

What works is work!

Making a Difference

To make a difference in any organization, do you invest in the knowledge and skills of the people already working for you or program? The research suggests people.

My experiences in public education suggest educators are over investing in the purchase of programs, products, and services and under investing in developing their own people in the core of what they do. Phrases like *new and innovative* seem to take precedence over good old-fashioned hard work. Clearly being *new and innovative* is sexier, has more glitz, and makes it appear like we might be on the cutting edge in our profession. But after so many years that have turned into decades, you'd think we would have learned, legislators cannot legislate a solution nor can educators buy a solution to the issues facing public education.

It appears that we are always on the lookout for the silver bullet, In education, there have been so many changes, we have developed a culture in the education community that if we wait long enough, this too will pass.

I believe *what works is work!* I believe that teachers and administrators are already employing many of the practices essential to increasing student achievement. I don't believe we need to buy more programs, bring in people with new and innovative ideas, I believe that we should expend our energy reinforcing and refining practices that are in place and we all know work. And we also need to inspect what we are expecting – follow-up and feedback are important ingredients for success.

We should do everything in our power to invest in the content knowledge, instructional and assessment strategies that teachers use in the classroom. Teachers' knowledge of content and strategies will affect their instructional decisions, those decisions will have a great impact on student understanding and performance that will impact achievement scores.

We already have structures in place to support teachers and administrators in achieving district goals. The Components of an Effective Lesson (CEL) provides a structure for teachers to employ in the classroom, a structure that is easily monitored, to ensure the class time is being used effectively.

The *teacher expectancies* ensure best practices are being implemented in the classroom. These expectancies, protocols, which lend themselves to ensuring students are succeeding

academically are now being hailed as high yield strategies and are being repackaged and sold back to us by vendors. To increase the probability of student success, feedback must be given to teachers on the success of their implementation of the CEL and expectancies.

The Backward Assessment Model (BAM) is a communication model that requires teachers to share their content knowledge, resources, and instructional strategies with their peers teaching the same grade or content before instruction begins so all students benefit from their collective knowledge.

And finally, we have the Proposed Professional Development Day Agenda, a part of the Backward Assessment Model. The agenda focuses the professional development day on what teachers teach, how they teach it, student performance, and changes in instructional strategies based upon student performance. BAM replaces background noise with focus on teaching and learning.

While I appreciate all the time and effort being consumed by adopting the latest new and innovative program, product or service, I have learned from my own experiences that you can only use an hour once. The more time we spend investigating, adopting, introducing, implementing, then changing to the new glitz with a whole new language that has to be translated, which results in more new training for the new program, the less time we are spending on the real work. That sounds like an avoidance strategy to me.

By using our time, energy, and resources on developing classroom teachers and administrators, increasing their content knowledge, employing the Components of an Effective Lesson, *teacher expectancies*, BAM, and Professional Development Day Agenda, the pieces to the puzzle are already on the table. At some point in time, we have to decide to put the pieces together so our students benefit from the whole picture.

Unfortunately, working hard does not seem to satisfy the cultural need by some educators for the bright lights and bells associated with being new and innovative. The noise resulting from being new and innovative takes people away from their jobs to attend conferences, meetings, providing time for networking, which causes people to be off task and costs a great of money. At some point in time, we have to realize that we must stay home and put our collective shoulders to the wagon and push. The resulting beads of sweat, while not glitzy, will translate into increased student achievement.

Remember, the only time *success* comes before *work* is in the dictionary.