teachers and administrators		
Other key results		

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2. The Implementation Gap

Degree of Implementation (Essential leadership behaviors)	All Schools	Schools With Declining Achievement (Deep implementation mitigates the impact of ineffective schools.)	Schools With Improving Achievement (Deep implementation helps high-achieving schools.)
Low	-17.74%	-30%	+5.0%
Medium	-3.98%	-14%	+10.2%
High	+11.65%	-1.8%	+13.9%

The implementation audit:

- What is our initiative inventory?
- What is the range of implementation?
- What is the relationship between implementation and student learning?

3. The “Not to Do” List

Rules of the game:

- **Think small:** activities, units, transitions, meetings, emails, contacts.
- **Weed your own garden:** Take personal responsibility. This activity is a “no blame” zone, and the only person who can make it succeed is *you*.
- **Consider the consequences of failing to do this:** You guarantee failure for every good idea from this institute because there is not time, resources, or emotional energy to initiate new activities unless you take some things off the table.

4. Implementation

The impact of implementation on student achievement: How do you measure implementation? *Create an implementation rubric.*

Identify an instructional strategy that is important to you right now.

Describe an “acceptable” or “proficient” level of performance for this strategy.

Describe performance that is “progressing” but not quite proficient yet.

Describe performance that is “not meeting standards”—it hurts students and colleagues.

Describe performance that is “exemplary”—*far* better than “proficient.” This would challenge even the most veteran and expert colleague to improve.

5. Example of Rubric for Effective Implementation of Data Teams

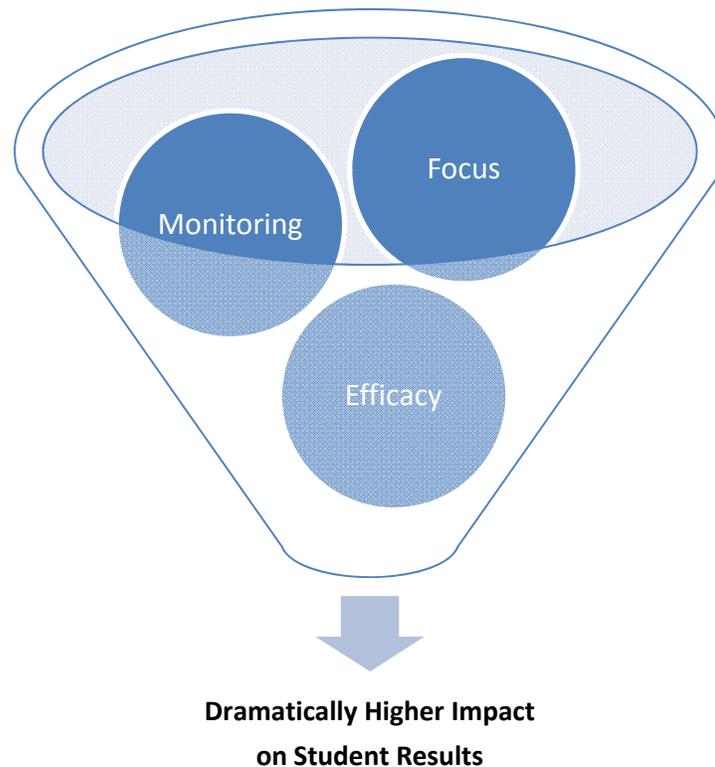
4 – Exemplary	3 – Proficient	2 – Progressing	1 – Not Meeting Standards
<p>Teachers and building administrators meet at least weekly to examine data on student results and also measurable variables regarding teacher and leadership actions that were related to those results. Each meeting has a written record of the items discussed; data reviewed, decisions made, and reviews of previous decisions. There is clear and consistent evidence of mid-course corrections during the year, showing that teachers and leaders modified their instructional plans, schedules, assessments, and professional practices based on the changing needs of students. There is clear and consistent evidence of differentiation for both students and teachers – that is, students who are struggling or who need enrichment receive specifically differentiated instruction and assessment to meet their needs, and teachers who need additional assistance receive coaching, support, and modeling to meet their specific needs. The data reviewed includes a variety of sources, including system-wide tests, building assessments, classroom assessments, teacher observations, and leader observations. Best practices of classroom teachers and administrators are identified, documented, and replicated. There is clear evidence that best practices by one educator or administrator are replicated by others. The emotional environment of the data team meetings is free from fear and full of mutual encouragement and exploration. Different teacher-leaders take roles in leading the meeting, and there is clearly a momentum for data analysis focused on student success that does not depend upon a single leader.</p>	<p>Teacher and leaders meet at least once a month to review data. There are written records of each meeting that show the data reviewed, the teacher and leadership actions considered, and the relationship between adult actions and student results. There is a clear and consistent record of decision-making directly related to the data – that is, specific changes in instructional and leadership practices designed to improve student results. Reviews of individual classroom results lead to the identification of best practices, and there is evidence that these practices are replicated by others. The meeting is typically led by the principal and one or two designated teacher-leaders.</p>	<p>Meetings are held at least quarterly and are largely led by the principal or a designated teacher-leader. Most of the meetings focus on the display of data, typically downloaded from the system’s data warehouse. The data are accurate, clear, and easy to understand. There is minimal evidence that the data are used to influence teacher and leadership practices. Written minutes are inconsistent. There is minimal evidence that teacher and leadership actions are measured and related in clear and specific terms to student results. The emotional context of the meeting appears to be largely one-way communication from the leaders to the teachers, with little indication that the data are collectively analyzed and used to make better decisions.</p>	<p>Meetings for data analysis are diverted by other matters – announcements, discipline, parent issues, and other matters addressed by the leader and meeting participants. Data on student achievement is discussed only in the most general terms – such as a school-wide average – rather than a specific analysis of student and classroom performance. Without this data, there is little evidence to support that any claim of “best practice” is anything more than something that faculty members enjoy doing. If the data warehouse is used at all, it is typically used by one or two people and the majority of classroom teachers either do not have access to it or do not use the access that they have. There is little or no evidence of mid-course corrections based on the available data on student achievement, teaching strategies, and leadership actions.</p>

6. Focus

Factor analysis as a “constellation”—finding patterns in millions of stars.

The constellation of professional practices with the greatest impact on achievement:

- Focus (six or fewer strategic priorities)
- Monitoring (specific observation of adults, not just testing of students)
- Efficacy (certainty that teaching and leadership have disproportionate impact on student results)



Assess your school, department, or district in each of these three areas and identify at least one possible way to improve.

7. Standards of Evidence in Education

- **Level 1:** Personal belief and opinion
- **Level 2:** Personal experience
- **Level 3:** Experience, beliefs, and opinions shared by others
- **Level 4:** Objective observation
- **Level 5:** Preponderance of the evidence

Common Claim in My School	Evidence to Support That Claim	Evidence Level (1–5)

8. What Makes 21st Century Skills Different?

From	To
Standardized conditions	Non-standardized conditions
Secrecy	Openness
Individual results	Individual <i>and</i> collaborative results

9. Assessing 21st Century Skills: Rhetoric and Reality

We Say That We Want	Our Assessments Practices Demonstrate That We Want	Comments and Notes
Collaboration	Individual work	
Creativity	One right answer	
Communication (speaking, writing, and technology)	Bubble sheets and short essays	
Critical thinking	Response to the stimuli of money and testing	
Real-time response	5-year plans	

10. 21st Century Assessment for Teachers and Leaders

Imagine three stacks of data:

- Student achievement—what do students know and do?
- Teacher professional practices—which specific teaching practices are associated with the best student results?
- Leadership professional practices—which specific leadership practices are associated with the best teaching practices?

11. Feedback: The Most Powerful Impact on Student Learning

Criteria for effective feedback:

- Accurate
- Timely
- Specific
- Constructive

12. Grading: The Feedback That Matters Most to Parents and Students

Your student has the following performance during the semester:

- C
- C
- MA (missing assignment)
- D
- C
- B
- MA
- MA
- B
- A

What is this student's final grade? _____

13. Engaging Parents, Students, Teachers, and Community Members

14. Improving Grading Systems

- Consequences for missing or poor work
- Average
- Zeros
- Late work
- Incentives for early work
- Menu system

15. Risks

- Risks of improved grading systems—angry colleagues, parents, and students
- Risks of unimproved grading systems—continued failure rates
- Which is the risk you are willing to take?

Dr. Reeves' Recent Articles

- "Making the Best Even Better," *American School Board Journal*, May 2011
- "Accelerating Board Expertise," *American School Board Journal*, April, 2011
- "Getting Ready for the Common core," *American School Board Journal*, March, 2011
- "The Shanghai Surprise," *American School Board Journal*, February, 2011
- "Fact or Fiction," *American School Board Journal*, January, 2011
- "Sound Grading Policies," *American School Board Journal*, December, 2010
- "The Write Way," *American School Board Journal*, November, 2010
- "Fixer or Multiplier?" *American School Board Journal*, September, 2010
- "What Does the Public Really Want," *American School Board Journal*, August, 2010
- "Focusing on Leadership Essentials," *American School Board Journal*, July, 2010
- "Getting Accountability Right: Principles and Policies for a New Era," *The AdvancED Source*, Spring, 2010
- "Earning Credits, saving money," *American School Board Journal*, June, 2010
- "Commentary/Common Standards: From What to How," *Education Week*, May 12, 2010
- "Paying for Performance," *American School Board Journal*, May, 2010
- "Sizing Up Your Leaders," *American School Board Journal*, April 2010
- "Dealing With Stress and Anxiety," *American School Board Journal*, March 2010
- "Resilience Through Adversity," *American School Board Journal*, February, 2010
- "The Board's Role in Innovation," *American School Board Journal*, January, 2010