

# Five Levers to Improve Learning

Prioritizing Efforts for Powerful Results  
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Status Quo



Transactional



Transformational



Transformational

## Which one is Better?



## Which School Is Better?

School A	School B
Charter School	Public School
1-to-1 laptops	1 computer lab
Standards-based report card	Traditional report card
Some gender-separate classrooms	Co-ed classrooms
Block schedule	52 minute periods
Extended school day	Standard school day
Online norm-referenced formative assessments 3 x year	Norm-referenced formative assessments
Collaborative release time	No collaborative release time
19 students per class	24 students per class
185 total students	628 total students



School A	School B
Ambiguous mission and purpose	Clearly defined mission and purpose and utilization of measures aligned to both
No published, articulated curriculum	Prioritized curriculum and learning goals
Exclusive utilization of judgmental feedback from teachers to students	Developmental feedback and expectation of mastery over time on targeted goals
Didactic, nondifferentiated instructional methods	Flexible, student-responsive instructional methods
Lecture utilized almost exclusively	Instructional strategies aligned to learner's needs
Low time-on-task for student learning	High time-on-task for student learning
Does not use data to inform improvement efforts	Data systematically used by students, teachers, and administrators to inform improvement efforts
Collaborative time utilized to discuss logistics and scheduling	Frequent dialogue among teachers linking achievement and perception data to action planning for curriculum, instruction, and assessment
Teacher supervision and evaluation utilized in a punitive manner, and only after parent complaints	Feedback actively sought among teachers and administrators in continuous efforts to improve their practice
Low academic press among staff; low expectations among students; general mistrust among administration, teachers, and students	High academic press among staff; high levels of support and trust; high expectations for learning among administration, teachers, and students

To improve student learning, most innovations, initiatives, and policies can be placed in one of 5 areas of leverage. 5 Levers:

- Structure: What? Where?
- Sample: Which students?
- Standards: Level of expectations?
- Strategy: Effective Practices?
- Self: Can I be Effective?

## Leverage Error

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- Pulling the wrong lever (make a change in the wrong lever) or seeking transformational change through a transactional process.



## Structure

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Lever One

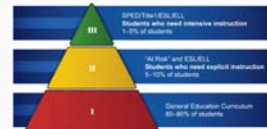
## Structure

- logistical components
- Schedules
- Staffing
- administrative processes



## Changing school structure results in increased student learning only under four conditions...

- Supports the use of more effective instructional strategies
- Allows for more responsive use of strategies to benefit specific groups of students
- Removes barriers in the way of learning opportunities for students or commitments among staff to collaborate on behalf of student learning
- Empowers staff and students to better realize their capacity to teach and learn





## Structure

Status Quo	Transactional	Transformational
Who will roll-over existing processes and when?	What rewards/consequences?	How will the change result in a changed learning experience?

## Structure

- What drives the school structure?
- To what extent do agenda items and meeting minutes deal with time, schedules, and logistics?
- If we are not achieving the results we hope to obtain under the current structure, are we attempting to address the problem or create better opportunities by reconfiguring more of the same structures and, by extension, largely maintaining each student's experience?
- How will the change in structure change students' learning experiences?


**Sample**

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Lever Two

**Sample**

Status Quo	Transactional	Transformational
When will placements occur?	Who will be placed where?	How do grouping practices result in utilization of more effective instructional strategies? How do we know?



## Sample

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- What drives grouping practices in our school or school district?
- How are staffing decisions linked to sampling? What is the general profile (experience, credentials) of individuals who work with learners who need greater support?
- To what extent do we find teachers waiting to address student learning needs because there is a different program/service in the school that holds a more primary obligation to tend to that student?
- If we are not achieving the results we hope to obtain under the current sampling procedures, do we attempt to address the problem or create better opportunities by regrouping students for a similar learning experience but deployed at a slower or faster pace?

## Standards

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Lever Three



## Standards

Status Quo	Transactional	Transformational
How can I teach my favorite units?	How will we align new standards on our curriculum mapper?	How will standards be utilized by students to inform their efforts to improve?



## Standards

- What is the success in our school or district? How does our answer to this question align to the expectations we set?
- Are standards and expectations for quality clearly articulated across our school or do standards for quality work vary dramatically from teacher to teacher?
- To what extent do all students have the opportunity to learn and develop skills in the articulated standards?
- To what extent are teachers waiting to address a student's learning needs or absolving themselves from addressing a student's learning needs, because the student's current level of skill is well below the articulated standard?

# Strategy

Lever Four

## Three Principles Related to How Students Learn...

- Students come to the classroom with preconceptions about how the world works
- To develop competency, students must have a deep foundation of factual knowledge, understand facts and ideas in the context of a conceptual framework, and organize knowledge in ways that facilitate retrieval and application
- A metacognitive approach to instruction can help students learn to take control of their own learning by defining learning goals and monitoring their progress in achieving them





## Effect sizes from “teaching” or “working conditions” (Hattie, 2009, p.244)

Teaching	d	Conditions	d
Quality of teaching	0.77	Within-class grouping	0.28
Reciprocal teaching	0.74	Adding more finances	0.23
Teacher-student relationships	0.72	Reducing class size	0.21
Providing feedback	0.72	Ability grouping	0.11
Teaching student self-verbalization	0.67	Multi-grade/age classes	0.04
Meta-cognitive strategies	0.67	Open vs. traditional classes	0.01
Direct instruction	0.59	Summer vacation classes	-0.09
Mastery learning	0.57	Retention	-0.16
Average	0.68	Average	0.08

## Strategy

Status Quo	Transactional	Transformational
When will we evaluate teachers?	What new strategies are expected given new curriculum/assessments?	What strategies will be utilized by teachers to empower students' own use of learning strategies?



## Strategy

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- Is there a common language of instruction among teams? Throughout the school?
- To what extent is the implementation of specific instructional strategies seen as the goal of initiatives in our school? Are adopting structural practices such as implementing a new schedule, adopting a new report card, or acquiring technology described as the goal or as a means to use more effective instructional strategies to support student learning?
- What time, effort, and energy are currently being used to develop teachers' capacity to develop expertise?

## Self

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Lever Five



## Self

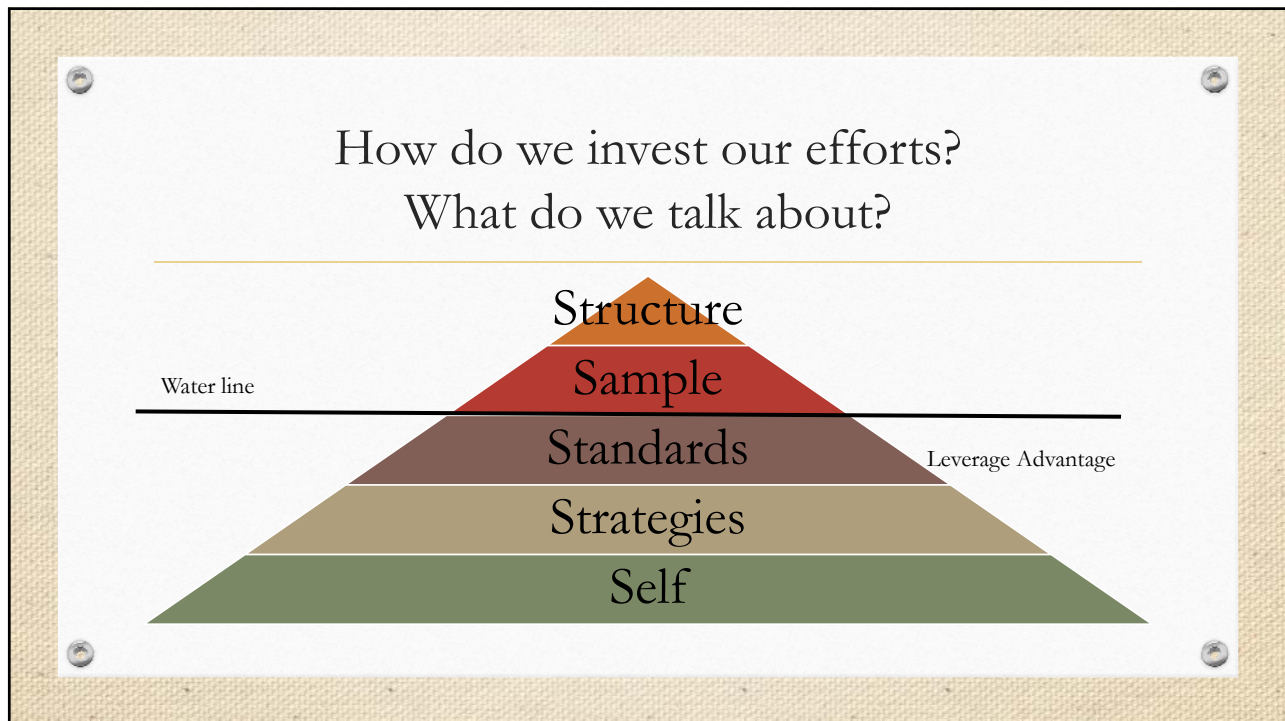
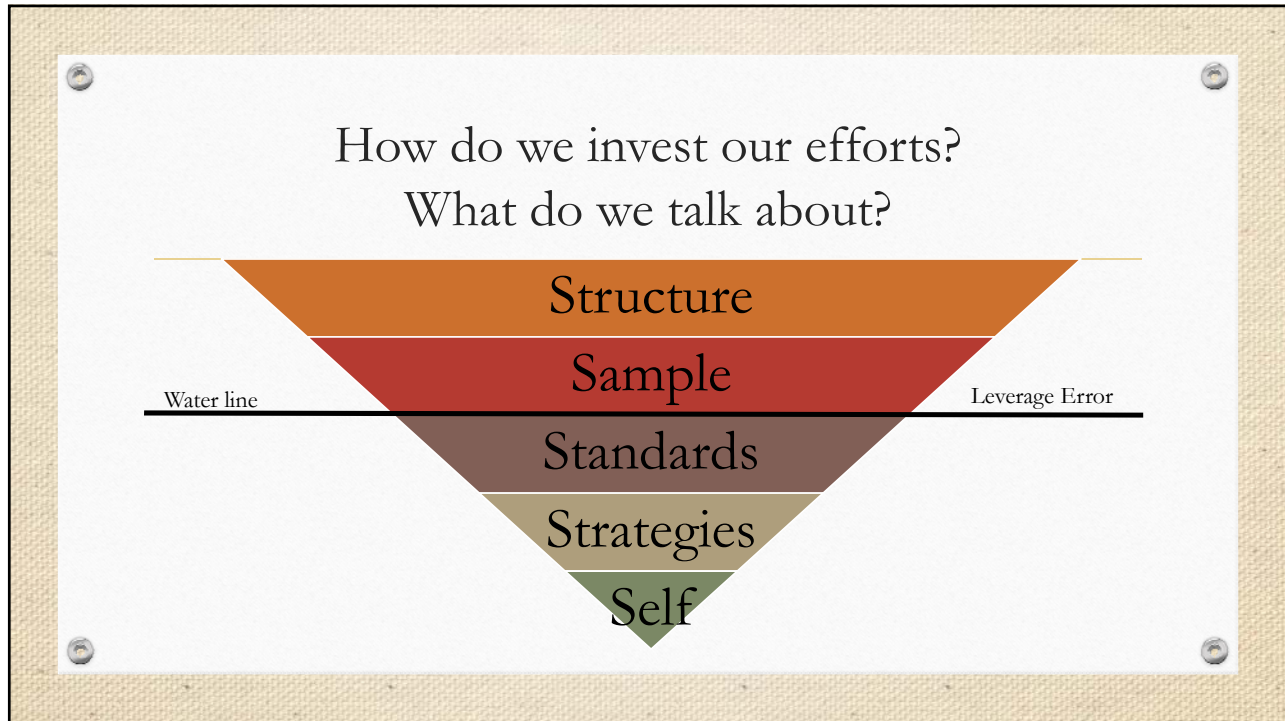
Status Quo	Transactional	Transformational
When will we orient students to rules and expectations?	What rewards and consequences will be applied to students to influence efforts?	How will we help students understand, and believe in, their capacity to improve?



## Prioritizing Efforts to Improve Student Learning

- Prioritizing around structure and sample can effectively change a school, but be aware that student learning experiences may remain unchanged
- Prioritizing to use more effective instructional strategies to connect kids to standards can be high leverage, but be aware of the critical distinction between transactional and transformational change.

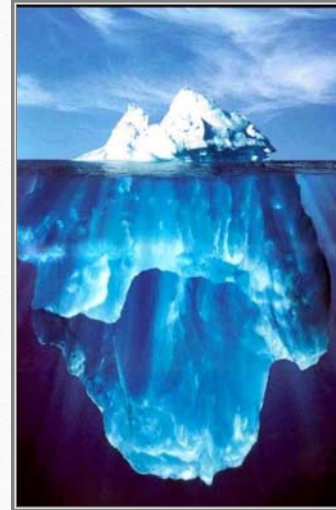






The visible tip of an iceberg floats on a much larger, more important but far less visible, foundation.

Building capacity for **standards**, **strategies**, and **self** will ensure that changes in **structure** and **sample** rest on a solid foundation.



## Three Critical Questions for Prioritizing Efforts to Improve Student Learning:

- What is the student learning outcome we are trying to influence?
- What levers will have the most direct impact on influencing that outcome for students?
- What is the magnitude of change necessary to obtain the results we seek? Ongoing management of the status quo? Transactional change in process and procedures? Transformational change in our understanding of the work and our relationship to the work?

