

Student Achievement: The Time/Team Relationship

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As a parent and future teacher, I want assurances my children are getting a top-notch education measured by results and not by processes. Do we, as a nation, now believe that student achievement is only measured based on state-offered standardized tests? If not, what else qualifies as a measurement tool? For me, student achievement is defined as students performing at the rigor and expectation of the grade level that they are in, and knowing my children can better compete against foreign nations as assessed by PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) and TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study). However, student achievement also means to me that students are succeeding on personal levels, dealing with life in positive ways.

Standardized tests can't measure that, only the efforts of the educators ~ The TEAM ~ can.

Key Definitions:

PISA ~ “a system of international assessments that focuses on 15 year-olds’ capabilities in reading literacy, mathematics literacy, and science literacy. PISA emphasizes functional skills that students have acquired as they near the end of compulsory schooling. PISA is administered every 3 years.” ¹

TIMSS ~ “provides reliable and timely data on the mathematics and science achievement of U.S. 4th and 8th grade students compared to that of students in other countries. TIMSS data have been collected in 1995, 1999, 2003, and 2007.” ¹

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TEAM...

Student achievement should be our primary focus, and we must ensure that all students are performing at the necessary levels in ALL subjects. Reducing a standard so more kids make it does not mean students are achieving. What about students that excel in an area that doesn't get measured by a standardized test? Are we stuck with state offered standardized tests as the only way to measure a student's achievement? To only rely on state-offered standardized tests to measure a student's achievement offers no complete way to measure a student's academic progress, and offers no incentive for the **TEAM** to get up and go to work in the morning. We need to measure with our eyes, our ears, and our minds. By watching students, listening to them speak, ask or answer questions, and thinking about how they have changed over time, we have made valuable assessments. For this reason, TEAM IS SO IMPORTANT! Counselors, parents, student body, coaches, principal, assistant principal, support staff ~ all those valuable assessments performed over and over every day are the assessments that have the greatest impact on instruction. It is a matter of knowing our students' strengths and weaknesses as they come in and leave every day. Should we just focus on mandated tests, yet overlook the skill of learning to deal with others in positive ways? Educators (i.e., the TEAM) are teaching the whole child not just the curriculum knowledge that mandated tests measure.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TIME...

More Academic Time to Accomplish More

❖ Pre-Kindergarten

- Pre-Kindergarten places children on a positive lifetime course.
- After attending Pre-Kindergarten, children are better prepared for school, increasing their chances of academic success in all grades.
- Pre-Kindergarten gives a head start to academic knowledge and skills that shape attitudes, dispositions and habits regarding learning and influencing social and emotional development.
- Pre-Kindergarten has direct effects on cognitive abilities that lead to long-term impacts on lives of children fostering their commitments to school and social and emotional development.

❖ Full-Day Kindergarten

- Full-Day Kindergarten offers greater academic benefits in subsequent grades than students who attend half-day kindergarten programs.
- Full-Day Kindergarten offers twice the time of academic instruction as students in half-day program allowing students to learn so much more.
- Students that attended Full-Day Kindergarten have higher achievement test scores in all areas tested with the exception of handwriting.

- Students that attended Full-Day Kindergarten have higher report card academic marks in primary and middle school.
 - Students that attended Full-Day Kindergarten exhibit more independent learning, classroom involvement, and productivity in work with peers.
- ❖ Extended Day/Extended School Year
- More time for academic improvement (More time for learning is especially crucial for helping at-risk students) ~ More time in school means more time for learning and less time for activities that are not conducive to academic achievement.
 - Improved educational success by summer school programs that focus on facilitating the development of academic skills.

More Efficient Use of Student Time

- ❖ Alternative Schedules/New Starting Times to Coincide with Students Optimal Learning Times
- Sleep is a biological necessity, and children/teenagers are not getting enough of it. With all the activities they are involved in after school, along with homework, their bedtime gets later. Some studies have shown that regardless of the time school lets out, bedtime does not shift. Therefore, a later start time (allowing kids to sleep longer), and a later release time, is conducive to having a more rested student body and which directly relates to the student's success.

❖ Technology More Available in Classrooms

- Computers are an empowering tool to the students ~ Computers build confidence and make things more exciting. Students also are more collaborative with peers, developing better relationships, helping each other on the computer.

More Efficient Use of Teacher Time

❖ More Time Available for Planning

- Teachers need more time for planning that doesn't take away from their weekends or evenings. There should be more allocated days, sporadically during the school year, for teacher planning and instructional goals.

Note: Teacher planning time is EXTREMELY important. It is not only important that teachers have time to plan, but also that the planning time is common with other teachers that are teaching the same subject/grade levels. During the planning process, teachers should be focused on three main questions: What do we want our students to learn? How will we know they've learned it? How will we respond when a student experiences difficulties? So often, teachers spend planning time on administrative things ~ composing reminders to parents about upcoming events, planning field trips, planning classroom parties, etc. Planning time should be for specific, intentional academic planning.

❖ Technology More Available

- SMART Board interactive whiteboards are an effective communication tool that will motivate students to become more involved and actively engage in constructing their own knowledge. Teachers can very easily demonstrate what works and what doesn't, and the evolution of a plan can take place right in front of their eyes. Students and teachers readily interact instead of just receiving information in a lecture format. Finally, SMART boards are a useful tool when it comes to developing tests, lessons and presentations.
- There has been “a significant increase in teacher productivity and student performance across all grade levels with the implementation of the SMART Board interactive whiteboard within the K-12 learning environment.”

Note: SMART boards are in the hands and controlled by teachers, not the learners. How people learn is changing and for technology to be effectively used, it *must* be in the hands of the learner as well as the teacher. Student learning styles must align to faculty teaching styles and then the learning must occur in a physical environment specifically designed for the most knowledge flow.

❖ Professional Development Program

- Continuing education programs to ensure that new teachers are prepared to meet the needs of their students, and experienced teachers adapt to new standards. Teachers need to deepen their knowledge and improve their

skills over time if we expect them to deepen the knowledge and improve the skills of our children.

Time/Team 8

The ***Time and Team*** relationship directly affects student achievement. The amount of rigorous instructional time a student receives on a daily basis has a direct impact on students' academic achievement and social and emotional growth. By making the best use of a student's time, taking advantage of Pre-Kindergarten, Full-Day Kindergarten, Extended School Day and Extended School Year, these ***Time*** factors have a profound influence on a student's level of achievement. Dedicated planning days and technology allow effective use of a teacher's time and energy. This combination of effectively managing student and teacher time will increase student achievement levels and teacher success.

The ***Team*** involved in the rigorous instructional time also has a direct effect - this is more complex and starts at the planning process - teachers sitting together, starting with the end result in mind and planning assessments and instruction accordingly. This also involves teachers having a plan of action for students who are not meeting the instructional goals, often that plan involves another teacher, either at-risk teacher or Para Pro to help the students who are not meeting the goals catch up.

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