

Career Development Grant Report
Great to Greater Institute
January 30 – February 1, 2017
San Francisco, California
Tim Whip/Razdolna and K-Selo

I attended the following sessions:

- How the Best Schools Keep Getting Better
 - Douglas Reeves
- More of a Good Thing: Literacy Practice that Great Schools Maximize
 - Angela Peery
- Assessment in Great to Greater Schools
 - Douglas Reeves
- Effective and Efficient Teams: Moving from Proficient to Adaptive Collaboration
 - Brandon Doubek Ed. D.
- At what cost? Defending Adolescent Development in Fiercely Competitive Schools
 - David Gleason
- Changing Hyper-Competitive Students through Collaborative Leadership Skills
 - Howard Knoff
- Mindshifts in Education: A Synthesis of the Best Research in Educational Leadership
 - Kim Marshall

How the Best Schools Keep Getting Better

Douglas Reeves talked about how great schools can improve. A few of his main points are:

- The greatest change will happen in the US not through the U.S. Department of Education mandates, but:
 - The new flexibility that is built into Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
 - There will be meaningful accountability systems
 - For teachers and students; as what teachers do affects what students do
 - Social-emotional learning included in accountability measures
 - Open to experimentation and reporting
- The elements of certainty vs. uncertainty in education
 - Certainty provides structure and is key to student safety, data over opinion
 - Most of life is uncertain and staff and students need to learn how to be comfortable w/uncertainty
- New Programs for school improvement often based on old programs
 - Norm-referenced tests (Ming Dynasty – 1368, C.E.)
 - Project Based Learning (Dewey, 1890's)
 - Standards-based Learning (1940's)
- Synthesizing the Research
 - Avoids cherry-picking studies
 - Invites counterintuitive findings
- When looking to implement a new program use “if ___ then ___”
 - If I teach the writing process instead of all the curriculum, then test scores will go down.
 - Way to test hypotheses
- “Successful Failure” is part of the improvement process

More of a Good Thing: Literacy Practice that Great Schools Maximize

Angela Peery asked participants to reflect on how well they are engaging readers, boosting vocabulary, and providing authentic opportunities for students to speak and present authentically. Some key points are:

- Choice in what students read is an integral part of being literate.
- Students must have access to a wide array of text.
- Students need ample time to share from and discuss their reading. Student with teacher and student to student.
- Students need to learn how to analyze information that is presented online.
- A robust study of vocabulary supports learning across the disciplines
- Vocabulary is directly tied to reading comprehension
- Providing authentic opportunities for students to speak and present before peers is a needed skill that is often left out

Assessment in Great to Greater Schools

Doug Reeves presented three levels of assessment: student, teacher, leadership. Some of his points are:

- The vocabulary of performance is weak
 - “Exceeds” is ineffective and imprecise and parents uniformly do not like it (Guskey, Thomas)
 - It implies quantitative distinction – “just a little bit better”
 - It fails to clarify improvement in rigor and complexity
 - Proposed the use of the following Exemplary, Proficient, Progressing, Not Meeting Standards
 - This scale is listed from left to right on a rubric putting Exemplary first
 - Leadership Performance Rubric for Principals and Teachers which include:
 - Resilience, Willingness to Admit Errors, Disagreement, Dissent, Improvement of Specific Performance Areas...

Effective and Efficient Teams: Moving from Proficient to Adaptive Collaboration

Brandon Doubek presented new paradigms that utilize multiple forms of qualitative and quantitative evidence that require redefining data for use in teams with greater time spent on solving problems with actionable outcomes than identifying deficits in learning.

Studies support the following:

- Collaborative schools do better than individualistic ones.
- Teachers who work in professional cultures of collaboration tend to perform better than teachers who work alone.
- The measure of effective teams is improve student outcomes.

Great to Greater Teams Focus on Implementation

- Go slow to go fast. Think about the why before what or how.
- Over communicate intentions
- Structure the teams for the intended outcomes – define the learning outcomes,
- Communicate structure and purpose of accountability system:
 - Purpose of Accountability
 - Mastery vs. Content Coverage
 - Grading on Mastery vs. Speed

At what cost? Defending Adolescent Development in Fiercely Competitive Schools

David Gleason presented information about how anxiety, disillusionment and depression emerge, sometimes with devastating outcomes, as conflicts between ever-increasing school expectations and students’ developmental capacities persist. Some points:

- The brain develops on its own schedule – it’s not going to change just because we think it should
- There are adaptive and technical challenges, adaptive answers to problems don’t exist yet while technical answers do
 - A student might be diagnosed with depression and treated for that while the underlying issues is ADD

Changing Hyper-Competitive Students through Collaborative Leadership Skills

Howard Knoff, Ph.D. led discussions on preparing students for the “real world”, collaborative leadership skills, and school preparation with ESSA. Main points:

- Under ESSA we need to be looking for non-academic indicators that correlate to academic achievement.
- Being careful not to over manage students instead of teaching them to be self-managing.
- Try to personalize learning to the students.
- We can’t motivate students out of a skill deficit – students need to be taught the skill.

Mindshifts in Education: A Synthesis of the Best Research in Educational Leadership

Kim Marshall presented information about the important changes occurring in educators’ and the public’s attitudes on a number of key issues in K-12 schools. Some outmoded beliefs about education are:

- Intelligence and talent are fixed at birth. Referenced Dan Coyle’s book “The Talent Code” and Carol Dweck “Mindset”
- Poverty is Destiny
- Great teachers are born, not made
- Principals are primarily managers

Overall a very beneficial conference. The number of participants was small, limited to 50, so in-depth conversations, time for reflection, and meaningful discussion was the norm. The presenters were easy to talk to and they answered all questions immediately.

Sean Dush 2/10/17