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**MEETING STANDARDS &  
RAISING TEST SCORES  
WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE  
MUCH TIME OR MONEY**

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# Achieving Critical Mass

Issues with Current Models in Staff Development and Curriculum

1. Time frames of accountability
2. Critical mass within time frames
3. Increased amount of required knowledge for teachers
4. Accountability requirements for campus/district

## To Achieve Critical Mass

- 1. Identify leaders (omnivores)**
  - a. Provide in-depth training for omnivores
  - b. Enable trainees to operationalize
  - c. Embed immediately into schoolwide program/calendar
- 2. Keep processes simple, using less time**
- 3. Involve more people**
- 4. Manage relationships, not people**

# Identifying Belief Systems

## BELIEFS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

Belief	Purpose of Education	Vocabulary	Method of Evaluation	Common Comments
<b>Cognitive Processors</b>	To teach students to think	Thinking skills, intellectual development, problem-solving	Observation of performance	“As long as they can think, it doesn’t matter what we teach ...”
<b>Self-actualizers</b>	To allow students to develop as individuals to their level of potential	Peak experience, whole child, affective, nurturance	IEP (Individualized Education Plan), holistic, developmental progression of skills	“I just want her to feel good about herself. I am not going to push her; it could harm her ...”
<b>Technologists</b>	To have students meet set of standards and demonstrate their learning against those standards	Measurable learning, task analysis, input, output, diagnosis of systems, computers, distance learning	Pre and post tests, gain scores, growth against standardized measures	“Is he learning or not? Did he make any growth? I don’t care how he feels about it ...”
<b>Academic Rationalists</b>	To learn a discipline and be able to use that discipline	Classics; humanities; traditional curriculum; rigor; basics; scholarly, conceptual themes	Mastery of content, achievement testing, summative testing	“My job is to teach the content; his job is to learn it ...”
<b>Social Reconstructionists</b>	To nurture social conscience and look out for well-being of world now and in future	Survival, consumer education, environment, peace education	Service hours; involvement in social reconstruction activities, editorials	“What does it matter what they know if there is no longer a world to live in?”
<b>Moral Standard Bearers</b>	To build character and moral human beings who can participate in immoral society	Character education, moral imperatives, God and country, vouchers, charter schools, privacy	Essays, knowledge of basics and classics tested	“There is so much evil in the world. They need to learn to obey. There is no point in learning anything but the basics and the classics.”
<b>Brain-based-learning Devotees</b>	To interact with language and environment to make meaning	Brain-based connections, making meaning, thematic curriculum, patterns	Rubrics, projects, performance assessments, identification of patterns	“If students cannot make meaning and identify patterns, why bother? Little else is remembered.”
<b>Legal Requirement</b>	To fulfill the law	Law, truancy	Attendance	“I have to.”

Adapted from the works of Eisner and Vallance, *Conflicting Conceptions of Curriculum*: McCutchan Publishing, Berkley, CA, 1974, and Mark Gerzon, *A House Divided*: Putnam Publishing Co., New York, NY, 1996.

## CASE STUDY ON BELIEFS

Your leadership team is in the second year of working toward long-term improvement. One of the team's data-driven goals is to improve achievement in science. The team found that only 60% of the sixth-graders could achieve a 70% mastery level on a criterion-referenced test dealing with physical, biological, and earth sciences. In reviewing the science curriculum for grades 1 through 6, the team found that science basically consisted of whatever the teacher had time for or wanted to teach. The team has decided to have a summer project to write the science curriculum. Before this occurs, however, the team wants to have input from all staff to develop a framework of appropriate content and labs at each grade level. The fourth-grade teachers are deadlocked and cannot come to consensus.

The fourth grade has five teachers:

**BETTY** – is a proponent of process science. She is in her mid-40s, has been teaching for 20 years, is recently divorced, and is an anti-smoking crusader. She agrees with Pete that labs are very important but believes that his content is much too difficult for fourth-graders. Several times in meetings she and Pete have verbally “tangled.” At one recent meeting Pete called Betty a “frustrated female” to which Betty retorted, “You have never successfully resolved your midlife crisis, and now you want to punish the children with useless knowledge – the only thing you can handle!” Then Betty laughed, and Pete lit a cigarette.

**PETE** – is in his early 50s and has been in education for 26 years. He spent some time in administration but preferred teaching, so he returned to it. His hobby is science, and he has many additional graduate hours in the subject. Pete states very strongly that the science curriculum has neglected basic concepts in chemistry, gravity, and machines (physical science), adding that those topics should be a focus in the fourth grade. Labs are very important also, he thinks, and he has written up labs that fourth-graders should do. He refers to Megan's insistence on peace education as “airhead fluff.” Parents of the high-ability students speak very favorably of his teaching.

**JUAN** – is in his early 30s, is recently married, and has been teaching seven years. He's still not sure if teaching is for him. However, his hobby is computers, and he believes that the fourth-grade curriculum should include computer-aided instruction, particularly in using some of the simulations for lab activities. (Anne, incidentally, has never touched a computer.) One of Juan's main concerns with this curriculum development is the order and sequence. At one meeting he said, “Just tell me what to do! Must we talk for hours? I want to know what Step 1 is, Step 2, etc! I'll just use my computer with whatever units you decide.” Pete agrees with Juan that the lab simulations would be advantageous, specifically for some of the chemical calculations. Juan feels that, in the future curriculum, technology and science will be so integrated that students need to learn them together now.

**MEGAN** – is recently out of college, is in her early 20s, and has been teaching for two years. She feels very deeply that peace education (anti-nuclear) should be a part of the science curriculum and has spent considerable time lobbying for this unit. She admits that science “is not my thing” and feels that social issues related to science are more important. As she says, “What good is science if you don’t understand how it affects people and the way they live?” Megan believes curriculum should be both relevant and fun: “After all, my parents (a doctor and a lawyer) spent 16 hours a day working. Life should be fun!”

**ANNE** – is in her early 40s, has two young children, 8 and 10, and has been teaching for 15 years. It’s her strong belief that the science curriculum should include what is appropriate for the child. After looking at Pete’s sample labs, she commented privately to Juan, “I don’t understand them. How could the children? If that’s what they decide on, I don’t know how I would ever do them!” Anne would like to see units on plants and animals because students become attached to them in a positive way. As Anne said in the meeting, “I just want the kids to feel good about science.” Anne has missed two after-school meetings – once for an orthodontist appointment and once for a piano recital, both of which involved her children. Anne also told the principal that she’s embarrassed by Pete and Betty’s name-calling, saying, “I just don’t think people should talk to each other that way.” She’s reluctant to go to any more meetings.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. What are the prevalent belief systems and who represents them?
2. What compromises might the fourth-grade teachers make to arrive at a curriculum which they all could teach?
3. What can you as a leadership team do to meet these two objectives?
  - a. Arrive at a set of curriculum topics that would be taught at that grade level.
  - b. Assist the team in working together.