

THE SCHARGEL CONSULTING GROUP

**REACHING AT-PROMISE STUDENTS
NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

**SAN DIEGO
JULY 8, 2007
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**EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP
OF AT-RISK LEARNERS:
STRATEGIES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY**

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BUILDING WORLD CLASS SCHOOLS

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What Are the New Responsibilities of Our School Leaders?

by Franklin P. Schargel, Tony Thacker, and John Bell

Today's teachers, principals and superintendents must respond to a host of new challenges: diversity of cultural backgrounds, waves of immigration, income disparities, physical and mental disabilities, and variation in learning capability. Increasingly, schools must adapt to address the needs of at-risk, nontraditional learners. Wherever teacher education programs have not kept pace with these challenges, many of their graduates must learn on the job, under the tutelage of their school leaders. And the tasks of scheduling, programming, ensuring security, and providing counseling have all become more complex.

Schools can no longer afford to offer one-size-fits-all education. Today's society demands an individualized approach that caters to the needs of each child. Today's educational leaders cannot rely solely on traditional methods of teaching and learning; they need a new repertoire of skills and approaches.

New Responsibilities Require New Qualifications

In the olden days, we could sum up the principal's role in a few words: to manage the building and head the school; to be a pal to students, parents and teachers; to be a leader of teachers. But that role has dramatically expanded. Consider a list of the major leadership responsibilities outlined for today's principals (see chart).

Most of an educational leader's time is spent managing the school. This requires that the principal have the skills and competencies appropriate for businesses as well as the schoolhouse. But, contrary to popular opinion, the principal is not the CEO of the school. At best, the principal is the middle manager in a system of rules, regulations, and mandates from above—at the bottom of the pyramid of true policymakers.

But command and control theory no longer works in education—not in the classroom or in the administration of schools. The days when principals

and/or superintendents could order people to do things are over. Traditional top-down models of school leadership do not work in an educational environment where workers possess as much education and experiential knowledge as the nominal leader. Only collaboration will get the job done.

And the job remains daunting. We judge our principals and superintendents by a new bottom line: their students' academic success. In the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, we cared about equality of access and opportunity. Today, with the emphasis on higher standards, we focus on proficiency of achievement. We no longer expect school leaders to simply usher students through the grades at a level of learning that matches the population or its special needs. Each year, the numbers must show improvement. Politicians, business leaders, the media, the public and the parents expect excellence in every school district, school, and classroom, and principals must provide the leadership to make that happen.

Leadership Responsibilities

Principal as a Leader	Principal as a Lead Teacher and Learner	Principal as the Face of the School	Principal as a Manager
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate and implement a comprehensively developed and shared vision and mission. Create a culture of high expectations for all students. Model ethical conduct and universally expect the same from faculty and staff. Empower others to make significant decisions. Nurture teacher involvement and engender teacher leadership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustain a school culture conducive to student and staff learning. Participate in focused and sustained professional development that implements, nurtures, and sustains research-based learning and teaching. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend community events. Ensure that steps are taken that guarantee improved educational experience for each student. Work to develop cooperative relationships between the school and the surrounding community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and manage the school budget. Select and evaluate instructional staff. Deal with discipline and attendance concerns. Provide a safe and orderly learning environment. Maintain accountability for an effective and aligned instructional program.

Practice What You Preach

A school's culture—the fabric that holds the school together—is hard to define, but we know it when we see it. The school culture shows up in statements like these:

- ◆ This is how we do things around here.
- ◆ We don't allow that here.
- ◆ We expect _____ to do this or that.
- ◆ Our norms are _____.
- ◆ Our goals are _____.
- ◆ We believe that _____.

Often, behind these statements lie unspoken but very powerful messages that too many schools continue to wittingly or unwittingly support:

- This is how we *say* we do things around here.
- We don't allow that here (except for _____).
- We expect _____ to do this or that (except these students).
- ◆ Our norms are _____ (except in the case of _____).
- ◆ Our goals are (but we probably can't reach them; we haven't figured out the details; and besides, they really aren't *our* goals anyway).
- ◆ We believe that _____ (unless this problem exists).

Have you ever heard an experienced educator say, "You can fool some of the people some of the time, you can even fool some of the people all of the time, but you can't fool students any of the time"? No truer words were ever spoken. All students, especially the ones at risk, recognize when we talk the talk without walking the walk. Perhaps at no time in education has this truth been more tested than in this era of No Child Left Behind. *All children can learn* has become the mantra of a generation of educators. Too often, our practice makes a very different statement. Let's look at some examples (listed below) of saying one thing and practicing another. As you look at this list, see if you recognize the practices of your school, your colleagues, or maybe yourself.

Belief Statement	Practice
All students can learn.	The most proficient teachers teach only upper-level classes.
Learning is number one.	The intercom interrupts classes all day. Little if any student work is on display. Only athletic trophies are showcased in the lobby.
I am an instructional leader.	There aren't any books concerning teaching or learning in the principal's office. There is never enough time to visit classrooms.
We are a professional learning community.	Faculty meetings rarely address instructional improvement. Bus drivers, custodians, and cafeteria workers are never invited to a faculty meeting and have no stake in student achievement. The faculty has no formal process for visiting colleagues' classrooms.
Grade-level meetings are important.	Student work is never a topic in grade-level meetings.
We value parent involvement.	The only opportunity for parent involvement is a Parent-Teacher Association meeting.

From: *At-Risk to Academic Excellence: What Successful Leaders Do*
 By Franklin Schargel, Tony Thacker, John Bell ©
 Published by Eye on Education, March, 2007

Please answer the following questions as completely as possible. Add additional sheets if necessary. Thank you for your input and for your efforts on behalf of your students.

1. To what instructional and/or organizational strategies do you attribute the high achievement of your students?
2. Research has shown that leadership's effect on student achievement is second only to classroom instruction. What *specific* practices or actions have *you* taken to boost student achievement?
3. When you began your tenure as the school leader at your school, what were the first things you changed or upgraded?
4. Describe the process you used to determine how to prioritize the changes outlined in question 3.
5. In your role as school leader, what aspect of your job do you see as having the greatest effect on student achievement?
6. In your role as school leader, what do you see as critical to increasing the achievement level of your at-risk students?
7. How have you been able to promote stronger ties among your school staff?
8. How have you been able to promote stronger ties between the school and your students?
9. How have you been able to promote stronger ties between the school and the community?

I would like my school to be acknowledged in your book (*please check one*). ~

Yes

~ No

If yes is checked, please complete the following demographics section.

School Name:

School Address:

School Contact E-mail:

School Phone #:

School Website (if any):

School Leader(s):



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**REACHING AT-PROMISE STUDENTS
NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

**SAN DIEGO
MONDAY, JULY 9, 2007
9:15 -11:45
1 P.M -3:30**

**TURNING AT-RISK LEARNERS INTO
SUCCESSFUL HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES**

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SCHOOL SUCCESS NETWORK

DROPOUT QUIZ

EVERYTHING YOU THOUGHT YOU KNEW ABOUT SCHOOL DROPOUTS

1. Fifteen states produce almost 80% of all school dropouts, is your state one of those states?
2. What percent of prisoners are school dropouts? _____.
3. Most dropouts come from what geographic area? _____.
4. The state with the largest number of dropouts (per capita) is _____.
5. What percentage of our dropouts leave from the middle school? ____.
6. What is the cost to our nation for school dropouts? _____.
7. What is the # 1 reason why dropouts say they left school? _____.
8. What percentage of dropouts leave as seniors in high school? ____.
9. How many students dropout of school on a daily basis? _____.
10. Retaining a student once increases the likelihood of their dropping out by ____%. Retaining a student TWICE increases the likelihood of their dropping out by ____%.
11. EXTRA CREDIT - What school incident was the most violent in the United States?

(Data supplied by US Department of Education, Bureau of Census, Department of Labor, Department of Corrections, Government Accounting Office)
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DEVELOPING WORLD CLASS SCHOOLS AND GRADUATES

EFFECTIVE DROPOUT PREVENTION STRATEGIES

The following strategies, developed in conjunction with the National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University, have been recognized by the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP Monthly, August 2001) and the United States Department of Education (www.ed.gov/dropoutprevention.html) as effective in reducing school dropouts.

- ★ **Systemic Renewal**—Systemic renewal calls for a continuing process of evaluating goals and objectives related to school policies, practices, and organizational structures as they impact a diverse group of learners.
- ★ **School-Community Collaboration**—When all groups in a community provide collective support to the school, a strong infrastructure sustains a caring environment where youth can thrive and achieve.
- ★ **Safe Learning Environments**—A comprehensive violence prevention plan, including conflict resolution, must deal with potential violence as well as crisis management. A safe learning environment provides daily experiences, at all grade levels, that enhance positive social attitudes and effective interpersonal skills in all students.
- ★ **Family Engagement**—Research consistently finds that family engagement has a direct, positive effect on children's achievement and is one of the most accurate predictors of a student's success in school.
- ★ **Early Childhood Education**—Birth-to-five interventions demonstrate that providing a child additional enrichment can enhance brain development. The most effective way to reduce the number of children who will ultimately drop out is to provide the best possible classroom instruction from the beginning of their school experience through the primary grades.
- ★ **Early Literacy Development**—Early interventions to help low-achieving students improve their reading and writing skills establish the necessary foundation for effective learning in all subjects.
- ★ **Mentoring/Tutoring**—Mentoring is a one-to-one caring, supportive relationship between a mentor and a mentee that is based on trust. Tutoring, also a one-to-one activity, focuses on academics and is an effective practice when addressing specific needs such as reading, writing, or math competencies.
- ★ **Service-Learning**—Service-learning connects meaningful community service experiences with academic learning. This teaching/learning method promotes personal and social growth, career development, and civic responsibility and can be a powerful vehicle for effective school reform at all grade levels.
- ★ **Alternative Schooling**—Alternative schooling provides potential dropouts a variety of options that can lead to graduation, with programs paying special attention to the student's individual social needs and academic requirements for a high school diploma.
- ★ **After-School Opportunities**—Many schools provide after-school and summer enhancement programs that eliminate information loss and inspire interest in a variety of areas. Such experiences are especially important for students at risk of school failure because they fill the afternoon "gap time" with constructive and engaging activities.
- ★ **Professional Development**—Teachers who work with youth at high risk of academic failure need to feel supported and have an avenue by which they can continue to develop skills, techniques, and learn about innovative strategies.
- ★ **Active Learning**—Active learning embraces teaching and learning strategies that engage and involve students in the learning process. Students find new and creative ways to solve problems, achieve success, and become lifelong learners when educators show them that there are different ways to learn.
- ★ **Educational Technology**—Technology offers some of the best opportunities for delivering instruction to engage students in authentic learning, addressing multiple intelligences, and adapting to students' learning styles.
- ★ **Individualized Instruction**—Each student has unique interests and past learning experiences. An individualized instructional program for each student allows for flexibility in teaching methods and motivational strategies to consider these individual differences.
- ★ **Career and Technical Education (CTE)**—A quality CTE program and a related guidance program are essential for all students. School-to-work programs recognize that youth need specific skills to prepare them to measure up to the increased demands of today's workplace.

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DEVELOPING WORLD CLASS SCHOOLS AND GRADUATES

VIOLENCE PREVENTION QUIZ EVERYTHING YOU THOUGHT YOU KNEW ABOUT SCHOOL VIOLENCE

1. In the 1960's there was a film about school violence. What was its name?
.....
2. The "weapon of choice" in schools is
3. The "drug of choice" in schools is
4. The most violence school incident in American history took place in
.....
5. Schools are safer or more dangerous than they have been in the past?
True/False
6. Does your school have a School Safety Plan? When was the last time
you read it? Does it have a variable response to a
variety of scenarios? Do you know what your role is?,
Was the School Safety Plan made up by the faculty as well as the
administration?
7. According to the FBI's School Shooter's Report, what is the number of
students who are afraid to come to school every day?
8. According to the FBI's School Shooter's Report and the Secret Service's
Threat Assessment Report, what do the latest group of school shooter's have
in common?
9. Does your school/district have a "zero tolerance" rule?
10. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, what percentage of violence
against young people takes place in schools? A) Less than 1% B) 5%
C) 25% D) 50%

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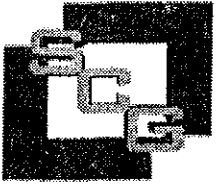
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<p>EXAMPLE:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 10px auto;">SAND</div> <p>Sandbox</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>MAN</u> BOARD</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>STAND</u> I</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">R E A D I N G</p>
<p>5.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>WEAR</u> LONG</p>	<p>6.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">R ROADS A D S</p>	<p>7.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">T O W N</p>	<p>8.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CYCLE CYCLE CYCLE</p>
<p>9.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">L E V E L</p>	<p>10.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>O</u> M.D. Ph.D. B.S.</p>	<p>11.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">KNEE</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 10px auto;">LIGHTS</div>	<p>12.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">II <u>IIII</u> OO</p>
<p>13.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CHAIR</p>	<p>14.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">DICE DICE</p>	<p>15.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">T O U C H</p>	<p>16.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>GROUND</u> FEET FEET FEET FEET FEET FEET</p>
<p>17.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>MIND</u> MATTER</p>	<p>18.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">HE'S/HIMSELF</p>	<p>19.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ECNALG</p>	<p>20.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">DEATH/LIFE</p>
<p>21.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>G.I.</u> C C C C C</p>	<p>22.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PROGRAM</p>	<p>23.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">B L O O D S P E</p>	<p>24.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">J U S T</p> <p style="text-align: center;">YOU ME</p>

BRAIN TEASERS III

<p>WIRE JUST</p>	<p>W D D D T E S</p>	<p>PEP PEP</p>	<p>C O U N T R Y O U T R Y O U T R Y O U T R Y C O U N T R Y</p>
<p>TIMING TIM/ING</p>	<p>HISTORY HISTORY HISTORY HISTORY HISTORY</p>	<p>YOU JUST ME</p>	<p>FALL ALOHA SUMMER HI WINTER HELLO SPRING SHALOM</p>
<p>BONBNET</p>	<p>H^I JKLMNOP^Q R</p>	<p>PLOT</p>	<p>NO P NO NO A NO NO Y NO</p>
<p>POLMOMICE</p>	<p>ARREST YOU'RE</p>	<p>E N I L</p>	<p>HIGH THE CLOUDS THE CLOUDS THE CLOUDS</p>
<p>BILLED</p>	<p>THE BRIDGE H₂O</p>	<p>LATE N_{ET}VE_{IL}</p>	<p>SITTING THE WORLD</p>

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DEVELOPING WORLD CLASS SCHOOLS AND GRADUATES

Family Involvement
Professional Development

All grade levels

How To Make Your School Family-Friendly

By Franklin Schargel

1. Open Lines of Communication

Meet with representatives of the community including church leaders, and community-based organizations like the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, Lions, etc. Have them announce school events like parent meetings, sporting events, student performances. Give them tickets to sporting events and student performances.

2. Have Student translators available for parents who prefer speaking in a language other than English.

3. Have staff make positive phone calls to parents

Most phone calls made to homes tend to be negative. Parents who get positive phone calls appreciate it. Call parents and complement them for having their child come on time, well prepared, or that their child did well on an examination or at a sporting or school event.

4. Have school cleaned before parent meetings.

Parents notice.

5. Have student work hanging in classrooms.

Parents and students need a replicable model of what "quality work" looks like. Create a template by having student work hanging in classrooms and halls.

6. "We Don't Want To Brag" bulletin board.

Put positive news on a bulletin board that parents can notice when they enter the school. The work can include positive news about faculty like their participation in out-of school events or their achieving degrees. Newspaper articles about the success of students in contests, sports, or achievements should be included. Include information or letters from graduates who are in college, the workforce or the military.

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7. Hang graphs of student achievements.

Graphs showing improvements in testing, attendance can be placed in visible locations in the building. The graph lines should be going up not down. Graphs should emphasize the positive, not the negative. (For example, you want to show the number of students who graduate, not those who dropout.)

8. Celebrate Student Success

Find occasions to celebrate the success of students whether in academics or sports or student activities. Make sure to invite parents. Take "instant" pictures of parents celebrating with their children. The success should not create "winners" and "losers". Insure that every student can be a winner.

9. Hold a Contest Thru Your Parent Organization.

Prizes can be for the parent who brings the most parents to a parent meeting or the one who attends the most frequently, or simply to a parent who shows up. Prizes can include free meals at a fast-food restaurant. (They are generally willing to give away meals.) "No cost" prizes can also include tickets to school sporting events or school performances.

10. Organize a Family/Faculty event.

Have parents and faculty sit down to "break bread" together. Have everyone bring something to eat (even if it store bought cookies.) The meeting might be held off-site at a community center or church. This provides an opportunity for people to engage in conversation, which need not be about what takes place in school.

11. "Everyone, bring one."

Encourage parents who attend a meeting bring one of the parents of one of their child's friends.

Excerpted from *Dropout Prevention Tools Volume II* by Franklin Schargel, to be published by Eye on Education, 2005. © Franklin Schargel

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How To Encourage A Student To Think About Staying In School

Developed By The Chicago Public Schools

At-risk children frequently take the easy way out and drop out of school. The Chicago Public Schools developed a contract that all students and their parents must sign in order to drop out of school.

Consent to Withdraw from School

I _____ acknowledge that by dropping out of school, I
Student Name
am voluntarily giving away my educational rights, privileges and opportunities.

1. I will be less likely to find good jobs that pay well, bad jobs that don't pay well, or maybe any jobs.
2. I will not be able to afford many things that I will see others acquiring.
3. I will be more likely to get caught up in criminal activity and illegal behaviors.
4. I will be more likely to spend time in jail or prison.
5. I will be more likely to rely on the state welfare system for my livelihood.
6. I will not have many choices about where to live.
7. I will be considerably less able to properly care for and educate my children.

I _____ confirm that I am over the age of 16. I also
Student Name
Have read and fully understand the consequences of my dropping out of school. Yet I choose to withdraw from school.

Student signature

I _____ confirm that my child is over the age of 16. I
(Parent/guardian name)
and fully understand the consequences of my child dropping out of school. Yet, I will allow my child to withdraw from school.

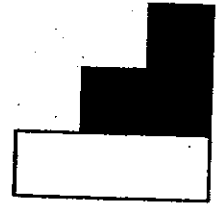
Parent Guardian signature

The above named individuals have been fully informed of the consequences of dropping out of school. I have also informed them of alternative and adult educational services that are available in the community.

Principal signature

IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO STAY IN SCHOOL

How to Help Students Evaluate Their Performance



It is important that students know how to evaluate their performance in classrooms. They need to be taught what to look for on how to evaluate what they find.

Student Performance Self-Evaluation Form

Name Date

- Rate the following six items as "seldom," "sometimes," or "often."*
- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <i>Seldom</i> | <i>Sometimes</i> | <i>Often</i> | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | I contributed ideas to the classroom discussion. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | I encouraged others as we worked. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | I helped give direction to the work. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | I followed the direction of others. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | I helped make decisions and solve problems. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | I took risks by exploring things that were new to me. |

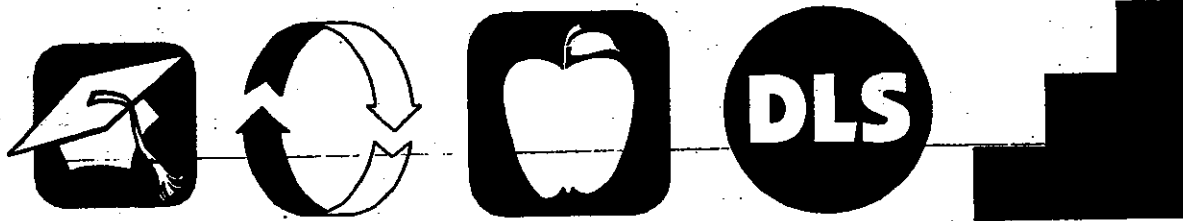
What do I contribute to the learning process?

What is the most interesting thing about what I did today?

What decisions did I have to make while we were working, and how did I try to solve the problems I faced?

What have I learned from this particular experience, and how can I apply what I have learned to other classes and everyday life?

What To Look for When Observing a Student's Learning Environment



When counselors and other support personnel go into classrooms to observe students. What should they be looking for?

Student name Date(s)

Observation within classroom

As it specifically relates to this student, indicate instructional strategies, modifications, and adaptations and their success; curricular materials used; academic and social performance; ability to work independently; verbal capabilities; motor skills; etc.

Were any of the instructional strategies, modifications and adaptations attempted during this observation successful?

Observations outside classroom

Comment on motor skills, social interactions, inclusion or exclusion by peers, interaction with adults, activity level, passive or aggressive behavior, etc.

Name/title of observer

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How to Develop a Business Partnership Agreement



Many schools are involved with the business community, yet few have developed business partnership plans to help their business partners know what they need and want. What follows is one school's one business plan.

Dear business partner:

We would like you to consider helping us in the following ways:

◆ **Curriculum**

Reviewing, revising, and developing curriculum so that graduating students will be trained to current standards.

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New, used, or broken but repairable and able to fit existing programs.

◆ **Jobs for Students**

Co-op, after school, summer, and after graduation.

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For teachers to upgrade skills and create an awareness in students of what skills and qualities are needed in the business world.

◆ **Business Training Workshops**

Workshops for teachers and students to learn techniques necessary for teaching employment skills (i.e., management, resume writing, computer programs).

◆ **Funds**

Contributions to maintain and further develop existing programs and to provide college scholarships for graduating students.

◆ **Business People on Loan**

Your people with expertise to speak to classes, to provide mock interviews, and to help with resume preparation.

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What Are the Predictors of Truancy?



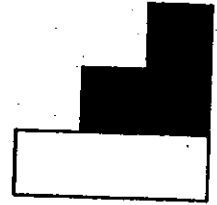
Certain factors correlate with truancy, which correlates with dropping out. The Kane County School System of Geneva, Illinois, has identified 27 such factors.

Predictors of Future Truancy

- ◆ Attendance patterns: frequent absences, suspicious excuses from school, frequent tardiness
- ◆ Poor classroom performance
- ◆ Peer relationships: loner, fights, not chosen for games, shy
- ◆ Limited participation in extracurricular activities and physical education
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- ◆ Two or more years behind in reading and/or mathematics
- ◆ Failure of one or more school years in elementary school
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- ◆ Friends much older and/or substance abusers
- ◆ Behavior problems requiring disciplinary measures
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- ◆ Alcohol and/or drug abuse and/or child of alcoholic family system
- ◆ Emotional problems/psychosomatic illness, asthma, colitis, ulcers, eczema, enuresis, encopresis
- ◆ Absent from home without parental consent
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- ◆ Lack of parental supervision before and/or after school
- ◆ Abused and/or neglected (spouse and/or child)
- ◆ Disconnected or no phone during the last school year
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- ◆ Moved four or more times during elementary school period
- ◆ Twenty or more absences in kindergarten or first grade
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- ◆ Frequent change of schools
- ◆ Feelings of not belonging and social isolation

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How to Help Students Evaluate Their Performance



It is important that students know how to evaluate their performance in classrooms. They need to be taught what to look for and how to evaluate what they find.

Student Performance Self-Evaluation Form

Name Date

- Seldom Sometimes Often Rate the following six items as "seldom," "sometimes," or "often."
- I contributed ideas to the classroom discussion.
- I encouraged others as we worked.
- I helped give direction to the work.
- I followed the direction of others.
- I helped make decisions and solve problems.
- I took risks by exploring things that were new to me.

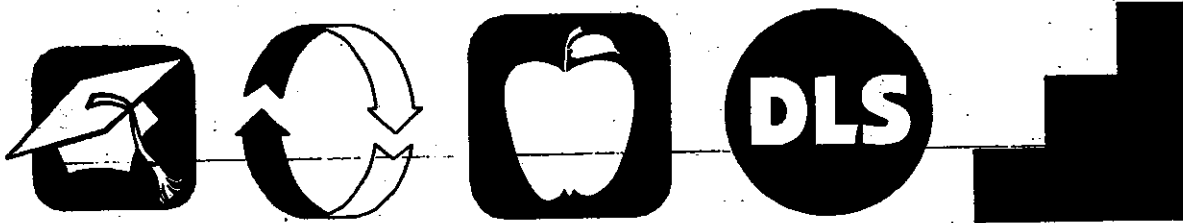
What do I contribute to the learning process?

What is the most interesting thing about what I did today?

What decisions did I have to make while we were working, and how did I try to solve the problems I faced?

What have I learned from this particular experience, and how can I apply what I have learned to other classes and everyday life?

What To Look for When Observing a Student's Learning Environment



When counselors and other support personnel go into classrooms to observe students. What should they be looking for?

Student name Date(s)

Observation within classroom

As it specifically relates to this student, indicate instructional strategies, modifications, and adaptations and their success; curricular materials used; academic and social performance; ability to work independently; verbal capabilities; motor skills; etc.

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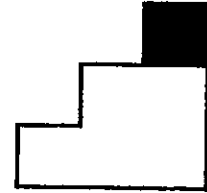
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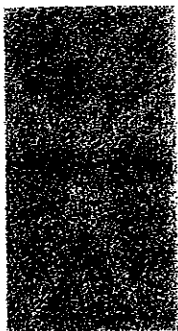


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The Schargel Consulting Group
 Developing World Class Schools and Graduates

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Stopping Dropping Out!

Efforts to prevent students from dropping out of school should begin when children start school, not when they're about to leave it, says Franklin P. Schargel, one of the authors of *Strategies to Help Solve Our School Dropout Problem*. According to Schargel and co-author Jay Smink, educators, parents, and the community need to work together to reduce the school dropout rate. Included: Fifteen effective strategies for reducing the number of school dropouts.



Education World: What are the biggest obstacles to implementing dropout prevention strategies in this country?

Franklin P. Schargel: A variety of obstacles prevent implementation of dropout prevention strategies -- and a number of ways exist to overcome them.

Educators -- and others -- believe that dropping out of school is a high school problem. In fact, there's no such thing as a high school dropout! Dropping out of school is not an event; it's a process -- and data indicates that that process begins as early as third grade. According to the United States Department of Education, 8.6 percent of school dropouts occur in middle school. Educators must start in elementary school to identify students who are having difficulty achieving success -- and build safety nets into the learning process for those students.

Parents need to be drawn early into the learning process, and schools need to make continuing efforts to involve parents in their children's learning. This can become a major challenge; many parents are working more than one job and the single-parent family is the norm in America.

Many schools and school districts are reluctant to admit they have a dropout problem. Although inner-city school districts often have a horrendous problem, no school community is exempt. Accepting any number of school dropouts -- even small numbers -- is a mistake. In the 21st century, as our society becomes more complex and more dependent on information, knowledge, and technology, a school dropout will have a difficult -- if not an impossible -- time finding work.

We need to change the teacher-learning paradigm. Teachers must become "enablers," enabling children to obtain information and turn it into a usable

Tips from the Experts

Schargel and Smink say that schools should employ these 15 educational strategies to help prevent students from dropping out:

- * Mentor and tutor students.
- * Provide service learning: Connect community service projects with classroom learning.
- * Provide alternative programs.
- * Provide after-school and summer enhancement programs.

resource -- knowledge. We must get away from the concept of only teaching information. Information is expanding exponentially at a rate that, according to Hewlett Packard, is doubling every two and a half years. Students must have a core of information. But continuing to teach and test *only* information is, in my opinion, a mistake.

Wherever I travel, I hear that education, especially education of children at risk, is expensive. I acknowledge that a major portion of local and state budgets go for education, but few people measure the cost of incarceration. Data from the United States Department of Corrections indicates that 82 percent of prisoners are school dropouts. It's not education that's expensive, it's the lack of education! "Education is a one-time cost, ignorance is a lifetime expenditure."

Schools need to be as globally competitive as businesses are. Schools frequently compare themselves to the school down the street or across town, but school graduates don't compete for employment with the best people in a city. They compete against the *world's* best. Cities compete for industry by saying that their schools are better than schools in another city; they should be saying that their schools are among the best in the world. The greatest economic stimulus to an area is a high graduation rate and a low dropout rate.

EW: Among the factors that contribute to students' dropping out of school, which are the hardest to address?

Schargel: The most prominent contributing factors are

- Low expectations for poor and minority students. If we really believe that "all children can learn" and that "no child should be left behind," we need to realize that not all children learn in the same way and at the same pace. Some children face obstacles that challenge the best educators and may take longer to achieve the same goals as children who are less challenged. We need to change the way we look at schools and the way they function. We may need to keep schools open late in the evening so children have a safe environment in which to do homework or access computers. We may need to offer remediation on Saturday or Sunday. No child has ever risen to low expectations.
- A passive learning process. Outside school, students are actively involved in a variety of activities, including sports, lessons, video games, and more. In school, however, we expect them to be passive recipients of learning. A disconnect exists between what happens in school and what happens outside school. We need to change the teaching-learning process.
- A lack of involvement by outside groups and agencies. A recently released U.S. Department of Education survey indicates that, between the ages of five and 18, 91 percent of a child's life takes place outside school. We must involve parents and the business community in children's education. Educators recognize that as a child progresses through the educational system, parental involvement declines. We need to develop strategies that maintain -- or even increase -- parental involvement. We know that pre-teens and teenagers face increasing challenges, including drugs, gangs, and sexual temptations. If educators are to succeed, it's critical that we have the active support and involvement of parents. The community needs to be drawn into schools as well -- and not solely as a source of funding. The business community can add the fourth "r" -- relevance -- to what is being taught in school.

EW: What are some common misperceptions about students who drop out?

Schargel: If we asked people to close their eyes and identify the typical dropout, they would fail to confirm the data that has been collected. Most dropouts, by number, are Caucasian because most students are Caucasian. Many dropouts come from stable families, have passing grades, and have never been pregnant or a parent. Almost 17 percent drop out in their senior year of high school. In other words, with fewer than nine months of school to

- * Stress early childhood education.
- * Increase family involvement in education.
- * Offer intensive reading and writing programs.
- * Provide professional development for teachers who work with at-risk students.
- * Make schools receptive to students' different learning styles.
- * Utilize instructional technology.
- * Customize learning.
- * Review school system policies and practices.
- * Involve the community in the schools.
- * Offer career education and workforce readiness programs.
- * Offer conflict resolution and violence prevention programs.

complete, these students say by their actions that it's not worth it to stay in school and graduate. When asked why they left school, 65 percent of school dropouts said they were bored.

EW: What are some characteristics of effective dropout prevention programs?

Schargel: Because the causes of dropping out are so diverse, the strategies for keeping students in school also need to be diverse. That's one reason we identify a wide variety of strategies. In my travels, I've spoken to people who run alternative schools, people who work in recovery programs to reclaim existing dropouts, and people involved in a variety of dropout prevention programs. The most successful programs use a wide variety of strategies -- from intensive reading and writing programs to service learning and mentoring programs. The greatest success is achieved by those who use all the strategies we have identified.

EW: How do you think the No Child Left Behind Act addresses the dropout problem?

Schargel: The No Child Left Behind Act does both positive and negative things. First, and most important, it increases federal funding. Second, it asks schools and programs for measured, documented, data-driven success, not merely anecdotal evidence. On the negative side, NCLB emphasizes and stresses high-stakes, "gate" testing (closing the promotional gate on those students who do not master the material in a given period of time.) We know from available data that retaining students who fail tests increases by 20 to 90 percent the likelihood that they'll drop out. We also know that social promotion doesn't work. We need to build safety nets into existing processes, to ensure that children learn early in their school careers. Then we need to maintain these safety nets so we can prevent failure in those children who initially fail to achieve. We know enough about brain research to recognize that children learn in a variety of ways, at their own pace; we need to build that knowledge into the system. Expecting all children to achieve the same level of success in a fixed amount of time dooms some students to fail.

Finally, most of the funding for dropout prevention is under Title I, which funds programs for low-income students -- as if there aren't any middle- or high-income students at risk!

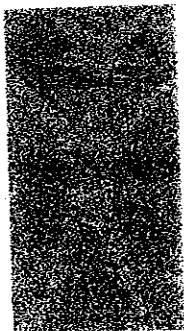
EW: How do you think the assessment component of the No Child Left Behind Act will affect the dropout rate?

Schargel: Jay Smink, co-author of *Strategies to Help Solve Our School Dropout Problem*, is an expert on school dropouts. Dr. Smink and the National Dropout Prevention Center have been studying this problem since 1987. We believe that high-stakes testing -- and the resulting retentions -- will cause the dropout problem to increase by 50 percent in the next five years. If that takes place, it won't be only students who are at risk -- it will be society.

Article by Ellen R. Delisio
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Send mail to franklin@schargel.com with comments .



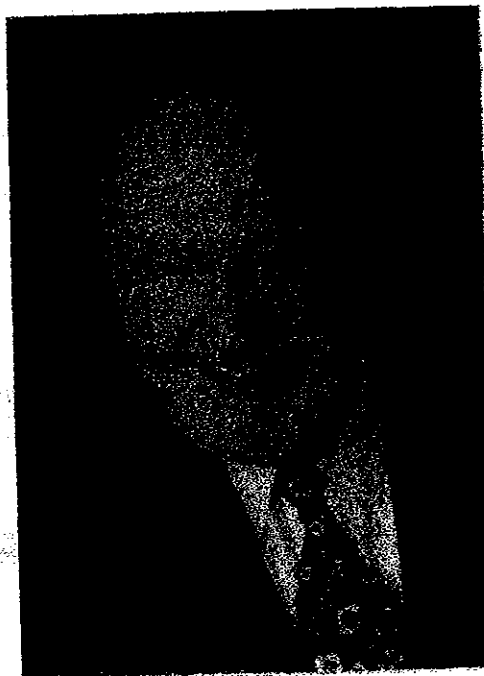
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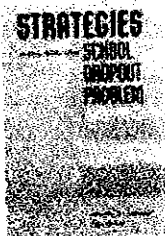
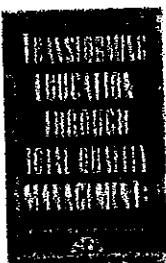
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Franklin P. Schargel

Franklin Schargel, a native of Brooklyn, New York now residing in Albuquerque, NM, is a graduate of the University of the City of New York. Franklin holds two Masters Degrees: one in Secondary Education from City University and a degree from Pace University in School Administration and Supervision. His career spans thirty-three years of classroom teaching and eight years of supervision and administration as Assistant Principal. In addition, Franklin taught a course in Dowling College's MBA Program.



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The Schargel Consulting Group
DEVELOPING WORLD CLASS SCHOOLS AND GRADUATES

Management REVIEW

Salvaging Our Public Schools

America has gone through dramatic changes in the last century, but our education system has failed to keep up. One educator outlines eight steps we need to take to combat the crisis in our public school system.

BY FRANKLIN P. SCHARGEL

America has gone through dramatic changes in its 219 years. Our economy has moved from agriculture to mass production; and now we are in an information- and knowledge-based environment that requires greater educational levels for success.

Yet the school model has changed very little. Our school year is still based on the agrarian model that allows our students to leave school for the spring planting and the summer and fall harvesting. Our schools are organized on the industrial top-down management model that was created to train people for low-skilled jobs through rote learning and individual skill-building in a time-structured and tightly disciplined environment.

True, our school buildings have changed. Some are even air-conditioned. Green boards have replaced the black slate of old. Yet in many classrooms, students still sit in straight rows. Teachers stand in front of the room, giving the perception that they have all the answers, using

chalk-and-talk methods to pour knowledge into the seemingly empty heads of their students.

On the economic side, America cannot compete against low-wage, low-skill countries (see diagram on page 23). And if we are to compete against countries with advanced economies, we must do so with a highly skilled workforce. Unfortunately, our schools have failed to keep pace with the changing demands of the global marketplace and have become a drag on national productivity.

Some people believe that if we devote enough energy and resources to the problem, we will halt the decline of education. This assumes that pouring more money at a process that is faulty will somehow erase its faults. Experience suggests otherwise. After all, after 10 years of educational reform and \$60 billion in new expenditures, standardized test scores are stagnant and dropout rates are climbing. Clearly, the "more-longer-harder" strategy—lengthening the school year, extending the school day and making students and teachers

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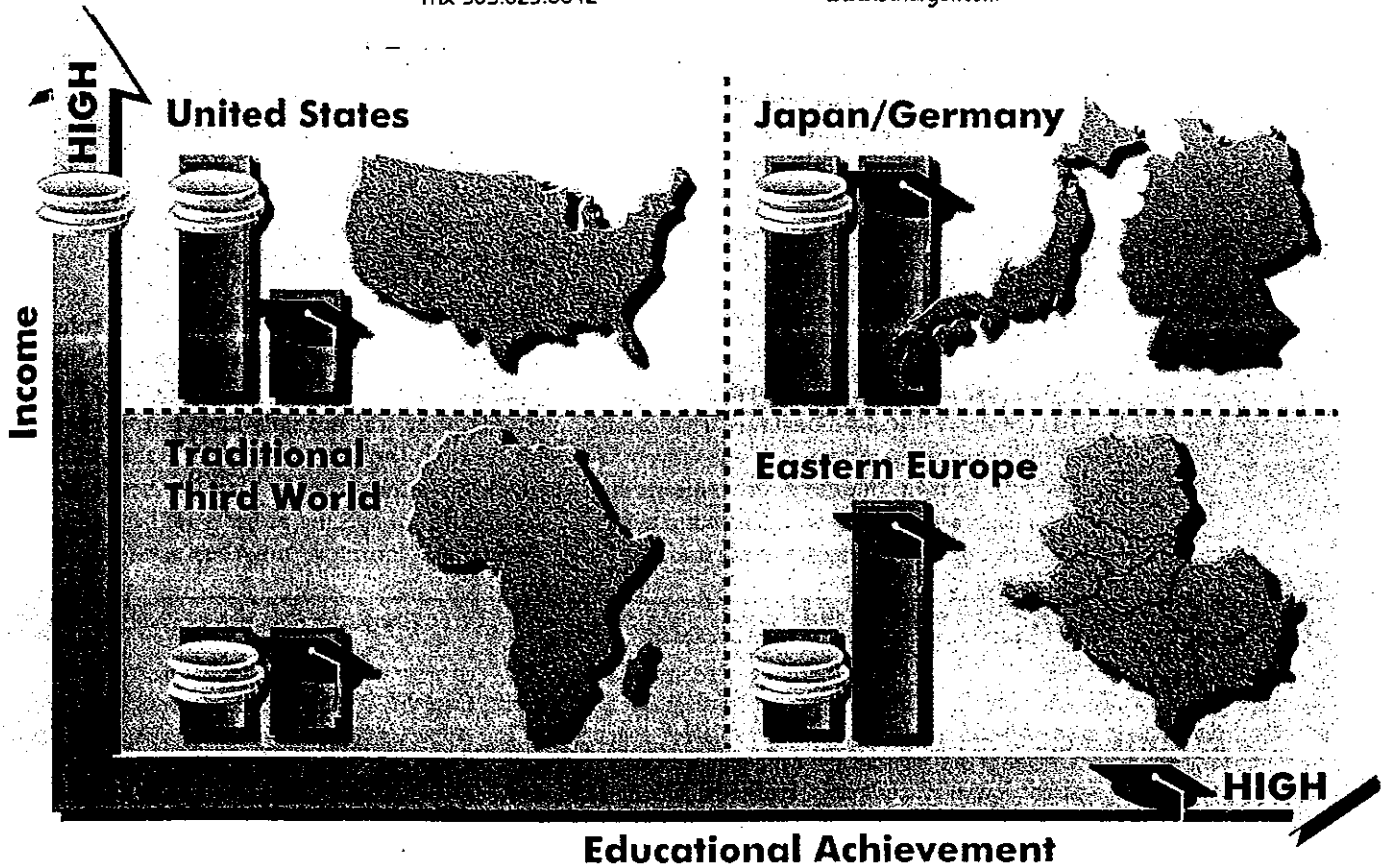
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work harder—is not working.

And more money is no longer available; in fact, budget cuts are setting in. Today, education is facing serious competition for declining government resources, and taxpayers are demanding a measurable return on investment.

We cannot solve our problems by spending more or by spending less, by creating new public bureaucracies or by privatizing existing ones. The way to achieve school transformation is through a systemic change in the way our schools are organized and run and the ways in which teaching and learning take place.

There are no easy answers, but it's clear that the success of America's economy is tied to our public school system. Therefore, if America's schools are incapable of producing graduates who are proficient in communicating, doing math and thinking critically, then America's businesses are doomed to fail. If America wishes to regain the economic world leadership in the 21st century, we must make

some tough choices and take some drastic steps and salvage our public education system.

↑ Educational reform must move to the top of our national agenda. We must reprioritize America's values and raise the status of education and educators. American society must stop being enraptured with short-term thinking, which too frequently offers a quick, unsustainable fix and shortsighted thinking. It is time for America to realize that our greatest natural resource is our human resource, our people!

At the same time, schools cannot be expected to do a quality job

BRIEFCASE

America stands poised to enter the 21st century with school calendars created in the 17th century, teaching methods developed in the 17th and 18th centuries, and classrooms designed in the 19th century. American education is like the crew in the rowboat furiously rowing to the future while the boat is firmly tied to the dock. We cannot succeed as a nation until we untie the ropes that keep us moored to the past.



with inadequate resources. The cutting of our federal, state and local budgets must stop. This doesn't mean that schools should be a long-term expense that just keeps increasing: Deming taught us that things become less expensive as they become better. Imagine the implications for education.

2 The federal government must join the states in setting goals and standards, developing performance information, supporting evaluation and dissemination results. The federal GOALS 2000 and the Malcolm Baldrige Quality Award, which is now open to educational organizations, can serve to help refocus the nation's attention on the need to strengthen education (see article on page 26).

3 We must make schools as customer-driven as the most successful business. That means providing ways for students to become actively involved in their own education. It also means that schools must adapt to the changing world before schoolwork becomes irrelevant to the student.

Confining students for six hours a day to a place where they do not want to be and where they feel they are wasting their time is ultimately a prescription for failure. As a society, we cannot afford to sacrifice 27 percent of our young people as "scrap" when they drop out of school. How can this or any nation succeed when it wastes 27 percent of its human resources?

Schools must also teach the kinds of skills that are needed in the workforce. Our knowledge workers need to learn to work cooperatively and in teams, and with people from diverse backgrounds, and to know how to investigate problems and analyze situations. Learning these skills should start in school.

4 Businesses must redefine their role. While businesses frequently lament the quality of workers being turned out by the schools, they traditionally have not worked closely with the schools to define the skills and abilities they want to hire. Business-education links for specific projects are becoming increasingly common; now businesses must

TQM TECHNIQUES IN THE INNER-CITY CLASSROOM

George Westinghouse Vocational-Technical High School, located in downtown Brooklyn, N.Y., is in many ways a typical inner-city high school. Many of the students come from single-parent, low-income families. Nearly three-quarters of its students are black, and one-quarter are Latino. Most graduates will be the first in their families to obtain a high school diploma.

Westinghouse has problems typical of many urban schools: a high attrition rate, an aging infrastructure, and a student population that arrives with poor reading and math skills, lack of motivation, a history of scholastic failure and low self-esteem.

Four years ago, George Westinghouse Principal Lewis Rappaport and I decided it was time to reinvigorate our school using total quality management to change our instructional process. We have been successful in changing the direction of the school, and in addition, we are making changes in the classroom—the place where learning happens and relationships are formed. Most important, what we have done at Westinghouse is replicable across the nation.

Here are some of our successes:

Our Apprenticeship Training Program, designed by two teachers, pairs an entering freshman with a senior

mentor in our vocational and technical department. The ninth-grader works side by side with the older student, who guides the ninth-grader through class experiments. Freshmen pick up skills, and the seniors get leadership experience. Teachers report less boredom, less disruption in class, and a lot more focus on work. Moreover, the structure of the class has changed from one teacher lecturing to 28 students to 14 pairs of students learning from one another, with the teacher acting as mentor. Both attendance and grades of the ninth-graders (the most at-risk group to drop out) have improved.

Students, teachers and parents are more involved in the school. School extracurricular activities are more popular as students have more say in their governance. Faculty members give up their own time to be active on the unpaid Quality Steering Committee. Membership in the PTA grew exponentially after the school asked parents when they would like to meet and help craft the agenda. For the first time in recent memory, parents are competing for PTA offices.

Nearby colleges in Brooklyn—Pratt Institute, Polytechnic University and New York City Technical College—have agreed to run coordinat-

ed programs with the high school. Project Care allows our students to take courses at the college while they are still in high school.

Our external customers have assisted us. We have raised more than \$2 million in new or additional programs and services. AT&T, Xerox, Marriott, Colgate-Palmolive, Digital Equipment, Time Warner and NYNEX have all generously provided technical assistance to us. Westinghouse Electric and National Westminster Bank have provided scholarship monies, and IBM provided two weekends of total quality training for members of our staff, student body and their parents.

The Ricoh Corp. has formed a partnership with our school in which students are repairing broken Ricoh photocopiers and fax machines.

Business-School Advisory Councils have been established in the electronics, woodworking and optical vocational areas. Council members—from business, industry and the faculty—meet regularly with the principal and staff to suggest ways to upgrade our programs and make our students more employable.

—FPS



enter into closer consultation with schools, perhaps coupled with long-term hiring relationships that could aid both the school and the business.

In the future, hiring decisions could be based on school transcripts and business managers could provide real-world expertise in the classroom, such as critiquing resumes or presenting the world of work to young people.

5 We must change the way we educate educators. The classrooms of the future will demand new teaching skills. Deans of education can no longer accept the status quo. Yet the faculty in many schools of education have had little or no classroom experience; some have never been in a schoolroom in this country.

6 States should provide financial aid and promote those schools that are adding value to student performance. So often in the past we have thrown additional dollars at schools where the processes were not working, effectively rewarding failure instead of success. We must change that paradigm and, at the same time, recognize that when we provide money for effective change in our schools, we may be eliminating the need to spend more money on police protection and prisons. There is something wrong when a society can find the resources to incarcerate its young people, but not to educate them.

7 We must ensure that our schools are sanctuaries of safety as well as citadels of knowledge. Our children cannot learn if they are consumed by fear: We must develop strategies to dissolve the root causes of school violence.

8 We must overcome our complacency with our schools. Businesspeople, parents and educators must realize that our nation's economic and political well-being depends on how well our young people perform when they enter the workforce.

Our public school system is unique in the world: It is the only system available to all young people, regardless of social position, family background, or physical or mental ability. Statistically, our public school system can never compete with that of Germany or Japan, for example, where only the elite students are allowed to enter academic high school.

But since our students will be competing with workers from around the world, those American schools that are achieving success

Singapore, Hong Kong, Israel, Sweden and the United Kingdom. If America's graduates cannot stand shoulder to shoulder with the world's best, they soon will have no place to stand at all.

The failure of America's public schools endangers the very fabric of American democracy and the foundations of America's industrial might. We cannot allow education in America to fail because education is the foundation of our democracy, the glue that holds our society together and the backbone of the American economy. MR

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TIME FOR CHANGE

Change takes time. That means high schools, with (at optimum) 25 percent per annum student turnover, are not the best incubators for change. Change also takes an investment in training, yet it is the unusual school system that has more than a few days or dollars per year to devote to this purpose.

Despite these issues, change is occurring in the classroom, propelled by corporate leaders who have proved willing to provide money and expertise to assist schools in their communities. Many of these programs have been successful, but few have been replicated on a large scale. Some of the hindrances to developing and duplicating successful business-education partnerships are as follows:

● School and business cultures are so different from each other that it is difficult for parties to communicate with one another or find ways to work in common toward their goals, even when those goals are complementary. Few teachers have personal experience in for-profit environments and few businesspeople have knowledge of

what goes on in the classroom beyond what they think they remember from their own school days.

● The school system is built on bureaucratic and political criteria, while businesses are self-contained entities that are most interested in helping to sponsor change in the local community where it will do them the most immediate good. Each business-education partnership has to be developed independently, and the work frequently gets done outside the normal channels of a top-down school bureaucracy.

● Public schools exist in a tenured, unionized, captive environment. Most businesses that are creating change are nonunion, or the change process is taking place with the full support of the union. Those circumstances do not exist in public school education. Additionally, a business can always fire a worker who doesn't "get it," but social and political pressures serve to keep malcontents in high school as long as possible, not the opposite.

—Martha H. Peak