Why Improving High School Instruction is so Difficult…
…it's the struggle to get a consistent leadership team in place over several years that skillfully pursues certain high-efficacy levers on quality teaching and learning, and does so with persistence.
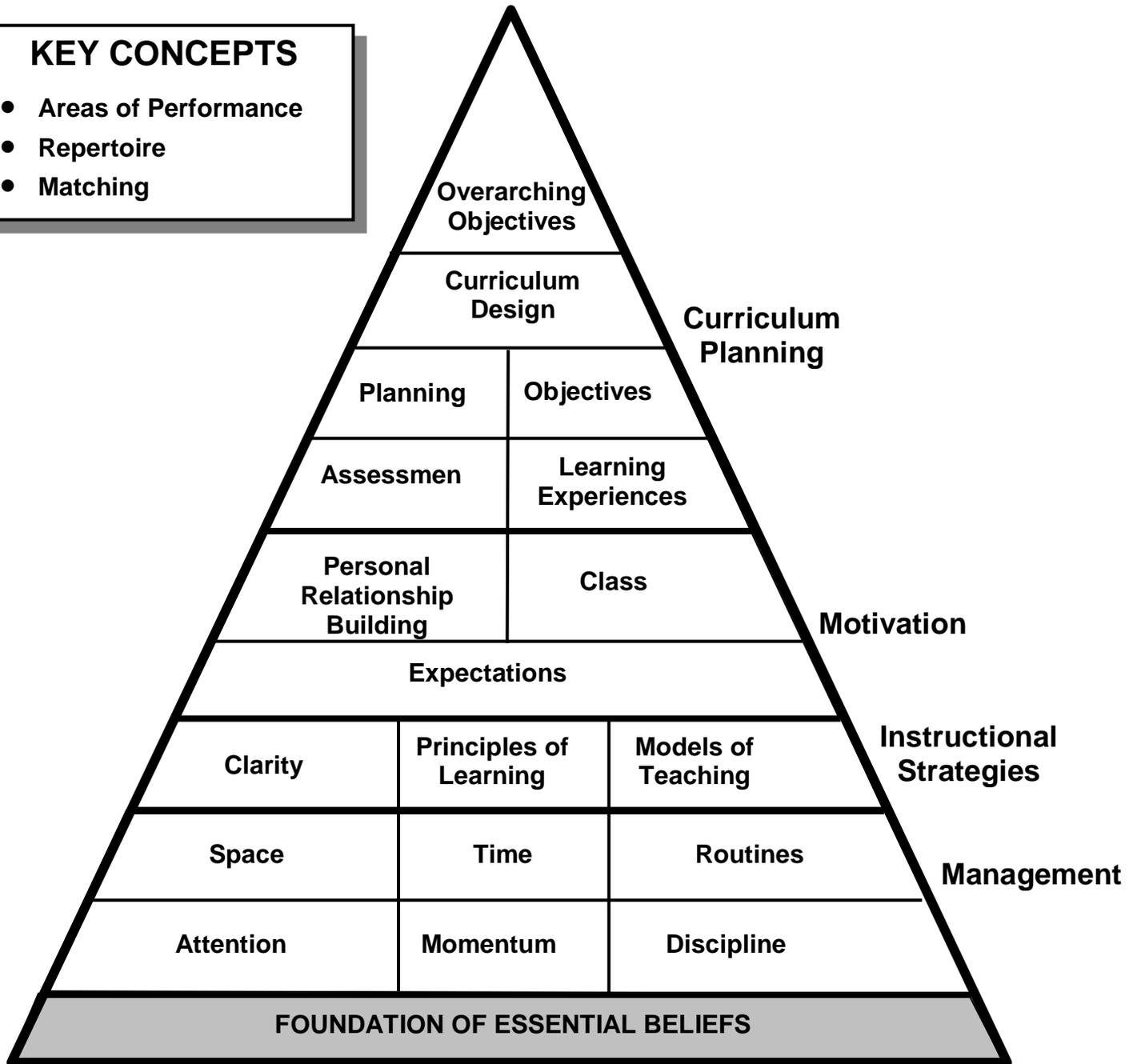
The central engines of instructional improvement below require cohesive, long-term focus from a school leader and a *leadership team* that has the improvement of teaching and learning in each and every classroom as its charter, its reason for being, it main mission. Thus the agendas of school leadership teams and the actions of leadership team members in their regular daily activities are tied to initiatives line these:

1. Develop common language and concept system based on common core of professional knowledge. Along with this challenge is a lack of acknowledgement
    -- that there IS a common core of professional knowledge,
    -- that it is highly sophisticated and complex,
    -- that it consists of repertoires rather than "effective behaviors"
    -- that the work of teaching requires joint problem solving with colleagues

2. Create roles and expectations for frequent, high quality conversations about teaching (Public teaching in a culture of non-defensive self-examination of practice in relation to student results.) When present, this quality shows up in teacher evaluation events, in the daily activities of instructional coaches with teachers, and in informal conversations and department meetings.

3. Ensure regular meetings of teachers who share content and do fine grain error analysis and design of re-teaching. (See "PLC/Content teams" video at RBTeach.com)

4. Prevent a culture of teacher autonomy from overriding coherence in curriculum expectations and common assessments for courses.

5. Make commitments across departments to important, high-yield instructional foci (e.g., literacy strategies; thinking routines.)

6. Develop tight, non-optional, non-punitive hierarchy of interventions for at-risk and failing students (DuFour et al, Whatever It Takes. Summary at RBTeach.com/Tasks of Leadership/Hierarchy of Interventions)

7. Develop concerted long-term plan to make "Effort Based Ability" show up in teacher behavior, classroom practice, and school policy and procedures.

MAP OF
PEDAGOGICAL KNOWLEDGE

KEY CONCEPTS
- **Areas of Performance**
- **Repertoire**
- **Matching**

Overarching Objectives

Curriculum Design

Curriculum Planning

Planning	Objectives
Assessmen	Learning Experiences

Personal Relationship Building	Class

Motivation

Expectations

Clarity	Principles of Learning	Models of Teaching

Instructional Strategies

Space	Time	Routines

Management

Attention	Momentum	Discipline

FOUNDATION OF ESSENTIAL BELIEFS

Conversations in Schools that Improve Student Achievement

Schools that make the most learning gains for students have leaders who ensure the frequency and quality of professional conversations. *Conversations among adults about teaching and learning permeate the building. That means they happen at all times of day, in formal and informal settings, and all the adults involve themselves.* The conversations:

- are about concrete teaching and learning issues
- use recent information about student performance
- spring from questions that assume responsibility and capacity to improve student learning
- are non-defensive
- enable people to know things about each other as people
- reach out to Professional Knowledge
- lead to action

Listen in as you walk around the building….meetings, teachers' lounge, hallways. If you hear conversations like this, you can be sure the school is improving student results.

Teachers are talking concretely about teaching and learning itself, and the issues, decisions and actions teachers are taking in daily practice with specific students.

"Based on recent information" means teachers bring specific and timely evidence about how students are doing to the table. It could be from yesterday's work as well as quarterly assessments, writing samples, test scores: whatever will illuminate where students are and what they need next.

"Spring from questions" means the conversations are asking questions about the connection between teacher action and student results with an assumption that it is our job to improve student results, and that we are able to do so.

"Non-defensive" means that when students don't learn, teachers face the evidence squarely and accept responsibility for their part. They don't get hung-up in guilt or blame of themselves or of the students. Thus they are always working on how to adjust their actions to improve student results.

"Each other as people" means that staff members come to know one another as individuals who have life histories and interests and commitments.

"Reaching out to Professional Knowledge" means that these conversations do not happen in a vacuum. The teachers are aware that there is a vast reservoir of Professional Knowledge created by peers over the past century; and they need to bring this Professional Knowledge into their planning and their problem solving in order to maximize student success.

"Lead to action" means the conversations go beyond being interesting and satisfying for the participants. They lead to changes in instruction that benefit students. These changes can be seen, heard, and measured in their positive results.

Behaviors/norms of the adult culture in schools that succeed for students and sustain their efficacy over time:

1. Non-defensive self-examination of practice in relation to student learning
   --individually
   --in groups

2. Constant reaching out to the Common Core of Professional Knowledge about Teaching and Learning

3. Public teaching in front of one another

4. Inquiry into students' understanding and their thinking

5. Error analysis and planning for re-teaching

6. Commitment to and joint responsibility for student proficiency

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These norms are observable in all the places above, "Where to Show Up and What to Do." It is our job as leaders to build and strengthen these behaviors/norms by:

Saying It
> Say they are important and why at every turn, through every ceremonial and public occasion we can.

Modeling it
> Act in ways that are congruent with these norms ourselves, especially in public settings.

Organizing for it
> Create structures, times, procedures, routines, practices that invite and enable these behaviors.
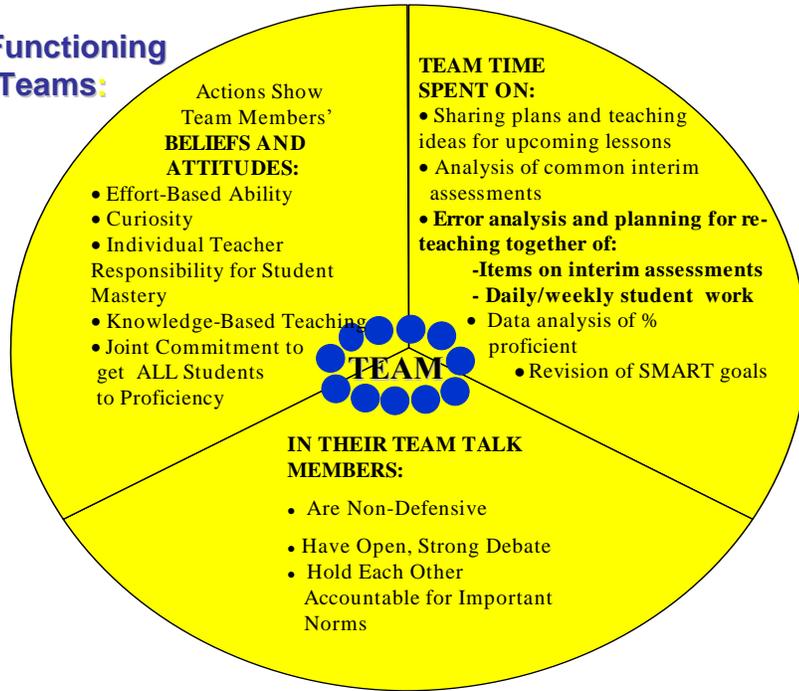
Protecting it
> Insulate and defend those people and those practices that support these behaviors from budget cuts, criticism, and social pressure.

Rewarding it
> Provide resources and recognition to those who take the risk and make the personal investment to act from these norms.

High Functioning PLCs/Teams:

Actions Show Team Members'
BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES:
- Effort-Based Ability
- Curiosity
- Individual Teacher Responsibility for Student Mastery
- Knowledge-Based Teaching
- Joint Commitment to get ALL Students to Proficiency

TEAM TIME SPENT ON:
- Sharing plans and teaching ideas for upcoming lessons
- Analysis of common interim assessments
- **Error analysis and planning for re-teaching together of:**
    -Items on interim assessments
    - Daily/weekly student work
- Data analysis of % proficient
    - Revision of SMART goals

TEAM

IN THEIR TEAM TALK MEMBERS:
- Are Non-Defensive
- Have Open, Strong Debate
- Hold Each Other Accountable for Important Norms

Appendix
Levels of Sophistication of Common Planning Time Activities/PLCs
LEVEL 1

- Ensure consistent, protected CPT meetings

- Record an Instructional Agenda and next steps for each CPT meeting

- Establish CPT norms

- Have student work is on the table most meetings.

- Discuss what students are having difficulty with

- Pass around and sharing activities, strategies, worksheets

LEVEL 2
- Planning lessons together in depth and detail
[Have the actual student materials/books/lab manual/ whatever on the table.]

- Score student work together to establish reliability at what we call a 1, 2, 3, or 4.

LEVEL 3

- Revisit and re-teach key concepts, inventing *new* re-teaching strategies together in detail for concepts or skills students are struggling with.

- Practice actually doing the re-teaching strategies with one another

- Decide in common to actually try the same re-teaching strategies together so we can compare results at the next meeting.

LEVEL 4

- Disaggregate data on an assessment we gave in common and pooling data on which students did well and which didn't

- Regroup students across our sections to re-teach

- Dig into concepts and sub-concepts in what we are teaching to get clearer on what student confusions and necessary prior knowledge might be.

- Actually do the student tasks/problems/assignments ourselves, together to anticipate student difficulties, misconceptions, and figure out prior knowledge they will need.

LEVEL 5

Do versions of "lesson study" -- focused peer observation for one another to collect data in service of a question one of us wants answered (evidence of student learning for a learning problem we've been addressing together…etc.) Debrief the observation and plan next steps.

36 Places where commitment to "Effort-Based Ability" shows up:

TEACHER CHOICE OF *LANGUAGE* IN:
1. Patterns of calling on students
2. Responses to student answers
3. Giving help
4. Dealing with errors
5. Giving tasks and assignments
6. Feedback on individual student performance, including authentic praise
7. Being tenacious

REGULAR *CLASSROOM MECHANISMS* FOR:
8. Feedback and data
9. Re-teaching , re-takes and re-do's
10. Grading
11. Grouping
12. Rewards
13. Extra help
14. Clear and accessible criteria
15. Exemplars

THESE ALL

DEPEND

ON

TEACHING

EXPERTISE

DAILY *INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES* FOR:
16. Communicating objectives
17. Checking for understanding
18. Making Students' Thinking Visible
19. Summarizing

EXPLICITLY TEACHING STUDENTS
20. Effective Effort Behaviors
21. Attribution Theory & Brain Research
22. Tools for Self-Evaluation
23. Techniques for Goal Setting and plans of Action
24. Reading and Study Skills.

SCHOOL-WIDE *POLICIES AND PRACTICES FOR:*
25. Hiring teachers
26. Assignment of teachers
27. Personalizing knowledge of and contact with students
28. Scheduling
29. Grouping
30. Content focused teams that examine student work in relation to their teaching
31. Reward system for academic effort and achievement
32. Push, support and extra help [Hierarchy of Intervention]

PROGRAMS THAT ENABLE STUDENTS TO VALUE SCHOOL AND FORM A PEER CULTURE THAT SUPPORTS ACADEMIC EFFORT

33. **Building identity and pride in belonging to the school**
34. **Creating a vision of a better life attainable through learning the things school teaches**
35. **Forming an image of a successful people who look like them and value education**
36. **Making parent contact to urge the value of academic attainment**

We do not, however, take on any of these 36 places with commitment unless we conceive of our job description is a certain way.

"My job is to give students belief, confidence, tools, and desire."

- Give students the belief that *effort* can grow the ability to do well at academics. ("Smart is something you can get.")

- Help them develop the confidence that they already have enough brain power to do rigorous work at high standards if the learn *effective* effort.

- Teach them the *tools* for exerting effective effort.

- Get them to care enough to *want* to.

The Bottom Line of Effort Based Ability:
The ability to do something competently—anything—mathematics, race car driving, dancing, public speaking—is primarily determined by effective effort and your belief that you can get proficient at it. "Smart is something you can get." The bell curve of ability is wrong. Even what we call "intelligence" is malleable.

Our work as educators, in fact a major part of it for some kids, is:
1) To convince them they can grow their ability at academics
2) show them how
3) and motivate them to want to