Understanding and Working with Students and Adults from Poverty

by Ruby K. Payne, Ph.D.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted inequities in our communities, schools, and businesses. Many who live on the edge of stability have slid into daily instability, increasing stress for our communities. This article examines the economic realities that we are seeing more of because of COVID-19, realities that aha! Process has been addressing for 26 years.

Poverty creates barriers, but people don't understand barriers they don't face. To better understand and work with people from generational poverty, a framework is needed. This framework has shaped the following basic ideas:

- Each individual has eight resources which greatly influence achievement; money is only one.

- Poverty is the extent to which an individual is without these eight resources.

- The hidden rules of the middle class govern schools and work; students from generational poverty come with a completely different set of hidden rules and do not know middle- class hidden rules.

- Language issues and the story structure of casual register cause many students from generational poverty to be unmediated, and therefore, the cognitive structures needed inside the mind to learn at the levels required by state tests have not been fully developed.

- Teaching is what happens outside the head; learning is what happens inside the head. For these students to learn, direct teaching must occur to build these cognitive structures.

- Relationships are the key motivators for learning for students from generational poverty.

Key Points

Here are some key points that need to be addressed before discussing the framework:

Poverty is relative. If everyone around you has similar circumstances, the notion of poverty and wealth is vague. Poverty or wealth only exists in relationship to the known quantities or expectation.

Poverty occurs among people of all ethnic backgrounds and in all countries. The notion of a middle class as a large segment of society is a phenomenon of this century. The percentage of the population that is poor is subject to definition and circumstance.

Economic class is a continuous line, not a clear-cut distinction.

Individuals move and are stationed all along the continuum of income.

Generational poverty and situational poverty are different. Generational poverty is defined as being in poverty for two generations or longer. Situational poverty exists for a shorter time and is caused by circumstances like death, illness, or divorce.

This framework is based on patterns. All patterns have exceptions.

An individual brings with them the hidden rules of the class in which they were raised. Even though the income of the individual may rise significantly, many patterns of thought, social interaction, cognitive strategies, and so on remain with the individual.

School and businesses operate from middle class norms and use the hidden rules of the middle class. These norms and hidden rules are never directly taught in schools or in businesses.

We must understand our students' hidden rules and teach them the hidden middle class rules that will make them successful at school and work. We can neither excuse them nor scold them for not knowing; we must teach them and provide support, insistence, and expectations.

To move from poverty to middle class or from middle class to wealth, an individual must give up relationships for achievement.

Resources

Poverty is defined as the "extent to which an individual does without resources." These are the resources that influence achievement:

Financial: the money to purchase goods and services.

Emotional: the ability to choose and control emotional responses, particularly to negative situations, without engaging in self-destructive behavior. This is an internal resource and shows itself through stamina, perseverance, and choices.

Mental: the necessary intellectual ability and acquired skills, such as reading, writing, and computing, to deal with everyday life.

Spiritual: a belief in divine purpose and guidance.

Physical: health and mobility.

Support systems: friends, family, backup resources, and knowledge bases one can rely on in times of need. These are external resources.

Role models: frequent access to adults who are appropriate and nurturing to the child and who do not engage in self-destructive behavior.

Knowledge of hidden rules: knowing the unspoken cues and habits of a group.

> **Individuals who made it out of poverty usually cite an individual who made a significant difference for them.**

Language and Story Structure

To understand students and adults who come from a background of generational poverty, it's helpful to be acquainted with the five registers of language. These are frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate.

Formal register is standard business and educational language. Formal register is characterized by complete sentences and specific word choice. Casual register is characterized by a 400- to 500-word vocabulary, broken sentences, and many nonverbal assists.

Maria Montaño-Harmon, a California researcher, has found that many low-income students know only casual register. Many discipline referrals occur because the student has spoken in casual register. When individuals have no access to the structure and specificity of formal register, their achievement lags. This is complicated by the story structure used in casual register.

In formal register, the story structure focuses on plot, has a beginning and end, and weaves sequence, cause and effect, characters, and consequences into the plot. In casual register, the focus of the story is characterization.

Typically, the story starts at the end (Joey busted his nose), proceeds with short vignettes interspersed with participatory comments from the audience (*He hit him hard. BAM-BAM. You shoulda' seen the blood on him*), and finishes with a comment about the character. (To see this in action, watch a TV talk show where many of the participants use this structure.) The story elements that are included are those with emotional significance for the teller. This is an episodic, random approach with many omissions. It does not include sequence, cause and effect, or consequence.

Cognitive Issues

The cognitive research indicates that early memory is linked to the predominant story structure that an individual knows. Furthermore, stories are retained in the mind longer than many other memory patterns for adults. Consequently, if a person has not had access to a story structure with cause and effect, consequence, and sequence, and if he or she lives in an environment where routine and structure are not available, he or she cannot plan.

According to Reuven Feuerstein, an Israeli educator:

- Individuals who cannot plan cannot predict.
- If they cannot predict, they cannot identify cause and effect.

- If they cannot identify cause and effect, they cannot identify consequence.
- If they cannot identify consequence, they cannot control impulsivity.
- If they cannot control impulsivity, they have an inclination toward criminal behavior.

Mediation

Feuerstein refers to these students as "unmediated." Simply explained, mediation happens when an adult makes a deliberate intervention and does three things:

- Points out the stimulus (what needs to be paid attention to)
- Gives the stimulus meaning
- Provides a strategy to deal with the stimulus

For example: Don't cross the street without looking (stimulus). You could be killed (meaning). Look twice both ways before crossing (strategy).

Mediation builds cognitive strategies for the mind. The strategies are analogous to the infrastructure of a house—that is, the plumbing, electrical, and heating systems. When cognitive strategies are only partially in place, the mind can only partially accept the teaching. According to Feuerstein, unmediated students may miss as much as 50% of text on a page.

Why are so many students unmediated? Poverty forces one's time to be spent on survival. Many students from poverty live in single-parent families. When there is only one parent, he or she does not have time and energy to both mediate the children and work to put food on the table. And if the parent is non-mediated, his or her ability to mediate the children will be significantly lessened.

Hidden Rules of Class

Generational Poverty	Middle Class	Wealth
The driving forces for decision-making are survival, relationships, and entertainment.	The driving forces for decision-making are work and achievement.	The driving forces for decision-making are social, financial, and political connections.
People are possessions. It is worse to steal someone's girlfriend than a thing. A relationship is valued over achievement. That's why you must defend your child no matter what he or she has done. Too much education is feared because the individual might leave.	Things are possessions. If material security is threatened, often the relationship is broken.	Legacies, one-of-a-kind objects, and pedigrees are possessions.
The "world" is defined in local terms.	The "world" is defined in national terms.	The "world" is defined in international terms.
Physical fighting is how conflict is resolved. If you only know casual register, you don't have the words to negotiate a resolution. Respect is accorded to those who can physically defend themselves.	Fighting is done verbally. Physical fighting is viewed with distaste.	Fighting is done through social inclusion/exclusion and through lawyers.
Food is valued for its quantity.	Food is valued for its quality.	Food is valued for its presentation.

Other Rules

Generational Poverty	Middle Class	Wealth
- You laugh when you are disciplined; it is a way to save face. - The noise level is higher; nonverbal information is more important than verbal. Emotions are openly displayed, and the value of personality to the group is your ability to entertain. - Destiny and fate govern. The notion of having choices is foreign. Discipline is about penance and forgiveness, not change. - Tools are often not available. Therefore, the concepts of repair and fixing may not be present.	- Formal register is always used in an interview and is often an expected part of social interaction. - Work is a daily part of life. - Discipline is about changing behavior. To stay in the middle class, one must be self-governing and self-supporting. - A reprimand is taken seriously (at least the pretense is there), without smiling and with some deference to authority. - Choice is a key concept in the lifestyle. The future is very important. Formal education is seen as crucial for future success.	- The artistic and aesthetic are key to the lifestyle and include clothing, art, interior design, seasonal decorating, food, music, social activities, etc.* - For reasons of security and safety, virtually all are contacts dependent on connection and introductions. - Education is for the purpose of social, financial, and political connections, as well as to enhance the artistic and aesthetic. * One of the key differences between the well-to-do and the wealthy is that the wealthy almost always are patrons to the arts and often have an individual artist(s) to whom they are patrons as well.

To help students learn when they are only partially mediated, four structures must be built as part of direct teaching:

- the structure of the discipline,
- cognitive strategies,
- conceptual frameworks, and
- models for sorting out what is important from what is unimportant in text.

Hidden Rules

One key resource for success in school and at work is an understanding of the hidden rules. Hidden rules are the unspoken cueing system that individuals use to indicate membership in a group. One of the most important middle class rules is that work and achievement tend to be the driving forces in decision-making. In generational poverty, the driving forces are survival, entertainment, and relationships. This is why a student may have a $30 Halloween costume but an unpaid book bill.

Hidden rules shape what happens at school. For example, if the rule a student brings to school is to laugh when disciplined and he does so, the teacher is probably going to be offended. Yet for the student, this is the appropriate way to deal with the situation. The recommended approach is simply to teach the student that he needs a set of rules that brings success in school and at work and a different set that brings success outside of school. So, for example, if an employee laughs at a boss when being disciplined, he will probably be fired.

Many of the greatest frustrations teachers and administrators have with students from poverty is related to knowledge of the hidden rules. These students simply do not know middle class hidden rules, nor do most educators know the hidden rules of generational poverty.

> **The hidden rules of the middle class must be taught so students can choose to follow them if they wish.**

To be successful, students must be given the opportunity to learn these rules. If they choose not to use them, that is their choice. But how can they make the choice if they don't know the rules exist?

Relationships Are Key

When individuals who made it out of poverty are interviewed, virtually all cite an individual who made a significant difference for them. Not only must the relationship be present, but tasks need to be referenced in terms of relationships.

For example, rather than talk about going to college, the conversation needs to be about how the learning will impact relationships. One teacher had this conversation with a 17-year-old student who didn't do his math homework on positive and negative numbers.

"Well," she said, "I guess it will be all right with you when your friends cheat you at cards. You won't know whether they're cheating you or not because you don't know positive and negative numbers, and they aren't going to let you keep score, either." He then used a deck of cards to show her that he knew how to keep score. So she told him, "Then you know positive and negative numbers. I expect you to do your homework."

From that time on, he did his homework and kept an A average. The teacher simply couched the importance of the task according to the student's relationships.

Conclusion

Students from generational poverty need direct teaching to build cognitive structures necessary for learning. The relationships that will motivate them need to be established. The hidden rules must be taught so they can choose the appropriate responses if they desire.

Students from poverty are no less capable or intelligent. They simply have not been mediated in the strategies or hidden rules that contribute to success in school and at work.

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A Framework for Understanding Poverty was written years ago by Ruby Payne for teachers. We learned the information also helped those who are working with persons making the transition from instability to stability. That led to *Bridges Out of Poverty,* a book that addresses poverty from the individual, organization, community, and policy lenses. Bridges initiatives help people, organizations, and communities successfully address the challenges of poverty. More information on her book, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty,* can be found at ahaprocess.com.

www.ahaprocess.com

Building Learning Structures Inside the Head

by Ruby K. Payne, Ph.D.

Hidden Rules of Class

Actual phone conversations:

"Ruby, we got our Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) data back. I cried and cried. I don't know what else to do. I did everything I know how to do. What is wrong with me? With my teaching? Maybe I should just quit and do something else."

"I know we are going to get our 'bubble kids' through the TAAS. But as the subpopulation score requirements climb, what are we going to do with the others? Those students that are two and three years behind?"

Teaching is outside the head; learning is inside the head. Every individual has a brain but not everyone has a developed mind. The work of Feuerstein, an Israeli educator who successfully worked for nearly 50 years with students whose mental development was delayed, developed mental prowess through a process of mediation.

Mediation involves three things: pointing out the stimuli (what the individual is to give attention to), giving it meaning, and providing a strategy.

Mediation occurs through language and direct teaching. Mediation builds learning structures in the head, which allow the learner to accept and process the information. A teacher can teach a perfect lesson, but if the student does not have the structures for accepting and using the information, a great deal of the lesson is lost. Through direct instruction, the undeveloped and under-developed parts of the learning structure can be built.

There are four parts of the structure that must be inside a head before a learner can accept the information. To simply represent these four structures, Figure 1 (on page two) will be used.

Quite simply, these four structures are 1) a structure for data and a structure for the discipline; 2) cognitive strategies or processes; 3) conceptual frameworks (schema); and 4) sorting mechanisms.

The First Structure

The first structure is an organized mechanism for data. In an analogy to a house, it is the studs and foundation—the very things that hold the structure intact and make it a structure. In an analogy to a computer, it is the hardware itself. It is the organ of the brain that accepts data and structures it. Everything in the universe has structure and is to a certain extent, defined by that structure. The mind is, to some extent, defined by the brain.
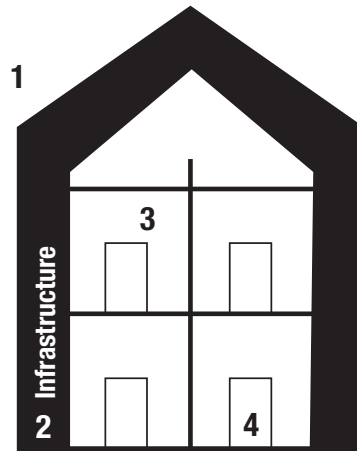
In addition, a student needs a structure for each discipline.

Figure 1

Learning Structures

Key
1) Structure
2) Cognitive strategies (processes)
3) Conceptual frameworks
4) Sorting mechanisms (important from unimportant)

Structures in disciplines tend to be underlying principles. For example, the key underlying principle in math is to assign order and value to the universe. In chemistry, the key under lying principle is bonding; in algebra, it is solving for the unknown. When the key underlying principle is under stood, then the whole discipline has a structure or a way to place data.

The Second Structure: Cognitive Strategies

The second learning structure is cognitive strategies. Feuerstein identified several strategies or processes that an individual must successfully have in order to deal with any piece of data. Feuerstein found that students missed much of the original data (up to 50 percent) when the cognitive strategies were not fully or only partially developed.

These strategies are analogous to the infrastructure of a house—the plumbing system, heating system, electrical system, sewage system, etc. In a house, it is when the systems are not working that we realize our reliance upon them. In a computer, these strategies are analogous to the software. Any individual who has worked with a malfunctioning soft ware package knows the importance of this part of the structure.

Feuerstein identified student characteristics when these strategies are missing. The strategies have been restated in the positive, i.e., what students can do when these strategies are present. In the mind, these cognitive strategies are the following:

Input Strategies

Input is defined as the "quantity and quality of the data gathered."

1. Use planning behaviors.
2. Focus perception on a specific stimulus.
3. Control impulsivity.
4. Explore data systematically.
5. Use appropriate and accurate labels.
6. Organize space with stable systems of reference.
7. Orient data in time.
8. Identify constancies across variations.
9. Gather precise and accurate data.
10. Consider two sources of information at once.
11. Organize data (parts of a whole).
12. Visually transport data.

Elaboration Strategies

Elaboration strategies are defined as the "use of the data."

1. Identify and define the problem.
2. Select relevant cues.
3. Compare data.
4. Select appropriate categories of time.
5. Summarize data.
6. Project relationships of data.
7. Use logical data.
8. Test hypothesis.

9. Build inferences.

10. Make a plan using the data.

11. Use appropriate labels.

12. Use data systematically.

Output Strategies

Output is defined as the "communication of the data."

1. Communicate clearly the labels and process.

2. Visually transport data correctly.

3. Use precise and accurate language.

4. Control impulsive behavior.

What do these strategies mean?

Mediation builds these strategies.

When these strategies are not present, they can be built. Typically in school, we begin teaching at the elaboration level, i.e., the use of the data. When students do not understand, we reteach these strategies but do not revisit the quality and quantity of the data gathered.

In order to better understand input strategies, each is explained in more detail. Typically, input strategies are not directly taught, because we do not know to teach them. However, for unmediated students, these strategies must be taught directly.

Implementing the Strategies

Using planning behaviors includes goal setting, identifying the procedures in the task, identifying the parts of the task, assigning time to the task(s), and identifying the quality of the work necessary to complete the task.

Focusing perception on a specific stimulus is the strategy of seeing every detail on the page or in the environment. It is the strategy of identifying **everything noticed by the five senses.**

Controlling impulsivity is the strategy of stopping action until thinking about the task is done. There is a direct correlation with impulsivity control and improved behavior and achievement.

Exploring data systematically means that a strategy is employed to procedurally and systematically go through every piece of data.

Numbering is a way to go systematically through data. Highlighting each piece of data can be another method.

Using appropriate and accurate labels is the use of precise words and vocabulary to identify and explain. If a student does not have specific words to use, then his or her ability to retrieve and use information is severely limited. It is not enough that a student can do a task, he/she must also be able to label the procedures, tasks and processes so that the task can be successfully repeated each time and analyzed at a metacognitive level. Metacognition is the ability to think about one's thinking. To do labels must be attached. Only when labels are attached can the task be evaluated and therefore improved.

Organizing space with stable systems of reference is crucial to success in math. It means that up, down, right, left, across, horizontal, vertical, diagonal, etc. are understood. It means that an individual can identify what the position of an item is with labels. It means that an individual can organize space. For example, if an individual does not have this strategy, then it is virtually impossible to tell a "p", "b" and "d" apart. The only differentiation is the orientation in space.

Orienting data in time is the strategy of assigning abstract values to time and the measurement of time. This strategy is crucial for identifying cause and effect, for determining sequence, and for predicting consequences.

Identifying constancies across variations is the strategy of knowing what always remains the same and what changes. For example, if you do not know what always makes a square a square, you cannot identify constancies. It allows one to define things, to recognize a person or an object, and to compare and contrast. This strategy allows cursive writing to be read with all of its variations. I asked a group of fifth-grade students I was working with this question: "If you saw me tomorrow, what about me would be the same and what would be different?" Many of the students had difficulty with that strategy.

Gathering precise and accurate data is the strategy of using accurate labels, identifying the orientation in time and in space, knowing the constancies, and exploring the data systematically.

Considering two sources of information at once is the strategy of visually transporting data accurately, identifying the constancies and variations, and exploring the data systematically. When that is done, then precise and accurate labels need to be assigned.

Organizing data (parts of a whole) involves exploring data systematically, organizing space, identifying constancies and variations, and labeling the parts and the whole with precise words.

Visually transporting data is when the eye picks up the data, carries it accurately to the brain, examines it for constancies and variations, and labels the parts and whole. If a student cannot visually transport, then he often cannot read, has difficulty with basic identification of anything, and cannot copy.

Elaboration and output strategies tend to be fairly well understood in schools, because that is where the teaching tends to occur. Feuerstein developed well over 100 instruments to use to build these strategies in the brain.

## The Third Structure: Conceptual Frameworks

Conceptual frameworks are the part of the structure that stores and retrieves data. In the house, it is analogous to the rooms. In most houses, rooms are identified by function—the bedroom, the living room, the kitchen, the bathroom, etc.

In a computer, the analogy is to the files. In an oversimplification of conceptual frameworks, they might look something like Figure 2.

These frameworks need the general or abstract words so that categories can be made for information, like the files in a computer or the rooms in a house. Development goes from the specific and concrete to the abstract and general.

At least two quick ways are avail able to diagnose the development and accessibility of conceptual frame works. First, if a student gives an example rather than a definition, you know that the concrete part of the framework is available, but the abstract part is not. To store much information, abstract words are necessary to assign and label the

Figure 2

Abstract

Concrete
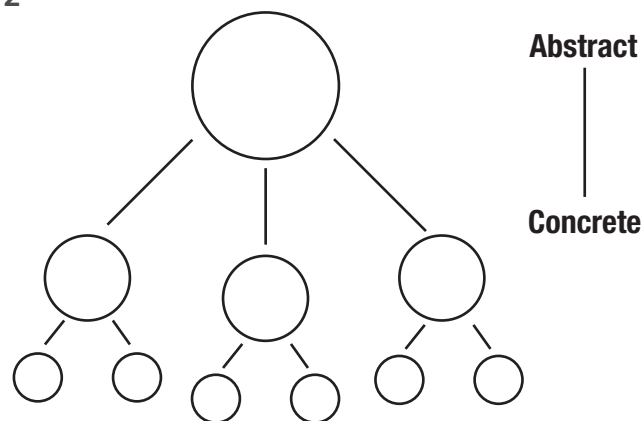
categories. Casual register has very little abstract terminology, so students who do not have access to formal register have difficulty with assigning things to categories.

The second way to diagnose conceptual frameworks is whether a student can ask a question syntactically. For example, the student will ask, "Don't you have any more?" If a student makes a statement but tonally infers it is a question, e.g., "You don't have any more?" then a high probability exists that the student has a low reading comprehension score (Palinscar), and the student is unable to access the stored information with any repeated success. If you have a student who cannot answer the test questions unless they are exactly the same as the review questions, then you have a student who cannot access their conceptual frameworks or "files."

Quite simply, if a student cannot ask questions syntactically, his ability to learn is significantly reduced because he cannot identify what he does not know nor can he systematically access what he does know.

There are several ways to build in conceptual frameworks, but one of the most successful methods is reciprocal teaching by Anne Palinscar.

Another successful method is to make students write their own multiple choice questions using question stems. Vocabulary development is yet another. Tactics for Thinking (Marzano) has several activities that assist in this development.

The Fourth Structure: Models for sorting

Before any data can be stored so that it can be found, some method for sorting the data must exist. Sorting the data simply means identifying what is important and what is not important. Sorting the data is analogous to the door on the room. It is what allows the entrance and exit to the file. On the computer, it is the click of the cursor on the file or the pathway.

Students have difficulty sorting information, particularly nonfiction text, because we do not teach how to sort important from unimportant, except as a summary skill.

Furthermore, if the student uses a random, episodic story structure, memory is often assigned on the basis of what has emotional significance. Because many students do not have a method for sorting information, they try to remember as much as possible, which is very ineffective.

Skilled learners sort text by the organizational pattern or structure of the text. For example, if an article is about the causes and effects of the Civil War, then the reader would sort for causes and effects. If the text compares and contrasts a given topic, then the reader would want to remember what was alike and what was different. We have given students graphic ways to organize their writing, but we have not given them the models to sort text. Basically, the majority of text that students see in schools can be represented by one of five models. Students are simply taught how to identify the five models and sort text with the five models.

In addition, other teaching techniques are available to assist with sorting. Project Read has several good ideas.

Five Models to Use for Sorting

In order to remember, the mind must sort through information and store what is important and discard what is not important. In order to remember the important parts of text, the mind needs to sort against the structure of the text.

We have traditionally used graphic organizers to help students write text. Being able to sort the important from the unimportant during reading is the flip side of that coin. Using models to help students sort text gives them a way to remember organizational pat terns and to identify what is important. The graphic organizers need to be simple so they are easy to remember. The five

Figure 3

Five Models to Use for Sorting

Hand
Topical or descriptive organization

Car
Fiction story structure

Ladder
Narrative
How-to

Cross
Pro/con
Advantages, disadvantages
Cause and effect

Hamburger
Position with proof

symbols in Figure 3 can be used. Any five can be used. Most text that students see in school fits one of these patterns.

How does a teacher use these with students? Give students a piece of text to read and one of the five models. Initially, choose the model that fits the organizational pattern of the text. Put students into pairs. Have them select the most important information and write it into an outline of the model. When finished, use a transparency and help students identify the most important information. Each student should add to his or her written model the information that has been missed.

Because the TAAS test has so much nonfiction text, students have difficulty because they want to sort using the fiction story structure (see Figure 4) and so remember the characters, setting and plot. By directly teaching them to sort, students can better select the important information.

Conclusion

The less mediated the student is, the more need the student has for direct instruction in these structures. For several of the reasons I cited in Part 1 of this article, many students from poverty do not have these structures sufficiently in place to do well on the TAAS.

Figure 4

Fiction Story Structure

Middle

Beginning

Characters

End

Problem

Goal

Setting
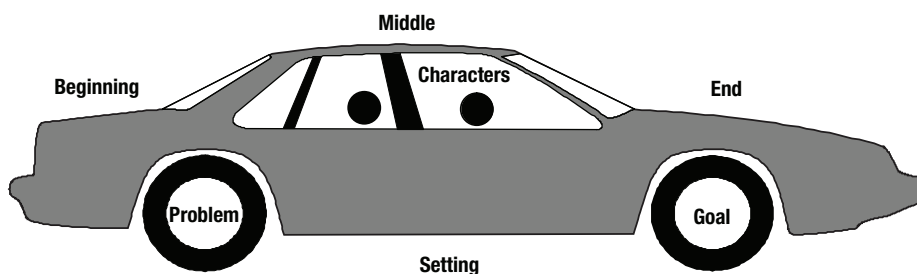
All that means is that we must provide direct instruction to build these in their minds. It means that we trade out some of the activities we use that do not have a great amount of payoff in achievement for those that have a higher payoff. For example, rather than having students answer questions at the end of the chapter, they can compose questions. When a student

does not have orientation in space, we embed that as a part of the instruction.

Direct instruction to build these strategies is imperative because of the issue of time. Historically, the reason individuals hired teachers or tutors was to provide the learning more efficiently than the individual could with out assistance. Trial and error, as well as experience, can be valuable teachers, but they take more time.

It will be from our interventions with the learning structures that greater strides in student achievement will come. Students who have been traditionally successful in school came to school with learning structures; we built our traditional instructional design around the notion that these would be in place.

But these structures can be built. Someone built them in the minds of students who come to school ready to learn. At school, Feuerstein built them successfully into students who at 12 and 13 years old did not have them. As we reframe our instruction to include their construction, student achievement will increase.

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More information regarding her book, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty,* can be found at ahaprocess.com.

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Working with Students from Poverty: Discipline

by Ruby K. Payne, Ph.D.

In poverty, discipline is often about penance and forgiveness. Because love is unconditional and because the time frame is the present, the notion that discipline should be instructive and change behavior is not a part of the culture in generational poverty. In matriarchal, generational poverty, the mother is the most powerful position and is in some ways "keeper of the soul," so she dispenses the judgments, determines the amount and price of penance, and gives forgiveness. When forgiveness is granted, behaviors and activities return to the way they were before the incident.

It is important to note that the approach is to teach a separate set of behaviors. Many of the behaviors students bring to school help them survive outside of school. Students learn and use many different rules depending on the video game they are playing. Likewise, they need to learn to use different rules to be successful in the setting they are in. If poor students do not know how to fight physically, they are going to be in danger on the streets. But if that is their only method for resolving a problem, then they cannot be successful in school.

The culture of poverty does not provide for success in the middle class, because the middle class to a large extent requires the self-governance of behavior. To be successful in work and in school requires the self-governance of behavior. What then do schools need to do to teach appropriate behavior?

Structure and Choice

The two anchors of any effective discipline program that moves students to self-governance are structure and choice. The program must clearly outline the expected behaviors and the consequences of not choosing those behaviors. The program must also emphasize that the individual always has choice—to follow or not to follow the expected behaviors. With each choice then comes consequence—either desirable or not desirable. Many discipline workshops use this approach and are available to schools.

When the focus is, "I'll tell you what to do and when," the student can never move from dependence to independence. He or she is always at the level of dependence.

Behavior Analysis

Mentally or in writing, teachers or administrators must first examine the behavior analysis:

1. What behaviors does the child need to be successful?
2. Does the child have the resources to develop those behaviors?
3. Will it help to contact a parent? Are resoures available through them? What resources are available through the school district?
4. How will behaviors be taught?
5. What are other choices the child could make?
6. What will help the child repeat the successful behavior?

When these questions are completed, they provide answers to the strategies that will most help the student. The chart on the next page indicates possible explanations of behaviors and possible interventions.

Participation of the Student

While the teacher or administrator is analyzing, the student must analyze as well. To help students do so, give them this four-part questionnaire.

This has been used with students as young as second semester, first grade. Students have the most difficulty with question number three. Basically, they see no other choices available than the one they have made.

Name:

1. **What did you do?**
2. **Why did you do that?**
3. **List four other things you could have done.**
4. **What will you do next time?**

In going over the sheet with the student, it is important to discuss other choices that could have been made. Students often do not have access to another way to deal with the situation. For example, if I slam my finger in the car door, I can cry, cuss, hit the car, be silent, kick the tire, laugh, stoically open the car door, groan, etc.

The Language of Negotiation

One of the bigger issues with students from poverty is that many of them are their own parents. They parent themselves and others—often younger siblings. In many instances, they are the parent to the adult in the household.

Inside everyone's head are internal voices that guide the individual.

These three voices are referred to as the child voice, the adult voice, and the parent voice. It has been my observation that individuals who have become their own parent quite young do not have an internal adult voice. They have a child voice and a parent voice, but not an adult voice.

What an internal adult voice does is allow for negotiation. This voice provides the language of negotiation and allows the issues to be examined in a non-threatening way.

Educators tend to speak to students in a parent voice, particularly in discipline situations. To the student who is already functioning as a parent, this is unbearable, and almost immediately, the incident is exacerbated beyond the original happening. The tendency is for educators to also use the parent voice with poor parents because the assumption is that a lack of resources must indicate a lack of intelligence. Poor parents are extremely offended by this as well.

When the parent voice is used with a student who is already a parent in many ways, the outcome is anger. The student is angry because anger is based on fear. What the parent voice forces the

Behavior Related to Poverty	Intervention
Laughs when disciplined. A way to save face in matriarchal poverty.	*Understand the reason for the behavior. Tell the student three or four other behaviors that would be more appropriate.*
Argues loudly with the teacher. Poverty is participatory, and the culture has a distrust of authority. Sees the system as inherently dishonest and unfair.	*Don't argue with the student. Have them complete the four-part questionnaire on page 2. Model respect for students.*
Angry response. Anger is based on fear. The question is what the fear is—loss of face?	*Respond in the adult voice. When the student cools down, discuss other responses that could be used.*
Inappropriate or vulgar comments. They rely on casual register, may not know formal register.	*Make students generate or teach students other phrases that could be used to say the same thing.*
Physically fights. Necessary to survive in poverty. Only knows the language of survival. Does not have language or belief system to use conflict resolution. Sees himself as less than a man if does not fight.	*Stress that fighting is unacceptable in school. Examine other options the student could live with at school. One option is not to settle the business at school.*
Hands always on someone else. Poverty has a heavy reliance on nonverbal data and touch.	*Allow them to draw or doodle. Have them hold their hands behind their backs when in line or standing. Give them as much to do with their hands as possible in a constructive way.*
Cannot follow directions. Little procedural memory used in poverty. Sequence not used or valued.	*Write steps on the board. Have them write at the top of the paper the steps needed to finish the task. Have them practice procedural self-talk.*
Extremely disorganized. Lack of planning, scheduling, or prioritizing skills. Not taught in poverty. Also, probably does not have a place to put things at home so they can be found.	*Teach a simple color-coded method of organization in the classroom. Use the five-finger method for memory at the end of the day. Make students give a plan for their own organization.*
Only completed part of a task. No procedural self talk. Does not "see" the whole task.	*Write on the board all the parts of the task. Make students check off each part when finished.*
Disrespectful to teacher. Has lack of respect for authority and the system. May not know any adults worthy of respect.	*Tell students that approach is not a choice. Identify for students the correct voice tone and word choice that is acceptable. Make them practice.*
Harms other students, verbally or physically. This may be a way of life. Probably a way to buy space or distance. May have become a habitual response. Poverty tends to address issues in the negative.	*Tell the students that approach is not a choice. Have the students generate other options. Give students alternative verbal phrases.*
Cheats or steals. Indicative of weak support system, weak role models/emotional resources. May indicate extreme financial need. May indicate no instruction/guidance during formative years.	*Use metaphor story to find the reason or need the cheating and stealing met. Address the reason or need. Stress that the behavior is illegal and not a choice at school.*
Constantly talks. Poverty is very participatory.	*Make students write all questions and responses on a note card two days a week. Tell students they get five comments a day. Build participatory activities into the lesson.*

student to do is either use the child voice or use the parent voice. If the student uses the parent voice, the student will get in trouble. If the student uses the child voice, he or she will feel helpless and therefore at the mercy of the adult.

Many students choose to use the parent voice in return because it is less frightening than the memories connected with being helpless.

Part of the reality of poverty is the language of survival. There are simply not enough resources to engage in a discussion of them. For example, if there are five hot dogs and five people, the distribution of the food is fairly clear. The condiments for the hot dogs are going to be limited so the discussion will be fairly limited as well. So the ability to see options and to negotiate among those options is not well-developed. Contrast that, for example, with a middle class household where the discussion will be about how many hot dogs, what should go on the hot dog, etc.

To teach students to use the "language of negotiation," one must first teach them the

> **Educators tend to speak to students in a parent voice, particularly in discipline situations.**
>
> **To the student who is already functioning as a parent, this is unbearable, and almost immediately, the incident is exacerbated beyond the original happening.**

phrases they can use. Especially, beginning in grade four, have them use the "adult" voice in discussions. Direct teach the notion of an adult voice and give them phrases to use. Make them tally each time they use a phrase from the "adult" voice. There will be laughter. However, over time, if teachers also model that voice in their interactions with students, they will hear more of those kinds of questions and statements.

In addition to this, several staff development programs are available to teach peer negotiation. It is important that, as a part of the negotiation, the culture of origin is not denigrated, but rather the ability to negotiate is seen as a survival skill for the work and school setting.

Child Voice

Defensive, victimized, emotional, whining, lose mentality, strong negative nonverbals.

- Quit picking on me.
- You don't love me.
- You want me to leave.
- Nobody likes (loves) me.
- I hate you.
- You are ugly.
- You make me sick.
- It's your fault.
- Don't blame me.
- She (he) did it.
- You make me mad.
- You made me do it.

The child voice is also playful, spontaneous, curious, etc. The phrases listed occur in conflict or manipulative situations and impede resolution.

Adult Voice

Non-judgmental, free of negative nonverbals, factual, often in question format, attitude of win–win.

- In what ways could this be resolved?
- What criteria will be used to determine the effectiveness and quality of...?
- I would like to recommend...
- What are the choices in this situation?
- I am comfortable (uncomfortable) with...
- Options that could be considered are...
- For me to be comfortable...

- I need the following things to occur...
- These are the consequences of that choice or action...
- We agree to disagree.

Parent Voice

Authoritative, directive, judgmental, evaluative, win–lose mentality, advising (sometimes threatening, demanding, punitive).

- You should not (should) do that.
- It is wrong (right) to do that.
- I would advise you to...
- That's stupid, immature, out of line, ridiculous.
- Life's not fair.
- Get busy.
- You are good, bad, worthless, beautiful (any judgmental, evaluative comment).
- You do as I say.
- If you weren't so..., this wouldn't happen to you.

The parent voice can also be very loving and supportive. These phrases listed occur during conflict and impede resolution. The internal parent voice can create shame and guilt.

Using Metaphor Stories

Another technique for working with students and adults is to use a metaphor story. A metaphor story will help an individual voice issues that affect their actions.

A metaphor story does not have any proper names in it. For example, a student keeps going to the nurse's office two or three times a week.

There is nothing wrong with her, yet she keeps going.

Adult to Jennifer, the girl: "Jennifer, I am going to tell a story and I need you to help me. It is about a fourth-grade girl much like yourself. I need you to help me tell the story because I am not in the fourth grade. Once upon a time, there was a girl who went to the nurse's office.

"Why did the girl go to the nurse's office? (Because she thought there was something wrong with her.) So the girl went to the nurse's office because she thought there was something wrong with her. Did the nurse find anything wrong with her? (No, the nurse did not.) So the nurse did not find anything wrong with her, yet the girl kept going to the nurse. Why did the girl keep going to the nurse? (Because she thought there was something wrong with her.) So the girl thought something was wrong with her. Why did the girl think there was something wrong with her? (She saw a TV show...)"

The story continues until the reason for the behavior is found and then the story needs to end on a positive note. "So, she went to the doctor, and he gave her tests and found that she was OK."

This is an actual case. What came out in the story was that Jennifer had seen a TV show in which a girl her age had died suddenly and had never known she was ill. Jennifer's parents took her to the doctor. He ran tests and told her she was fine. She did not go to the nurse's office anymore.

A metaphor story is to be used one-on-one when there is a need to understand the behavior and what is needed is to move the student to the appropriate behavior.

Teaching Hidden Rules

For example, if a student from poverty laughs when he is disciplined, the teacher needs to say, "Do you use the same rules to play all video games: No, you don't because you would lose. The same is true at school. There are street rules and there are school rules. Each set of rules helps you be successful where you are. So, at school, laughing when disciplined is not a choice. It does not help you to be successful. It only buys you more trouble. Keep a straight face and look contrite, even if you aren't."

That is an example of teaching a hidden rule. It can even be more straightforward with older

students. "Look, there are hidden rules on the street and hidden rules at school. What are they?" And then after the discussion, detail the rules that make the student successful where they are.

> **Students from poverty need to have at least two sets of behaviors from which to choose—one set for the streets, and one set for school and work.**

What Does This Information Mean in the School or Work Setting?

- Students from poverty need to have at least two sets of behaviors from which to choose—one set for the streets, and one set for school and work.

- The purpose of discipline should be to promote successful behaviors at school.

- Teaching students to use the adult voice, i.e., the language of negotiation, is important for their success in and out of school and can become an alternative to physical aggression.

- Structure and choice need to be a part of the discipline approach.

- Discipline should be a form of instruction.

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Campuswide Interventions That Improve Student Achievement

by Ruby K. Payne, Ph.D.

Conversation between a principal new to the building and a supervisor:

> **Supervisor:** "That campus cannot be low-performing again. I do not have any extra money to give you. With the Title I money you have at your campus, your school will need to find a way to raise your achievement significantly."

> **Principal (to herself as she walks to the car):** "And just how would that happen? I have 1,100 students of whom 80% are low-income, 12 new teachers, and a mobility rate of 40 percent. I know it can be done, but in a year?"

Many of our models for staff and curriculum development do not address realities pressuring schools today. Some of these realities are:

- The critical mass needed to impact student achievement. Example: 90% of teachers are doing a particular intervention or strategy versus 10% not doing it.
- The growing knowledge base required of teachers and administrators. Example: Educators are to know about sexual harassment, inclusion, cooperative learning, reading strategies, ADHD, modifications, gifted/talented strategies, legal guidelines, ESL strategies, etc.
- The time frames in which student achievement is to occur and be measured. Example: State and norm referenced tests are designed for annual measures of learning.
- The accountability criteria that schools must meet.
- The lack of money and time for extensive training for teachers. Example: Most districts and campuses have five days or less allocated for staff development, which limits the length and/or depth of the training.
- The increased numbers of students who come from poverty and/or who lack support systems at home. The increased numbers of students with emotional and mental health issues. Example: Educated parents, when the school system does not address their children's needs, tend to provide assistance, pay for a tutor, or request a teacher. In poverty, the student only gets interventions through school.
- The increased number of new teachers spurred by the exodus of teachers from teaching.

Processes and models are available to address these needs, but to put these in place, an additional model for staff development and curriculum development must be used. This model basically trades in-depth learning for critical mass by using a simpler approach. Fullan talks about the importance of critical mass as well as the main criteria teachers use to determine how "user-friendly" the curriculum and training are, i.e., how operational they are (Fullan, 1991; Fullan, 1996).

In these models, which I have used for several years, the amount of time spent in training is decreased, the model is less complex and totally operational, and 100% of the staff is trained. We still need reflective staff development; we just need an additional model to help address some of the issues above.

Figure A outlines some of the basic differences.

What does this information mean in practice? With simpler models that are operational and involve 100% of the staff, the roller-coaster ride that students take through school can be significantly lessened. One of the reasons that middle class students do better in school is that their parents intervene to lessen the impact of the roller coaster. (These parents do so by paying for tutoring, requesting teachers, and providing assistance and instruction at home.)

As you can see in Figure B, the X represents Johnny and his journey through five years of school. In first grade, he had a wonderful teacher who willingly went to every kind of training available. Johnny had a great year and made the expected progress.

Figure A

Definition	**Reflective staff development** A process by which a person examines in-depth his learning on a given subject	**Operational staff development** A method for immediate implementation across the system to address accountability and student achievement
Purpose	To build in-depth learning and change	To impact the system quickly; to build in connections/linkages across the system
Effects of critical mass	Depends on amount of resources and level of attrition; takes at least four to five years	Affects critical mass almost immediately; can have 80% to 90% implementation the first year
Time required	Four to five days per person for initial training	Two hours to one day of training per person
Breadth	Limited	Systemic
Cost analysis	High per-person cost	Low per-person cost
District role	May be contacted or may use district expertise to deliver and provide follow-up	Identifies which campus systems need to be addressed; works with campuses to reach critical mass; assists with the operational development of innovation
Follow-up	Provided in small groups or by expert trainer	Provided through accountability measures and the fine-tuning from discussions to make innovation more user-friendly
Role of principal	In liaison with training; may provide resources and follow-up opportunities	Assists with the delivery of training; provides the insistence, support, and accountability for innovation

Figure B

Johnny's progress	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Grade 1	X				
Grade 2	X				
Grade 3			X		
Grade 4		X			
Grade 5			X		

In second grade, his teacher was having many health problems and missed quite a few days of school. In addition, Johnny's parents divorced so he was shuttled between homes. In the second grade, Johnny actually regressed.

In the third grade, he had a beginning teacher. She loved the students but did not have the experience or the guidelines to provide the instruction that the other third-grade teacher did. Most of the educated parents had asked for the other teacher because of her excellent reputation. Johnny made progress.

In the fourth grade, Johnny had a teacher who did not participate in staff development. As far as she was concerned, it was a waste of time.

Her students tended to do poorly on the state test, but her husband was on the school board. Once again, given her reputation, the educated parents had requested that their children be placed in the other fourth-grade classroom.

In the fifth grade, it was determined that Johnny was now two and a half grade levels behind and should repeat the grade. That caused him to be separated from his peers, which, in the research, students often view as emotionally devastating as a death.

How can we address this problem? With systemic interventions that can impact achievement through simple yet effective tools and processes.

Benjamin Bloom (1976) did extensive research to determine what makes a difference in learning. He identified four factors: 1) the amount of time to learn, 2) the intervention(s) of the teacher, 3) how clear the focus of the instruction is, and 4) what the student came in knowing. As is readily apparent, the control the individual teacher has over these variables is significantly impacted by what is happening at the campus.

When these interventions are addressed at a campus level in a systematic way, more learning occurs.

Systemic interventions that can impact achievement are:

1. **Reasonable expectations.** This is a simpler model of curriculum mapping that addresses the focus of instruction and the amount of time.

2. **Growth assessments.** These are methods for identifying and assessing the growth a student makes on a regular basis.

3. **Benchmarks.** This is a simpler model of three to four indicators by grading period to show whether a student needs an immediate intervention. It is absolutely crucial for first-grade reading. Honig (1995) states that a first-grader who is not in the primer by April of the first-grade year generally does not progress beyond the third-grade reading level.

4. Interventions for the student. When students are identified through the growth assessments and benchmarks as making inadequate growth, immediate interventions are provided for the student, one of which is allowing more time during the school day.

What follows is a description and example for each of the above. It is important to note that all of these are working documents of one or two pages so that they can constantly be reassessed. It is analogous to having a road map: all of the details are not present. However, the lay of the land, the choices of the route, and the final destination are clear.

Reasonable Expectations

Reasonable expectations identify what is taught and the amount of time devoted to it. This allows a campus to "data mine," i.e., determine the payoff between what actually gets taught, the amount of time given to it, and the corresponding test results.

For example, if two hours a day are spent on reading but only 15 minutes is devoted to students actually reading, the payoff will be less than 45 minutes of that time being devoted to students actually reading.

Figure C is the process used. For each subject area, it requires about 30 to 60 minutes of individual time, one to two hours of grade-level time, and three hours of total faculty time.

Figure D is an example from Runyan Elementary in Conroe, Texas. The principal is Nancy Harris.

There are any number of growth assessments available. What makes something a growth assessment is that it identifies movement against a constant set of criteria. What makes a growth assessment different from a test is that the criteria do not change in a growth assessment. Rubrics are one way to measure and identify growth.

Figure C

Simple Yet Effective Tools and Processes

One of the first pieces of information that a principal and campus need to know is what is actually being taught. Here's a simple process to help find this out.

1. If you are on a six-week grading period, divide a paper into six equal pieces. If you are on a nine-week grading period, divide a paper into four equal pieces. Have each teacher for each subject area write the units or skills that they teach in each grading period. In other words, what do they usually manage to teach to that grade level in that subject area in that amount of time?

2. Have each grade level meet and discuss one subject area at a time. Do all the teachers at a grade level basically have the same expectations for that grade level in terms of content and skills? Have they come to a consensus about the expectation for that grade level?

3. Have the faculty as a group compare the grade levels one through five or six through eight or nine through 12. If Johnny was with the school for five years, what would he have the opportunity to learn? What would he not have had the opportunity to learn? Where are the holes in the opportunities to learn?

4. The faculty then uses this information to identify the strengths and weaknesses in the current educational program. Are some things repeated without benefit to achievement? Are some things not ever taught or so lightly brushed to not be of benefit? What is included that could be traded out for something that has a higher payoff in achievement?

5. When the discussion is over, the one-page sheets are revised and given to the appropriate teachers.

6. Twice a year, the principal meets with grade-level teams, and using these sheets, discusses the progress of the learning, adjustments that need to be made, etc. These become working documents, and because of their simplicity, they can be easily revised.

Figure E is an example of a reading rubric to measure student growth. It was developed by Sandra Duree, Karen Coffey, and me in conjunction with the teachers of Goose Creek ISD. *Becoming a Nation of Readers* identified characteristics of skilled readers, so those characteristics were used to measure growth as a constant over five years. We identified what

growth would look like over five years if a student were progressing as a skilled reader.

To develop a growth assessment, a very simple process can be used. Have the teachers in your building (who consistently get the highest achievement and understand the district curriculum and TAAS specs) develop the growth

Figure D

Second-Grade Language Arts Curriculum (70% fiction, 30% nonfiction)		

First six weeks
 	
Reading–60 minutes
Drop Everything and Read (DEAR)–10 minutes
Teacher reading to students
Reading workshop–50 minutes
 	
Spelling–15 minutes (60 words total)
10 words per week
 	
Writing–45 minutes
Personal narrative two to three sentences
    same subject
Daily Oral Language (DOL)–15 minutes
Writing workshop–30 minutes
 	
Vocabulary (integrated)–5 words per week
 	
Skills–20 minutes
Choosing a just right book
Characters
Predicting
Distinguishing between fiction and nonfiction
	Second six weeks
	
	Reading–60 minutes
	DEAR–10 minutes
	Teacher reading to students
	Reading workshop–50 minutes
	
	Spelling–15 minutes (60 words total)
	10 words per week
	
	Writing–45 minutes
	Six to seven lines on same subject for how-to
	DOL–15 minutes
	Writing workshop–30 minutes
	
	Vocabulary (integrated)–5 words per week
	
	Skills–20 minutes
	Setting
	Beginning, middle, end of story
	Parts of speech; noun, verb
	Sequential order
	Comprehension
	Compound words
	Contractions
		Third six weeks
		
		Spelling–15 minutes (60 words total)
		10 words per week
		
		Writing–45 minutes
		Five to seven steps in paragraph,
		    sequential for how-to
		DOL–15 minutes
		Writing workshop–30 minutes
		
		Vocabulary (integrated)–5 words per week
		
		Skills–20 minutes
		Main idea
		Prefix, suffix
		Context clues
		Synonyms, antonyms, homophones, homonym
		Comprehension
		Compound words
		Contractions

Fourth six weeks **Reading–60 minutes** DEAR–15 minutes Teacher reading to students Reading workshop–45 minutes **Spelling–15 minutes (60 words total)** 10 words per week Alphabetical order to second letter **Writing–45 minutes** How-to five to seven steps in paragraph form DOL–15 minutes TAAS form Writing workshop–30 minutes **Vocabulary (integrated)–5 words per week** **Skills–20 minutes** Quotes Draw conclusions Main inferences Adjectives/adverbs Comprehension Possessives Compound words Contractions	**Fifth six weeks** **Reading–60 minutes** DEAR–15 minutes Teacher reading to students Reading workshop–45 minutes **Spelling–15 minutes (60 words total)** 10 words per week Alphabetical order to third letter Writing–45 minutes Descriptive writing–7 sentences Compare/contrast DOL–15 minutes TAAS form Writing workshop–30 minutes **Vocabulary (integrated)–5 words per week** **Skills–20 minutes** Main idea distinguished from details Fact/opinion Cause/effect Comprehension Possessives Compound words Contractions	**Sixth six weeks** **Reading–60 minutes** DEAR–15 minutes Teacher reading to students Reading workshop–45 minutes **Spelling–15 minutes (60 words total)** 10 words per week Alphabetical order to third letter **Writing–45 minutes** Summary Compare/contrast DOL–15 minutes TAAS form Writing workshop–30 minutes **Vocabulary (integrated)–5 words per week** **Skills–20 minutes** Recognize propaganda and point of view Comprehension Possessives Compound words Contractions

assessment. Keep in mind these guidelines: 1) the purpose is to identify the desired level of achievement, 2) the growth assessment needs to be simple and easily understood, and 3) student movement or growth toward the desired level of achievement needs to be clear.

These are the steps to creating a growth assessment:

1. Identify three to five criteria.
2. Set up a grid with numerical values (one through four is usually enough).
3. Identify what would be an excellent piece of work or demonstration. That becomes number four.
4. Work backwards. Next, identify what would be a three, and so on.

> "Systemic interventions can identify areas where more time needs to be devoted and can address the effectiveness of both the whole and the component parts of the curriculum."

When the growth assessment is developed, it needs to go back to the faculty for feedback and refinement. When there is substantial agreement and 80% buy-in, the faculty needs to move forward with it.

Benchmarks

Figure F is one example. As you can see from the example, benchmarks are very simple. They identify the critical attributes that students must acquire each six weeks if they are to progress. If the student has not demonstrated these benchmarks, then immediate additional interventions must begin.

How does one get benchmarks? Once again, identify the experienced educators who always have high student achievement. Ask them how they know a student will have trouble. They already know the criteria. And by putting it in writing and having a common understanding, teachers, particularly those who are new to teaching or who are not as experienced, can more readily make interventions and address student progress. It then needs to go back to the grade level for their feedback and changes.

Interventions for Students

The issue here is that the intervention be timely and occur at a classroom and campus level (see Figure G). One other point is simply that, for optimal learning, the student needs to stay with the regular instruction, as much as possible, to have the opportunity to learn what the other students are learning. Additional time for learning must be found (for example, using social studies time to teach nonfiction reading).

What these systemic interventions allow a campus to do is to address the four variables in learning: 1) the amount of time to learn, 2) the intervention(s) of the teacher, 3) how clear the focus of the instruction is, and 4) what the student came in knowing.

It allows the faculty to address the amount of time, the interventions, the clarity of the instructional focus, and what the student had the opportunity to come in knowing. Right now, because of the depth and breadth of most curriculum guides, it is difficult to know that the students actually had the opportunity to learn. By having these systemic items in place, the faculty discussion can truly be data-driven; it allows the faculty to talk about student achievement in relationship to the total curriculum.

Figure E

Reading Rubric Grade 1

Student name:_____   School year: _____
Campus: _____   Grade: _____

	Beginning	**Developing**	**Capable**	**Expert**
Fluency	Decodes words haltingly	Decodes sentences haltingly	Knows vowel teams (ea, ee, oa, etc.)	Decodes polysyllabic words
	Misses key sounds	Knows conditions for long vowels	Identifies common spelling patterns	Decodes words in context of paragraphs
	Identifies most letter sounds	Identifies blends and consonants	Uses word attack skills to identify new words in the sections	Decodes words accurately and automatically
	Identifies short vowels	Decodes diagraphs and "r" control vowels (or, ar, er, etc.)	Reads sentences in a meaningful sequence	Reads paragraphs in a meaningful sequence
	Says/recognizes individual words	Reads at rate that doesn't interfere with meaning	Reads with expression	Reads with expression, fluency, appropriate tone, and pronunciation
Constructive	Predictions are incomplete, partial, and unrelated	Predicts what might happen next	Predicts story based upon pictures and other clues	Can predict possible endings to story with some accuracy
	Predictions indicate no or inappropriate prior knowledge	Makes minimal links to personal experience/ prior knowledge	Relates story to personal experience/ prior knowledge	Can compare/contrast story with personal experience
Motivated	Does not read independently	Reads when parent or teacher requests	Reads for a specific purpose	Initiates reading on own
	Concentrates on decoding	Eager to use the acquired skills (words and phrases)	Uses new skills frequently in self-selected reading	Reads for pleasure
Strategic	Does not self-correct	Recognizes mistakes but has difficulty in self-correcting	Has strategies for self-correction (reread, read ahead, ask a question, etc.)	Analyzes self-correction strategies for the best strategy
	Uncertain as to how parts of a story fit together	Can identify characters and setting in a story	Can identify characters, setting, and events of a story	Can talk about story in terms of problem and/ or goal
Process	Cannot tell what has been read	Does not sort important from unimportant	What is important and unimportant can be determined with assistance	Organizes reading by sorting important from unimportant

Figure F

Benchmarks for Fourth-Grade Language Arts

If a student cannot do the following, then immediate interventions need to be used.

First six weeks

- Edit fragments and run-ons in own writing
- Identify and define figurative and literal meaning
- Write an elaborated, organized descriptive paper
- Be able to choose just-right books

Second six weeks

- Identify story structure orally and in written form
- Write an organized, elaborated expressive narrative
- Identify correct subject/verb agreement, and use in everyday writing

Third six weeks

- Read a passage and use context clues to decode unknown words
- Read a passage and recall facts and details orally and in writing
- Read a story or paragraph and sequence major events
- Write an organized, elaborated how-to

Fourth six weeks

- Read a passage and identify main idea, orally and in written summary
- Read a passage and paraphrase orally and in writing
- Write an organized, elaborated classificatory paper
- Read a passage and identify the best summary
- Write a three- to four-sentence paragraph

Fifth six weeks

- Use graphic sources to answer questions
- Read passage and predict outcomes and draw conclusions
- Distinguish between fact and non-fact, between stated and non-stated opinion
- After reading a passage, be able to tell cause of an event or effect of an action
- Write an organized, elaborative, persuasive paper

Sixth six weeks

- Write an assessment of chosen portfolio pieces
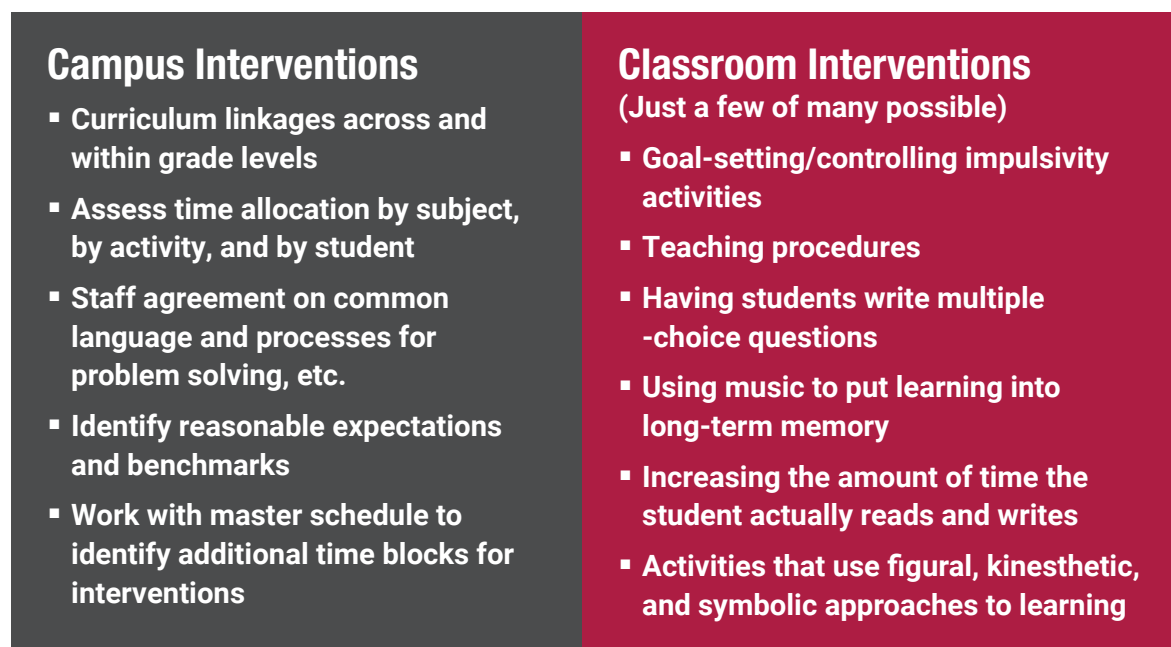- Assemble/share a reading and writing portfolio

The discussion can focus on program strengths and weaknesses. It can identify areas where more time needs to be devoted and can address the effectiveness of both the whole and the component parts of the curriculum. It allows a faculty to determine staff development that will address student needs, and it provides one more tool for analyzing TAAS data.

Currently, many campuses address the best objective they were low in the year before, only to fall in other objectives the next year.

The strategies described in this document allow a new teacher to have a much better sense of expectations. Parents have a much better sense of the learning opportunities students will have.

The aforementioned approaches provide a tool for principals to dialogue with teachers about learning. But more importantly, they allow the campus to identify before the damage is great the students who are not making sufficient progress and to make that intervention immediately, as opposed to one or two years down the road.

Figure G

Campus Interventions	Classroom Interventions (Just a few of many possible)
▪ Curriculum linkages across and within grade levels	▪ Goal-setting/controlling impulsivity activities
▪ Assess time allocation by subject, by activity, and by student	▪ Teaching procedures
▪ Staff agreement on common language and processes for problem solving, etc.	▪ Having students write multiple-choice questions
▪ Identify reasonable expectations and benchmarks	▪ Using music to put learning into long-term memory
▪ Work with master schedule to identify additional time blocks for interventions	▪ Increasing the amount of time the student actually reads and writes
	▪ Activities that use figural, kinesthetic, and symbolic approaches to learning

This is the process I used as a principal. Our math scores made significant improvement within two years. I have used it at the secondary level in language arts with excellent results as well.

These simple models and processes give us the tools to talk about what we are doing and to minimize the roller-coaster ride for students.

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