“Problems in High Schools that Attempt to Improve”
Elmont Memorial Junior-Senior High
Elmont, New York
1,945 Students in grades 7-12

African American 77%
Low-Income 27%

Source: New York Department of Education
Elmont Graduation Rates, 2007

Source: New York Department of Education
Improvement and High Performance at Elmont Memorial Junior-Senior High

African-American Students – Secondary-Level Math

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Elmont</th>
<th>New York</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: New York Department of Education
Granger High
Granger, Washington
324 students, Grades 9-12

Latino 83%
American Indian 7%
White 10%
Low Income 83%

Source: Washington State Report Card
Grade 10 Reading, Granger High School
Washington State Assessment of Student Learning (WASL)

Source: Washington State Report Card. Broken line indicates when new cut score was put in place.
Grade 10 Writing, Granger High School
Washington State Assessment of Student Learning (WASL)

Source: Washington State Report Card
Graduation Rates

Before 2001:

“Less than 50 percent”

--according to former principal, Richard Esparza
(data not reported by state)

2008:

“90 percent”

--according to former principal, Richard Esparza
(data not yet reported by state, but 2007 was reported as 88%)
Grade 10 Math, Granger High School
Washington State Assessment of Student Learning (WASL)

Source: Washington State Report Card
No matter what they look like, students in Grades 6 through 12 support higher standards (even if it means summer school)

Percentage of students who think it is a good idea for school districts to require students to meet higher academic standards or go to summer school to catch up

Note: students were in grades 6 to 12
Source: Public Agenda, Reality Check 2006: Issue No. 2: How Black and Hispanic Families Rate Their Schools
But teachers don’t agree. In a recent survey,

• When read the statement, “We should expect all students to meet high academic standards and provide extra support to struggling students to help them meet those standards,”

  **ONLY 32 percent of teachers agreed.**

• When read the statement, “We should have a separate track to allow students who are not college bound to get a diploma without meeting standards,”

  **59 percent of the teachers agreed.**

Which may explain how a colleague of mine recently saw this assignment in a Michigan high school:

Supply and Demand Project

Students will create a writing project using the following formats:
Pen Pal letter, short story, play, poem, e-mail, song/rap, phone conversation, etc…
Students must show an understanding of the economic terms for unit 2 by using an actual product (good or service) to explain the terms. In the story the following terms must be used:
Supply
Demand
Law of supply
Law of demand
Shortage
Surplus
Profit
Equilibrium price
So principals must look for that 32 percent of teachers who think that students can meet standards if given support and are willing to provide that support.

Elmont calls this looking for the “Elmont Heart.”
"People have to understand that these students can be just as successful as anyone else. It begins with the belief system."

--Richard Esparza, former principal, Granger High School
“Content knowledge is most important. If the person doesn’t know the material, the kids know that.” —Lisa Tabarez, principal, Imperial High School, Imperial California

Source: California State Department of Education.
Richard Esparza, principal, Granger High School, Granger, Washington
Higher Grades Basketball Camp

There is no one like you!
Many core classes, particularly in high-poverty and high-minority secondary schools, are taught by out-of-field teachers.

![Bar chart showing the percentage of classes taught by teachers with neither certification nor major.]

- **High Poverty**: 41%
- **Low Poverty**: 17%
- **High Minority**: 30%
- **Low Minority**: 16%

Note: Data are for secondary-level core academic classes (Math, Science, Social Studies, English) across United States. High-poverty ≥75% of students eligible for free/reduced price lunch. Low-poverty school ≤15% of students eligible. High-minority ≥75% students non-white. Low-minority ≤ 10% students non-white.

Source: The Education Trust, *Core Problems: Out-of-Field Teaching Persists in Key Academic Courses and High-Poverty Schools*, (2008)
Number of classroom visits by evaluator prior to a final evaluation rating of a teacher

- 2 visits: 30%
- 1 visit: 30%
- 3 visits: 20%
- 4+ visits: 17%
- No visits: 3%

Average minutes of classroom observation prior to a teacher being given a final evaluation rating

- <15 minutes: 1%
- 15-30 minutes: 12%
- 31-45 minutes: 35%
- 45-60 minutes: 37%
- >60 minutes: 15%

Elmont evaluation process

• **Untenured teachers**

  7 observations per year  
  (unannounced)  
  • 4 by chairperson  
  • 1 by district coordinator  
  • 1 by assistant principal  
  • 1 by principal  

Chair people begin observations in September

• **Tenured teachers**

  2 observations per year  
  • 1 by chairperson  
  • 1 peer/chairperson or video
Elmont evaluation process

END-OF-THE- YEAR EVALUATION
- Factual data
- Summary of progress
- Instruction/professional development
- Involvement in school activities
- Bottom-line rating

COMMITHMENT TO SCHOOL ACTIVITIES
- Match assignment to interest and ability
- Extra help

INDIVIDUALIZED GOALS
- Classroom Management Skills
- Lessons containing essential elements
- Lessons responsive to the curriculum

LESSON PLANS
- Review for aim, motivation, and summary
- Peer support
- Review organizational activities

OBSERVATION
- Build on strength, minimize weakness
- Be effective
- No more than three recommendations
- Be supportive
- Rate the lesson

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
- Peer observations
- Faculty workshops, staff
- Development days, department conference
- Small group workshops

The New Teacher

COMMITMENT TO SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

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Elmont evaluation process

INDIVIDUALIZED GOALS
- Maintain/recapture enthusiasm
- Match skill & interest to technique for instructional improvement

LESSON PLANS
- Supervisory review of new skills
- Peer support
- Share resources

OBSERVATION
- Build on strength, minimize weakness
- Look for integration of new skills and make recommendations for improvement

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
- Workshops in new skills
- Peer observation
- Teachers teaching teaching

COMMITMENT TO SCHOOL ACTIVITIES
- Re-energize in activities according to interest

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Elmont Classroom Observation

- Observations should be conducted early in the year
- A clear supervisory plan should be formulated based on the needs of the teacher
- The observer should minimize tension by actively listening, smiling, and encouraging the teacher during the lesson
- Observations should be a full period
- Observers should enter before the bell and take a seat in the back of the room
- Observers should never take over the class or show displeasure
- Observers should note elements of effective instruction
- Observers should make note of the quality and quantity of student participation
Elmont Evaluation Written Report

• Objective narrative
• Identify commendations
• Identify recommendations
• Rate the lesson
• Develop an action plan
Elmont Commendations

• Identify effective instructional strategies used in lesson
• Provide specific examples from lesson
• Explain why strategies are effective
Sample Elmont Commendation

- Your students were actively engaged and on task the entire period. This is a direct result of the meticulous planning of the exam that you developed. Creating an assessment that requires students to be on task for the entire period is important because it eliminates the opportunity for students who have finished their exam to distract their classmates who have not. Please continue to develop exams that challenge your students for the entire period.
Sample Elmont Commendation

You built this lesson around a well-defined instructional aim. The worksheet that you distributed at the start of the period contained the lesson’s aim, “Am I contributing to or hurting the achievements of the Civil Rights Movement?” You introduced the lesson by having a student read the aim aloud to the class and regularly mentioned it throughout the lesson. An effective aim is one that is problematic, evaluative, supported by your activities, and only answerable at the end of the period. Your aim today fits that description. Please continue to check this definition of an aim with those that you design for your daily lesson plans.
Elmont Recommendations

• Identify areas in need of improvement
• Provide specific examples from lesson
• How the recommendations will improve instruction
• Graded pattern:
  – Knowledge of classroom management and routines
  – Exhibiting a good rapport
  – Constructing a worthwhile aim
  – Utilizing the essential elements of the lesson plan
  – Encouraging participation
  – Utilization of various instructional methods
  – Integration of technology
Elmont Sample Recommendation

• As we discussed during our Post-Observation Conference, at one point in the lesson you took a sub-standard response that was not elaborated on. We agreed that the definition of internal conflict, pivotal to the aim of the lesson, was not good enough. You admitted that, in the interest of time, you took the response and moved forward with the lesson. As we discussed, setting standards and having students meet those standards includes the proper responses. In the future make it a point to ensure that students have a true grasp on the concept. We agreed that students did not make the connection between the lesson activities and the aim of internal conflicts. This ultimately took away from the lesson. Please be sure to accept responses that further the developmental objectives or question further to see that these responses are formed so that the level of understanding can be of the highest level, not a superficial one.
Elmont Sample Action Plan

• This was a very good lesson. Your enthusiasm and sincere desire to motivate your students is truly commendable. You have created a warm and nurturing environment where the students are at the center of the learning process. Your commitment to becoming an excellent teacher is evidenced by the fact that you are open to discussing your own professional growth and open to suggestions on how to improve. To help you continue your growth I suggest that you continue to work closely with Mr. Greene on developing lessons that engage your students at the highest level.
“I taught in the city for four years and thought I was a pretty good teacher. But until I came here I had never taught a lesson.”
--Wendy Tague
For a full explanation of Elmont’s evaluation system, see

Supportive Supervision: Becoming a Teacher of Teachers

By Diane B. Scricca, former principal of Elmont Memorial Junior-Senior High School with Albert J. Coppola and Gerard E. Connors

Published by Corwin Press, 2004
To read more about Elmont and Granger High Schools (Shameless plug alert), buy *It’s Being Done* at:

Harvard Education Press
([www.hepg.org](http://www.hepg.org))

or at Amazon.com
To read more about Imperial High School (ANOTHER shameless plug),

Buy HOW It’s Being Done at:

Harvard Education Press (www.hepg.org)
or at Amazon.com

IN SEPTEMBER
To Continue This Conversation With “It’s Being Done” Educators

The 2009 Education Trust National Conference

When the going gets tough
Smart Choices and Bold Action
to Raise Achievement and Close Gaps

Mark your calendar
November 12-14, 2009
Arlington, Va.

Call your colleagues
Have gap-closing work to share?
Submit a proposal to present.

Organize a staff field trip, and join us!

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Sample Elmont Commendation (Bonus)

- You had effective starting routines for the class. You were in the hallway before class began encouraging students to arrive on time. The aim and do now were clearly written on the white board for students to see as they entered the classroom. All of your students were seated before the late bell and working on the do now activity. By taking these actions, you demonstrated your support for school policies and conveyed the idea to your students that every moment of instructional time will be used in your class. Also, standing in the hallway encouraging students to arrive on time helps the school and your department meet their goals to minimize lateness.
Elmont Sample Recommendation (Bonus)

- At our post-observation conference we discussed that your application activity sparked interest and engaged your students in the learning process. However, we also agreed that while the students were engaged, the activity did not allow them to critically think at a high level. For example, the directions on the activity worksheet stated, “Read each of the below scenarios and determine whether negligence has occurred.” This is problematic because students were only required to answer yes or no to each scenario. We discussed that your students consistently display a high level of energy because they find the material very interesting and want their opinions and thoughts heard in class. We agreed that pairing students together and providing them with four to five scenarios for them to determine if negligence has occurred could have improved the lesson’s activity. Pairing students would also be required to base their responses on the four elements needed to prove if negligence has occurred. You could then have the pairs of students defend their responses to the class.
Elmont Sample Action Plan (Bonus)

• Analysis: This was a satisfactory lesson. Although you are working hard and planning well, that hard work is not on display because of the fundamental management issues discussed. You are to observe department members and discuss your observations with your chairperson at some point over the next three weeks. By observing Ms. McDonnell, you will take note of smooth transitions between lesson activities that will enable you to maintain student attention. From Ms. Smith, you will see the perfect implementation and enforcement of sound opening strategies. Finally, from Mr. Schuler you will observe the benefits reaped from a well-structured activity. Further, please continue to discuss your lessons with your chairperson each week to ensure that you are effectively addressing the recommendations. Once this is accomplished, you will be able to contribute to the English Department and school goals as you have so far this year.
NAEP Reading
17-year-olds

Average Scale Score


African American  Latino  White

*Denotes previous assessment format
Source: NAEP 2008 Trends in Academic Progress, NCES
NAEP Math
17-year-olds

*Denotes previous assessment format
Source: NAEP 2008 Trends in Academic Progress, NCES
Elmont evaluation process

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The New Teacher

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The Veteran Teacher

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