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for Educators

Alan Blankstein on Empowering School Cultures to Support All Students

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Anthony Rebora

Managing editor, *Education Week Teacher*

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Alan M. Blankstein is the founder and president of the HOPE Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to supporting educational leaders in creating effective learning cultures where failure is not an option for any student. He is the author of *Failure Is Not an Option: Six Principles That Guide Student Achievement in High-Performing Schools*® and *The Answer Is in the Room: How Effective Schools Scale Up Student Success*. A widely-recognized speaker on school improvement, Blankstein has also provided keynote addresses at conferences throughout the world and for many major educational organizations in the United States.

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Failure Is Not an Option



Driving Success for All
Students

Alan M. Blankstein

Failure Is Not an Option: How High-Achieving Schools Succeed with All Students

1. Guiding principles of highly effective schools
2. Collaborative leadership teams as driver for change
3. Focus on engaging, relevant pedagogy
4. Systems for prevention and intervention

Failure Is Not an Option: How High-Achieving Schools Succeed with All Students

Principle #1

Common, Mission, Vision, Values, & Goals

Principle #2

Assuring Achievement for ALL Students: Systems for Prevention and Intervention

Principle #3

Collaborative Teaming Focused on Teaching and Learning

Principle #4

Using Data to Guide Decision-making and Continuous Improvement

Principle #5

Gaining Active Engagement from Family and Community

Principle #6

Building Sustainable Leadership Capacity

Leadership Team Drives the Change

- 1. Composition**
- 2. Constitution – purpose**
- 3. Conduct – protocols**

Four Types of Team Cultures

1. **Individualistic**
2. **Balkanization**
3. **Contrived Collegiality**
4. **Collaborative**

— Fullan and Hargreaves

Three Drivers of Success for All Schools

- 1. Teachers pursue a clear, shared purpose for all students' learning.**
- 2. Teachers engage in collaborative activity to achieve their stated purpose.**
- 3. Teachers take collective responsibility for student learning.**

— Newmann, Wehlage 1995

The 10 D's of Deviance in Approaches to Difficult Youth

Perspective	Problem Label	Typical Responses
Primitive	Deviant	blame, attack, ostracize
Folk Religion	Demonic	chastise, exorcise, banish
Biophysical	Diseased	diagnose, drug, hospitalize
Psychoanalytic	Disturbed	analyze, treat, seclude
Behavioral	Disordered	assess, condition, time out
Correctional	Delinquent	adjudicate, punish, incarcerate
Sociological	Deprived	study, re-socialize, assimilate
Social Work	Dysfunctional	intake, case manager, discharge
Educational	Disobedient	reprimand, correct, expel
Special Education	Disabled	label, remediate, segregate

Adapted from *Reclaiming Youth at Risk: Our Hope for the Future*

Classic Mission

It is the mission of our school to help each and every child realize his or her full potential and become a responsible and productive citizen and life-long learner who uses technology effectively and appreciates the multi-cultural society in which we live as they prepare for the global challenges of the 21st century.

Four Questions of a Mission Statement to Shift School Cultures

1. If all students can learn, what should they be learning?
 - a. Is there a school wide agreement to this question? What about district wide?
 - b. Is there alignment between what is taught and what is tested?
 - c. Are the scope and sequence of lessons consistent across subject or grade levels?

Four Questions of a Mission Statement to Shift School Cultures

2. How will we ensure engaging and relevant pedagogy?
 - a. Is professional development for the adults in the school engaging and relevant?
 - b. Is the instruction relevant to student needs?
 - c. Is the pedagogy state-of-the-art and continually improving?

Four Questions of a Mission Statement to Shift School Cultures

3. How will you know if they are learning it?
 - a. How often are **assessments** given?
 - b. Do the formative assessments align with the summative ones?
 - c. Are assessments consistent across grade/subject areas?
 - d. Are tests a “surprise”?

Four Questions of a Mission Statement to Shift School Cultures

4. What will you do if they don't learn?
 - a. Do all teachers and staff agree?
 - b. Are supports working? How do you know?
 - c. Are supports comprehensive, or are there holes?
 - d. Are all staff aware of all supports?

Engaging Pedagogy for Closing the Gap

Connecting with Students

- 1. Greeting students at the classroom door**
- 2. Commenting positively on their non-academic activities**
- 3. Catching “carry-in” problems**
- 4. Writing home to congratulate parents**
- 5. Calling on students randomly at the beginning of the year**

Engaging Pedagogy for Closing the Gap

Connecting with Students

6. Use fishbowl technique
7. Eating lunch with students, going to ball games and other extra-curricular activities
8. Include their culture in the teaching
9. Ask them how they feel about what you just taught
10. Incorporate their experiences and interests in the assignments

Engaging Pedagogy for Closing the Gap

Additional Teaching Strategies for Closing Gaps

11. When questioning students, increase wait time
12. Throughout the room, post examples of challenging questions with the types of responses you expect
13. Consistently model the responses you expect by the way you answer students' question
14. Incorporate into your questions words that have been shown to trip up students on standardized tests
15. Re-teach daily with a 4-5 minute review

Engaging Pedagogy for Closing the Gap

Additional Teaching Strategies for Closing Gaps

16. Check for understanding immediately, varying your technique
17. After a major test, have students correctly answer all the items they have missed. Have them work in small teams to answer various sections of the test, and report out to the class.
18. Use crisis as opportunity
19. Decide the meaning of behavior
20. Use humor!

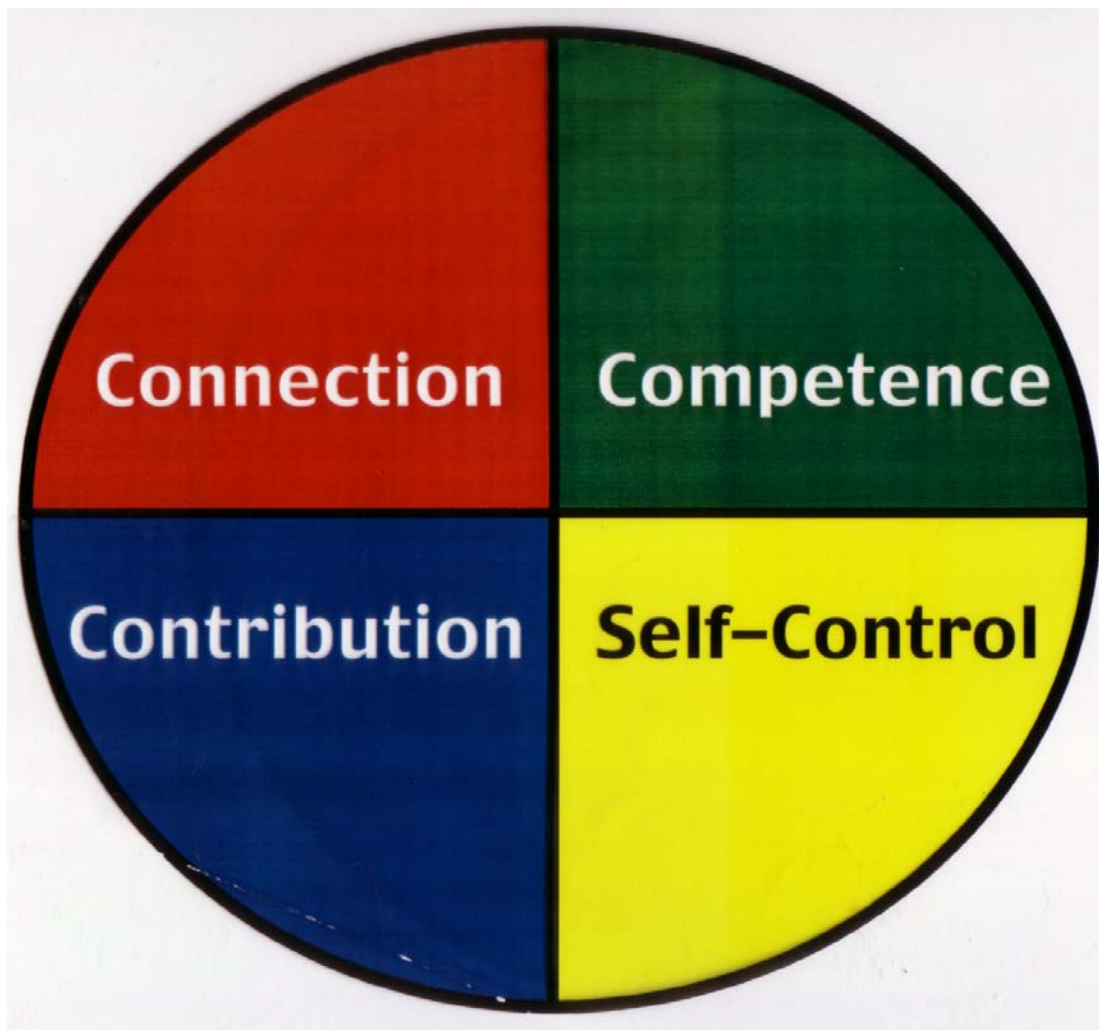
Meeting Basic Needs

Where all paths—old and new, native and modern—merge into a consensus around principles of healthy child development

Source	Basic Needs
William Glasser, M.D. <i>Control Theory in the Classroom</i> (1986)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Survival and reproduction 2. Belonging and love 3. Power 4. Freedom 5. Fun
Stanley Coopersmith <i>The Antecedents of Self-Esteem</i> (1967)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Significance to others 2. Competence 3. Power to control one's own behavior and gain respect 4. Virtue of worthiness in the eyes of others
Martin Brokenleg <i>Circle of Courage</i> (1992) Based on Sioux tradition	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Belonging 2. Mastery 3. Independence 4. Generosity
Boys and Girls Clubs of America <i>Youth Development Strategy</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Belonging 2. Usefulness 3. Competence 4. Influence
Allen N. Medler <i>What Do I Do When...?</i> (1992)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Success and being capable 2. Acceptance, belonging 3. Influence over people, events 4. Generosity and helping others 5. Stimulation and fun

SOURCE: © National Educational Service, 1996

Community Circle of Caring



Practices That Promote Connection vs. Disconnection

Connection	Disconnection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcoming students even when they are late • Greeting students warmly at classroom door • Systemically assuring every student is positively connected to an adult • Using extra-curricular engagement data of all students as a measure of school success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sending students to the principal's office, regardless of circumstances of late arrival • Working on paper at desk until all students are seated & the start bell rings • Leaving personal connections to chance • Assuming most students are involved in extra-curricular activities
Developing Competence	Building Incompetence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing make up work • Demanding mastery of material • Testing what is taught • Finding and emphasizing strengths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having "One chance" policies • Averaging zeros into semester grades • "Surprise" tests and pop quizzes • Focusing on weaknesses

Practices That Promote Connection vs. Disconnection

Self-Control	Compliance and Obedience
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Allowing students to help create class rules•Eliciting input on class projects and readings•Teaching empathy, self-awareness, and other emotional intelligences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Telling students what the rules are•Recycling prior year's projects•Keeping emotional learning apart from academics
Contribution	Self-Centeredness
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Allowing older students to teach younger ones•Creating Community service and learning opportunities•Encouraging cooperative learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•No student-led mentoring•Holding learning within the school•Teacher directs all learning

Steps of *Instructional Learning Walks*

Step 1: Brainstorm a list of observable Indicators of Quality Instruction.

- 1. Think of a lesson you have taught or observed that was highly successful in terms of student participation and outcomes.**
- 2. How did you know it was successful?**
- 3. What actions were the students engaging in that contributed to their successful outcomes?**
- 4. What actions or role did the teacher take to garner the success?**
- 5. What were some of the key attributes of the lesson that contributed to its success in each category?**
- 6. Think of these categories: teacher behaviors and student behaviors.**
- 7. Individually, list teacher behaviors and actions and student behaviors and actions that you expect to see when Quality Instruction is present.**

Steps of *Instructional Learning Walks*

Step 2: Norm the Indicators of Quality Instruction as a group

1. In teams or small groups, share your individual lists.
2. Combine and refine the lists to form one comprehensive list.
3. Continue combining and refining until you have a list of three to five indicators in each category (teacher behaviors, student behaviors).

Steps of *Instructional Learning Walks*

Step 3: Check Indicators of Quality Instruction

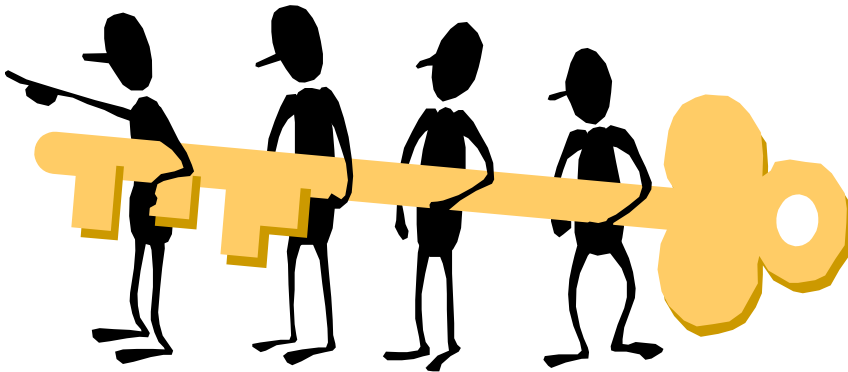
Be sure you have distinguished between Indicators of Quality Instruction and Lesson Design/Instructional Strategies. For example, an indicator might be “focused student discussion” while one strategy the teacher is using to incorporate focused student discussion might be cooperative learning. We are looking to identify the “indicator of quality” such as “focused discussions” not the specific instructional strategy or program.

The Foundation
of a
Pyramid of Support
is a
Collaborative
Culture

Because failure is not an option

Purpose: Pyramid of Support

To identify additional support systems at varying levels of intensity in order for students to perform at their academic and/or behavioral potential.



Identify Current Support Systems

Is the time/money/intensity producing the desired results?

Identify Needed Support Systems

What interventions/enrichment should be added? How will we do this? What resources will be needed?

Determine a Timeline

What parts of the Pyramid of Support will be implemented by the end of the year? What is our long range plan?

Review Successes

What has worked so far? What do we need to change?

Research Further Support Systems

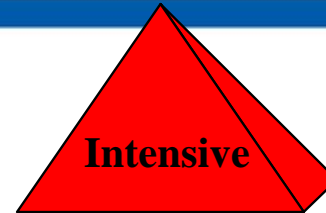
What is working at other schools? What have we learned in advanced coursework? What have we read about in educational articles?

Coyote Ridge Pyramid of Support

Period
2

Pyramid of Support

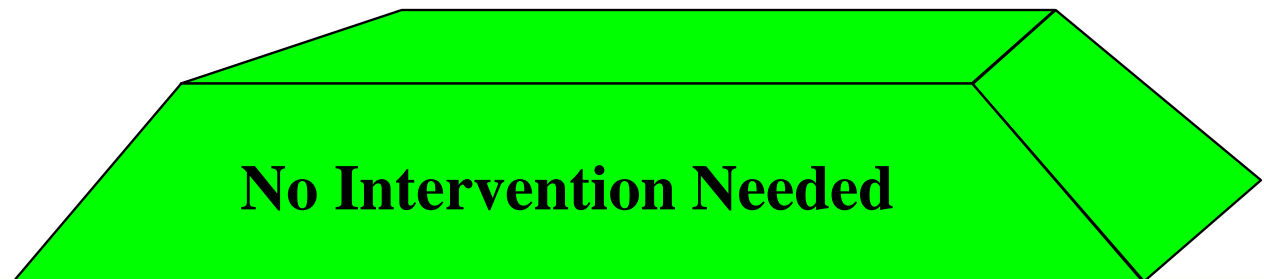
Highest Level



Middle Level



Lowest Level

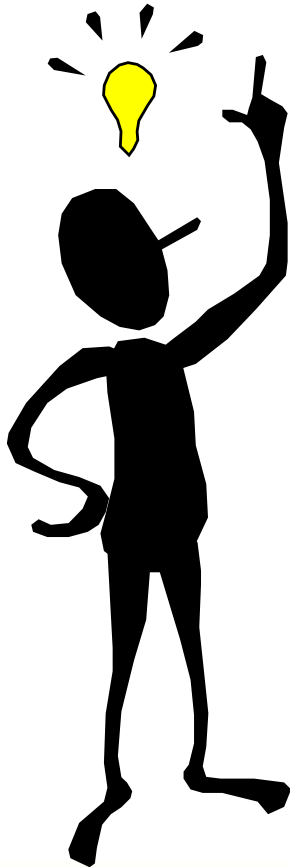


Yellow Level: Individual Teacher Support



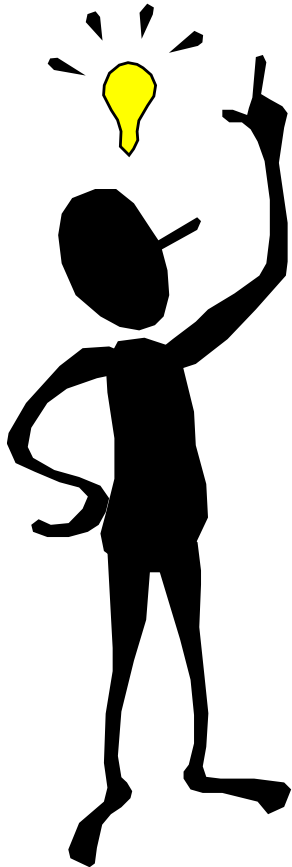
- Look at prior records/assessment information to determine strengths/needs
- Converse with prior teachers
- Conference with parents
- Provide midterm grades/progress
- Use classroom/grade level volunteers to tutor small groups or individual students
- Continually assess for movement in levels, i.e. running records, QRI/BRI, math unit tests
- Implement Literacy Achievement Plan
- Meet with administrator for support
- Use “buddy system” within classroom

Orange Level: Grade Level and Cross Grade Level



- Reconfigure students in grade levels
- Utilize SMART time
- Use district coaches
- Complete classroom data forms
- Utilize special education staff
- Provide math club
- Provide “Bubble Group” instruction
- Utilize high school or college students
- Utilize trained volunteers
- Utilize Literacy Coordinator/Interventionist
- Provide summer school or tutoring opportunities
- Utilize Study Groups prior to school

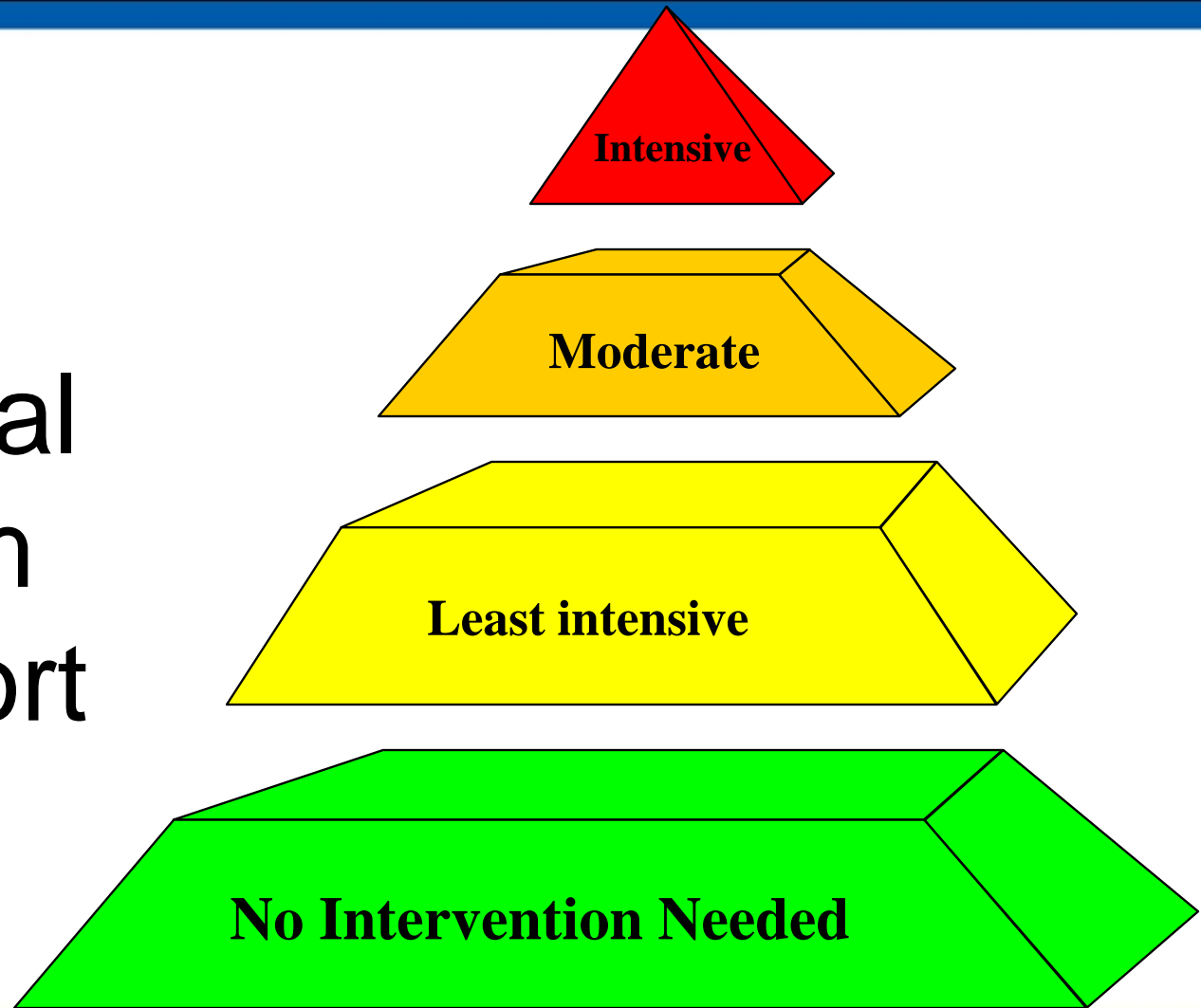
Red Level: Mentoring



- Provide short-term one-on-one counseling with school social worker or psychologist
- Use student/staff member “buddy system”
- Use one-on-one mentor volunteer

Vertical Team Pyramid of Support

Vertical
Team
Support



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Q & A