

Curriculum Leadership Institute E-Hint

Leadership Tips from Douglas Reeves

We at CLI like to share websites from other organizations that we find to be helpful. One such site, www.makingstandardswork.com, links you to the Center for Performance Assessment, located in Englewood, CO. The chairman and founder of the Center is Dr. Douglas Reeves. In September, 2006, Dr. Reeves offered some "Leadership Tips" as a preview for the Center's Senior Leadership Institute. We're passing these tips to you in this *CLI E-Hint*.

Dr. Douglas Reeves: Ten things you can do this year to improve student achievement...

1. Start a WIN – Work in Now! – Program. The reason many high school students fail is missing homework. Some schools are dramatically reducing course failures by requiring SAME DAY after-school detention for ANY missing homework. Students quickly find that it's more convenient to get the work done.
2. DOUBLE the time devoted to literacy and math. When students are struggling in 9th grade English and math classes, they are very likely struggling in every other class as well. Schools that have doubled time in these subjects significantly reduce the failure rate. Sometimes, this means moving a science and social studies sequence from grades 9, 10, 11 to grades 10, 11, 12. Increasing time on literacy reduces the dropout rate because it reduces grade 9 failures.
3. EXTEND the time when grades are due from teachers to the administration after final exams. One high school reduced 9th grade course failures from over 1,000 to fewer than 400 when it gave teachers four weeks after finals to turn in grades. During that time, students facing failure were able to complete missing labs, finish term papers, or do other projects. If they were missing only a single major project, it did not make sense for them to repeat the entire class.
4. TEACH project management, time management, and self-discipline. One recent study found that these skills are significantly more influential on high school success than IQ in predicting high school grades and post-secondary education participation.
5. RESTRICT student choice for any student reading below grade level. Students do not have a constitutional right to electives. In fact, the best way to increase electives is to decrease choice for students who are risking failure. After all, students who drop out of school are not taking electives in 11th and 12th grade.

6. Require NON-FICTION WRITING in every class. One high school developed a simplified rubric for non-fiction writing and required every class – no exceptions – to have at least one nonfiction writing assessment every semester.
7. INCREASE student feedback, providing daily or weekly feedback. The typical 9-week report card is too late – an educational autopsy. If students are to use feedback to improve performance, then the feedback must be immediate.
8. COLLABORATE among teachers for the evaluation of core skills. If teachers do not agree on what the word “proficient” means, then students will get mixed messages about what level of quality is acceptable. Only when teachers look at the same piece of anonymous student work and collaboratively score that work will there be a true professional learning community.
9. Create COMMON ASSESSMENTS at least once per quarter. Certainly teachers can have freedom and flexibility in many areas, but the core expectations of a class must be consistent. It is the only way that students have an equal and fair opportunity to be prepared for the next level of instruction. Curriculum mapping is not enough. Teachers must have Power Standards and common assessments, agreeing on the most important standards and agreeing on what they will assess.
10. BAN ADMINISTRATIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS in faculty meetings. Time in meetings is too precious to waste on announcements that could be made by email or delivered in writing. Use every second of meeting time for professional collaboration.