Leadership for teacher learning
Dylan Wiliam (@dylanwiliam)

Things that don’t work
• Getting smarter people into teaching
• Paying good teachers more
• Brain Gym
• Learning styles
• Copying other countries

Things that might work
• Lesson study/Learning study
• Social and emotional aspects of learning
• Educational neuroscience
• Growth mindset
• Differentiated instruction
• Grit

Things that do work—a bit
• Firing bad teachers
• Charter schools
• Vouchers
• Class size reduction
Things that do work—a lot

- Curriculum improvement
- Formative assessment

Myths about curriculum

- Standards tell us what to teach
- Curriculum means textbooks
- Knowledge isn’t important ("You can always Google it")
- Students should be involved in authentic tasks
- We should be teaching skills, not content
- Responding to students’ interests closes achievement gaps

Why knowledge matters

Target number: 127

The main purpose of curriculum is to build the contents of long-term memory

- 25
- 3
- 1
- 9
- 4
Effective learning environments

What determines how quickly children learn?

- Student characteristics
- School organization
- Instructional quality
  - The quality of the curriculum
  - The time teachers have to plan teaching
  - The size of classes
  - The resources available
  - The skills of the teacher
- All of these are important, but the quality of the teacher is especially important

So what should teachers get better at?

Evaluation vs. improvement

- Evaluation frameworks:
  - of necessity, have to be comprehensive
  - include all aspects of teachers work
  - at best, incentivize improvement on all aspects of practice
  - at worst, incentivize improvement on aspects of practice that are easy to improve
- Improvement frameworks:
  - are selective
  - focus on those aspects of practice with the biggest payoff for students
- To maximize improvement, evaluation frameworks have to be used *selectively*
Why formative assessment needs to be a priority

### Educational Endowment Foundation toolkit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Quality of evidence</th>
<th>Extra months of learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>$$</td>
<td>★★★★</td>
<td>+8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognition and self-regulation</td>
<td>$$</td>
<td>★★★★</td>
<td>+8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer tutoring</td>
<td>$$</td>
<td>★★★★</td>
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<td>Early years intervention</td>
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<td>★★★★</td>
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<tr>
<td>One to one tuition</td>
<td>$$$$</td>
<td>★★★★</td>
<td>+5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homework (secondary)</td>
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<td>★★★★</td>
<td>+5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaborative learning</td>
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<td>★★★★</td>
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<td>Small group tuition</td>
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<td>Behaviour interventions</td>
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<td>Digital technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social and emotional learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reducing class size</td>
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<td>+3</td>
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<td>Summer schools</td>
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<td>★★★★</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sports participation</td>
<td>$$$</td>
<td>★★</td>
<td>+2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arts participation</td>
<td>$$$</td>
<td>★★★★</td>
<td>+2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extended school time</td>
<td>$$$</td>
<td>★★</td>
<td>+2</td>
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<td>Individualized instruction</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>★★★★</td>
<td>+2</td>
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<td>After school programmes</td>
<td>$$$$</td>
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<td>Learning styles</td>
<td>$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mentoring</td>
<td>$$$$</td>
<td>★★</td>
<td>+1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homework (primary)</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>★★★★</td>
<td>+1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching assistants</td>
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<td>★★</td>
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<td>Performance pay</td>
<td>$$</td>
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<td>Aspiration interventions</td>
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<td>Block scheduling</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>★★</td>
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<td>School uniform</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>★</td>
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<td>Physical environment</td>
<td>$$</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability grouping</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>★★★★</td>
<td>-1</td>
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Where the learner is going
Where the learner is now
How to get the learner there

Teacher
Clarifying, sharing, and understanding learning intentions
Eliciting evidence of learning
Providing feedback that moves learners forward

Peer
Activating students as resources for one another

Student
Activating students as owners of their own learning

What makes effective teacher learning?

Looking at the wrong knowledge

• The most powerful teacher knowledge is not explicit:
  — That’s why telling teachers what to do doesn’t work.
  — What we know is more than we can say.
  — And that is why most professional development has been ineffective.
• Improving practice involves changing habits, not adding knowledge:
  — That’s why it’s hard:
    • And the hardest bit is not getting new ideas into people’s heads.
    • It’s getting the old ones out.
  — That’s why it takes time.
• But it doesn’t happen naturally:
  — If it did, the most experienced teachers would be the most productive, and that’s not true (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2006).

Strategies for change (Heath & Heath, 2010)

• Direct the rider
  — Follow the bright spots (malnutrition in Vietnam)
  — Script the critical moves (1% milk, 25 points)
  — Point to the destination (no dry holes)
• Motivate the elephant
  — Find the feeling (gloves on the table)
  — Shrink the change (five-minute room makeover)
  — Grow your people (mindset)
• Shape the path
  — Tweak the environment (popcorn study, one-click)
  — Build habits (don’t tax the rider, action triggers)
  — Rally the herd (free spaces in hospitals)
Strategies for teacher change

- Direct the rider
  - Follow the bright spots (volunteers vs. conscripts)
  - Script the critical moves (structured meetings)
  - Point to the destination (NCLB)
- Motivate the elephant
  - Find the feeling (the moral imperative)
  - Shrink the change (small steps)
  - Grow your people (all teachers can improve)
- Shape the path
  - Tweak the environment (time for teacher learning)
  - Build habits (create routines and structures)
  - Rally the herd (make new mistakes)

Uses of school-based PLCs

- PLCs are likely to be effective for
  - Situations in which team-work is likely to be more effective than individual activity
    - Data-driven decision-making
    - Lesson study
  - Changes that require changing habits
    - Classroom formative assessment
- PLCs are likely to be less effective for
  - Changes that require acquisition of knowledge
  - Changes that are relevant to a small number of people

Professional learning communities

Teacher learning communities
Supportive accountability

What is needed from teachers:
- A commitment to:
  - The continual improvement of practice
  - Focus on those things that make a difference to students

What is needed from leaders:
- A commitment to engineer effective learning environments for teachers by:
  - Creating expectations for continually improving practice
  - Keeping the focus on the things that make a difference to students
  - Providing the time, space, dispensation, and support for innovation
  - Supporting risk-taking

Teacher learning communities

Plan that the TLC will run for two years.

Identify 10 to 12 interested colleagues:
- Composition:
  - Similar assignments (e.g., early years, math/science)
  - Mixed subject/mixed phase
  - Hybrid

Secure institutional support for:
- Monthly meetings (75–120 minutes each, inside or outside school time)
- Time between meetings (two hours per month in school time):
  - Collaborative planning
  - Peer observation
- Any necessary waivers from school policies

A “signature pedagogy” for teacher learning

Every monthly TLC meeting should follow the same structure and sequence of activities:
- Activity 1: Introduction (5 minutes)
- Activity 2: Starter activity (5 minutes)
- Activity 3: Feedback (25–50 minutes)
- Activity 4: New learning about formative assessment (20–40 minutes)
- Activity 5: Personal action planning (15 minutes)
- Activity 6: Review of learning (5 minutes)

Activities 1, 2, 3, 5, 6: “Bookends”

For each of these five activities, the process is exactly the same at each TLC meeting

This provides a familiar structure for teachers to get better together
- As the structure fades into the background,
- The learning comes into the foreground

Teachers come to the meeting knowing what is expected of them
Activity 1: Introduction

- Sharing learning intentions for the meeting

Activity 2: Starter

- A variety of warm-up activities to get participants’ minds to the meeting:
  - Think of something you are looking forward to this year
  - 30-seconds to get “things off your chest” about what infuriates you about your job
  - 30 seconds to tell the group about something that happened within the last month and made you feel good
  - Think of something that happened in a lesson this year that made you smile
  - Think of something that one of your colleagues did last term that supported you
  - Go back to the TLC ‘ground rules’

Activity 3: Feedback

- Routines need to be established, expectations shared, and structure maintained.
- Similar expectations regarding preparation and engagement.
  - Coming to the meeting knowing they will be sharing their own formative assessment experiences.
  - Being prepared to offer constructive, thoughtfully conceived feedback to colleagues.
  - Being prepared to challenge ideas that may be good classroom practice but are not necessarily tightly related to formative assessment.

Activity 4: New learning

- Drip-feed’ of new ideas, to increase knowledge, and to produce variety
  - Watch videos of classroom practice
  - Book study (one chapter each month)
  - New formative assessment techniques
**Activity 5: Personal action planning**

- Each teacher updates his or her personal action plan
- Makes a specific commitment about what they will do over the coming month
- Arranges any support needed from colleagues
  - Specific date and time for peer observation

**Activity 6: Wrap**

- Did the meeting meet its intended objectives
  - If yes, great
  - If no, time to plan what to do about it

**Every TLC needs a leader**

- The job of the TLC leader(s):
  - To ensure that all necessary resources (including refreshments!) are available at meetings
  - To ensure that the agenda is followed
  - To maintain a collegial and supportive environment
- But most important of all:
  - It is not to be the formative assessment “expert.”

**Peer observation**

- Run to the agenda of the observed, not the observer:
  - Observed teacher specifies focus of observation:
    - E.g., teacher wants to increase wait time.
  - Observed teacher specifies what counts as evidence:
    - Provides observer with a stopwatch to log wait times.
  - Observed teacher owns any notes made during the observation.
How will we know if it’s working?

We’ll know when it’s working when...

- Leading indicators of success
  - Teachers are given time to meet, and do so
  - Teachers increasingly act as “critical friends” to others
  - The prevalence of classroom formative assessment practices is increasing
  - Students are more engaged in classrooms
  - Teachers modify the techniques in appropriate ways, indicating an understanding of the underlying theory
  - There is a shift in the ownership of the reform
- Lagging indicators of success
  - Increased student achievement

Possible foci for “Learning walks”

- Clear, valuable learning intentions for lesson
- Success criteria understood by students
- Students chosen at random
- Questions that make students think
- Students, not teacher, dominate discussions
- At least 80% students involved in answering questions
- All-student response system used
- Teacher waits three seconds after question
- Students support each others’ learning
- Students take responsibility for own learning
- Teacher gives oral formative feedback
- Evidence of comments that advance learning
- Teacher finds out what students learned
- Teaching adjusted after evidence collection

Key stakeholders’ reactions

- Departmental sub-cultures
- Unions
- Professional associations
- Teaching assistants
- Parents
- School Board members
- Community leaders
Managing disappointments

- Failure: opportunity for learning or blame
- Falling down: failing or learning?
- High-reliability organizations embrace failure
- $1m dollar club
- “A complaint is a gift”
- Group-work is hard for teachers, ... and for teachers of teachers...

To find out more...

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