

## Successful School Turnarounds Using Transformational Leadership

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### Keys to success in Creating a Foundation for a Successful school

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Every school is unique in its own way and there is not a perfect formula of creating a school that meets high expectations. There are however foundational techniques that can be utilized in an effort in creating a high performing school that exceeds standards set in place by our educational system. The solid foundation begins with proper leadership specifically targeting transformational leadership. A buy in from teachers, parents and students is also a key function in creating variables that target a collaborative network of achievement. The leadership of the school must gain traction from setting and creating small obtainable goals to catapult the school as a whole to a higher level of achievement. A foundational variable is also creating a positive discipline plan that will reinforce positive behavior and enhance the curriculum of all students. The next key is creating a curriculum that is geared towards student's abilities and attributes all while examining school data.

“To prepare Americans for the jobs of the future and help restore middle-class security, we have to out-educate the world and that starts with a strong school system (Obama, 2012)”. There are many schools in the United States that are plagued with disparities. Schools that are in need of a turnaround may exhibit, low test scores, low graduation rates, poverty, discipline issues and the inability to retain quality teachers. These schools fail to meet the standard quality of education for our children in America. Schools that are identified as, in need of a turnaround must have strong leaders in place with leaders that exhibit transformational skills. Transformational leadership is essential in turning a school around so that it can meet and exceed standards that are set by our given educational system. There is no set formula to turn a school around, although there are some basic strategies that a transformational leader can follow.

A transformation calls for a degree of actions that are less drastic than laying all of the teachers and staff off. A transformational school turnaround is a process in where the integrity of the staff is retained; the school leader uses all of their resources to gain traction and momentum with their current staff and teachers. “Transformational leaders motivate followers by raising their consciousness about the importance of organizational goals and by inspiring them to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the organization. In their relationship with their followers, this theory posits, transformational leaders exhibit at least one of these leadership factors: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration (Marks, Printity, 2003).”The primary action in creating a turnaround in a school is to put in place an administration with a transformational mindset. Before a leader takes control of the school they must have in place a vision of what will become of the school.

## **Creating a Vision**

The vision of a school is the first step in creating a turnaround. The vision must come from the school leader and they must propose the vision to the staff and have all school personnel on board. “A school vision is a statement that is for the future of the school and every teacher should be on board with the vision (Saavedra, 2012).” A leader must evaluate the school that they are leading to create the vision. They must examine the deficits within the school to structure the vision to dissolve the deficits. A vision must come from motivation, optimism and high goals. “Vision implies that the leader knows what the core values and core tasks of the organization are, and what the organization should achieve. Vision can inspire teachers (as subordinates) to perform exceptionally well (Kurland, 2010).” The school leader will encourage all of the staff to engage their attitude in the vision. “Constructing a school vision involves the identification and analysis of many short term or micro tasks. It is essential to identify these micro tasks because it is through studying the execution of these tasks that we can begin to analyze the how as distinct from the what of school leadership (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001),” It will be incorporated into the curriculum, culture, attitude and energy of the school. The vision will create a mission statement for the school.

The mission of the school is what the staff and students will accomplish within the year. The mission is structured with the vision in mind and is a stepping stone to get to the ultimate goal. A leader must also come into the school prepared with the mission in hand. The leader must come into the first day of school to make change and to make change the leader must be mission oriented. The leader must be able to influence all of the staff to accomplish the given mission. “Idealized influence (attributed charisma), which refers to leaders’ charismatic actions centered on values, beliefs, and a sense of mission (Kurland, 2010).” Transformational leaders are able to communicate the mission and vision in detail to all of the staff and acts as an

interpreter of the mission and vision. People want to follow a leader that is motivated, has a clear vision and articulates the mission clearly to others. Charisma plays a clear role in gaining people's attention to the mission; people want to follow a leader that they can relate to. Within the mission, come the objectives and specifics of the organization. The school is like an organism that is broken up into smaller system. Each small system needs to have an objective that correlates back to the mission of their school. The transformational leader needs to break up the school into sub groups and be active within each of them.

“Unfortunately, many educators have little or no experience in using data systematically to inform decisions. More than likely, they have developed annual goals, but these goals have not been driven by the careful study of the school's and district's evidence of student learning (Learning Point Association, 2004).

### **Data Collection**

“Data collection is essential to the progress of turning a school around. The leader needs to know where the school needs work, what is working and what type of progress programs are making within the school. The data that must be examined from the AEIS reports, teacher to student growth within the school, discipline records of the students, teacher and staff surveys, and examines the current school culture through the lens of the community.

The data to examine within the AEIS reports is the growth within the school. The leader must take a look at the last three to five years of reporting and measure a progression or digressions in standardized test scores. The leader must examine whether the school has been rezoned or have the teachers not been up to standard within the classroom (Saavedra, 2012). Once the data plans have been established within the school the next step is to implement the plans and collect the data. Collecting the data calls for collaboration of teachers and effort

from the teachers to properly input the data. The next step is for school leaders to analyze the data and make informed decisions on programs that are needed or not needed. The final step in data analysis is to constantly make subtle changes in the way data is collected or in the way data is used. Data can be very instrumental to transformational leaders in turning a school around for the good. Data can be used as the window into student academic performance.

### **Creating a Positive School Culture:**

“Regardless of population size or location, wherever people spend a considerable amount of time together, a culture emerges - a set of customs, beliefs, values, and norms - that can either create a sense of mutual purpose – mission, vision, values, and goals - or perpetrate discord that even precludes the possibility of any unity or shared meaning. Every school has a culture whether it is being attended to or not (Bulach, Lunenburg, & Potter, 2008; Deal & Peterson, 2009).” The leader also has to examine whether there had been a school culture and the details of the existing culture. A plan in launching a particular school culture should be drafted with all stakeholders of the school and with the vision and mission in mind (Lunenburg, 2010). A lot of decisions will have to be made dependent upon the established structure of the school. If the school is in turmoil and needs a transformational leader that is swift in making decisions, then the mission, vision and school culture can be pre designed before the first day of school. The leader will have to hand the teachers the plan and motivate all to be on board. There may be a series of questions to ask one’s self before developing the school culture. Such as: can the school culture be developed during the school year? (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2010; DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, 2007): What is the school trying to become? What is our vision of the school we are trying to create? What attitudes, behaviors, and commitments must we demonstrate for our vision to be realized? What goals should we establish to move closer to the school we desire?

Are we clear on what is to be accomplished and the criteria we will use in assessing our efforts? Are the current policies, programs, procedure, and practices of our school congruent with our stated vision and values? What are our plans to reduce discrepancies? Depending on the type of transformation needed within the school, the leader may have to answer all of these questions on their own and come into the school loaded with the answers. When a school is in turmoil the teachers are searching for a leader that is strong, knowledgeable and can articulate a sound plan. It would be a great idea to hit the ground running when a leader enters a school that needs to be turned around. The school culture will be changed as the school progresses and so will the mission of the school.

Price (2012) examines that, “research finds that attitudes of principals and teachers create an atmosphere for learning, often referred to as school climate that influences school effectiveness. Other research shows that atmospheres of trust, shared vision, and openness create positive school climate conditions. Williams (2002) notes that school leaders need to allow teachers to cultivate a positive school environment by developing professional learning communities, held to high expectations, given resources, planning time, professional development and teacher mentor programs. It is important that the school administration understand who their teachers are, where they come from, what their needs are and how to motivate a staff. Williams (2002) also indicates that caring is essential in school in collaboration with the entire faculty within the school; this mindset is then rapidly transitioned to students within the classroom. Administrators need to foster the ideas of creating a welcomed environment within the school building beginning with their staff, teachers are the first point of contact of students and parents within the building. The leadership determines the culture of the school and the school culture is the rhythm of what parents, students and teachers follow. It is

imperative to have a leader that believes in creating support networks with parents in place. Researchers believe that creating communication from the school to home via academics, giving parenting advice for the home, parental volunteering within the school, teaching parents how to help their children with their homework, including parents in school decision making and creating community partnerships are successful attributes in creating a positive school culture to curtail negative behavior (Sheldon and Epstein 2002). Parents and other stakeholders of the child's education is the key to success of that child. Green (2015) examines in his finding that, "findings illustrate how principals and community leaders support urban school reform along with community development. It is essential for educational leaders, and those who prepare them, to think about how principals and community leaders can implement this work. It is about making valuable connections with the community, especially the parents. When a school has the support of the parents, then the child will be a success and the classroom teacher will be free to revolutionize the student mind. Pena (2000) states, "Hindering communication is the widespread belief among teachers that disadvantaged minority parents do not want to be involved in their children's schooling and the equally widespread belief among low-income African American and Hispanic parents that teachers do not want them to be involved in their children's education." It is necessary to create connections between parents and the school to foster cooperation among the school, family and community, this may be a way to curtail school discipline and improve student behavior (Sheldon and Epstein 2002). According to Jesse, Davis, & Pokorny (2009) nearly all research that consist of creating positive change in a school echoes the importance of having strong leadership that possess qualities such as charisma , promotes collegial support, support amongst the community and all stakeholders involved. School leadership is one of the

fundamental keys in creating a school system that is going to disrupt the school to prison pipeline.

### **Small Goals Means Big Gains:**

The next step in turning a school around is creating sub groups and creating obtainable objectives. This step is essential to the success of the school to turnaround, it needs to happen rapidly and executed with diligence. Creating sub groups and objectives is a process of setting direction, “This category is particularly important for turnaround school leaders at the early crisis stabilization stage, but the context requires enactment of these practices with a sense of urgency, quickly developing clear, short – term priorities (Leithwood, Harris, Hopkins, 2008).” The leader needs to come into the school with the knowledge of the deficiencies within the school and the strengths and weaknesses of the staff. The school leader will develop subpopulations of teachers and have the teams devise a plan of action to delete a given deficit within the school. Each sub group will have an assigned team leader that will report to the principal for a quick snapshot of progress of the group’s objectives. Each objective that is created through the sub groups will be mission oriented to bring the school up to standard. The principal will be highly active in supporting each of the groups and the needs of the objectives.

The next step in success of the school turnaround is the leader being supportive of the staff and the objectives created by the sub groups or what may be termed as clusters. The school leaders are responsible for the overall flow and productivity of each group. They should make appearances in every group and have a snapshot of the overall progress or regression of the team. This is the moment in where the action plan for each group is developed. Once the action plan has been devised, it is then launched. The teachers should be split and grouped strategically by



the administration with teacher preferences in mind. Once all of the teachers and staff are strategically placed in their clusters they can devise many objectives that they would like to see accomplished within the school and their departments. The principal will then take every objective and relate each one of them to the overall mission and culture of the school. Each objective should be treated as a priority for the school leader. When each objective is accomplished they should be communicated to the rest of the staff to show progress of the cluster groups. The administrative team should make sure to give thanks and praise to a job well done and to not have any objective overlooked. This will allow teachers to feel vested within the school and not just feel like a number. This is one of the first steps in turning a school around because when action is taken it boosts morale and creates a momentum of progress (ERS, 2010). The leader then takes the momentum and uses it for the next step of school turnaround. Early wins mean momentum and motivation to gain support of the staff and community. “In nearly all cases leaders identify and focus on a few early wins with big payoffs, and they use that success to gain momentum. These new tactics often break organization norms or rules (Steiner, Ayscue, Hassel, 2008).” The rules and norm to be broken are that of the school’s traditional norms and rules. If things are not working within the school with what is in place then it is up to the leader to go against the grain and make some big change. When change is made and there is a positive impact the leader must hold that accomplishment on a pedestal to gain traction of the school. When people see that there is change and it is working then they will be more likely to accept all of the new policies that are set in place. It will silence critics that oppose the leader’s presence and actions. As the school leader gains support within the school the more support that they can gain through the community. Community support is essential to gaining wins of support for the school’s initiatives. The community can be a support system for student achievement.

## **Engage the Community**

The community can be reached in multiple ways for the success of school turnaround. Let the community know that the school is serious about the student's success by publicly announcing their accomplishments through the media. The leader must establish community socials on school ground to get the community mobilized, from a school fair to a school bar-b-q put together by the parents of the students that attend the school. The school leader should tap into the local community by understanding the diversity and culture of the people that live within the community and celebrating in such way (Davis, Ruhe, Lee, 2006). "Collaboration is about building potent, synergistic, working relationships, not simply establishing positive personal connections (Adelman, Taylor, 2007)". It is important to develop relationships with the community that will be sustained for a long period of time.

The school leader should consider designing what it termed as a community university on the school grounds. "It is important when serving students with extenuating circumstances that a system is in place for assisting families. High-achieving schools for students in poverty frequently provide referral for community-based health services, counseling programs, and other comprehensive and integrated services (Beran, 1995, Lewis, 2000, Jesse, 2009)." It is an initiative to offer people of the community educational skills that will potentially better their job skills. Programs could entail resume writing classes, strategies for the interview, writing courses, math courses and English courses for non-English speakers. These programs will create a direct bond with the community and the school can gain much support from not just the community but outside of the community as well. The leader must market for intellectual volunteers from the local university or community to come in to teach at the school university. The leader should seek out external financial help from grants that are available for community programs and

school programs. “School leaders can help strengthen family educational cultures by doing things that promote trust and communication between families and schools, by helping to provide resources to families, by educating and supporting families in matters connected to parenting and schooling, and by adjusting school practices to accommodate to the educational cultures that families do have (Leithwood, 2003).” These programs are designed to create and maintain a culture amongst the community. It is an outreach that communicates an enrichment of knowledge and a higher level of education. It sets the tone that education is the key to success in the world and that the American dream is a reality.

**Parent Buy In:**

Parents are a key in a child’s up bring and in disrupting the school to prison pipeline. According to Jesse, Davis & Pokorny (2004) school leaders who are invested in creating change in their schools are characterized with a clear focus of achievement, positive school climates, supportive relationships amongst students and most importantly a strong connection and support with parents. Parent connections are fundamental to the success of the student and creating a transformation within the school. We as educators need to recognize the importance of the role of parents and invest in supporting their involvement within our schools. Shatkin & Gershberg (2007) investigates the role of parent involvement within schools and suggest that there is evidence in enhancing mutual trust, has led to student success, direct interventions, leadership development and partnerships within the community. There are many variables in involving parents that will create student success, students need to maintain the idea that their futures are important and that the community as a whole has their best interests. Green (2015) argues that principals who work directly with the community and embrace a compass of creating a bridge between the school and the community are the negotiators; these are the principles that allow

doors to be open for resources to be allocated to teachers and students and create a hub for the community. School administrators are the pivot point in creating lasting relationships with the community and parents. These are truly valuable resources for the school as a whole. Green (2015) suggest that principals should serve as facilitators to the community and parents, he contends that administrators can create a sense of buy in from parents and community stakeholders, through conducting community meetings and by informing community members how they could be assets to the school.

### **Teacher Buy In:**

School leaders need to motivate teachers to step up to the plate who are grade level teachers or teach a given suggestion and ask them to become the behavioral interventionist or to develop a mentor program. Allix states in his research, “Like Burns’s model, the driving force of leadership in these conceptualizations is moral and democratic engagement, powered by articulated vision that creates a sense of shared meanings, values, goals and commitments.”

Destroying the prison to school pipeline is a process in which entails creating a school culture that is connected and interwoven within the given community. There is an importance in preparing teachers to meet the many challenges faced with teaching in an urban school district and according to research many teachers are unprepared to meet the demands of teaching in an urban school setting (Smith & Smith 2008). It is the responsibility of the school leader to facilitate the actions of the school and to break the cycle of the school to prison pipeline.

Leithwood (2003) states, “In public education, the ends are increasingly centered on student learning, including both the development of academic knowledge and skills and the learning of important values and dispositions. It is important for the staff of the school to know the children that they serve; teachers and administrators took the job of educator to be a public servant and

must remember why they are where they are. There is a high importance for teachers not only to understand their roles academically but they must also enhance their social competence of the community that they serve (Smith & Smith 2008). They must also make an attempt to know the community that they engage with on a daily basis, not the community that they live in, but the community that they educate the children of. Gregory, Skiba and Noguera (2009) state, “Low income students with histories of low achievement, who reside in high crime high poverty neighborhoods, may be at greater risk for engaging in behavior resulting in office disciplinary referrals and school suspensions.” It is of high importance for community and staff to be engaged in students’ lives and attempt to create a connection with every student. Williams (2002) notes that high expectations, caring relationships opportunities for student participation are some of the many variables used in closing the achievement gaps and disrupting the prison to school pipeline. Williams (2002) also suggest that teachers and staff need to engage the whole child rather than just academics, but the social, emotional, physical and spiritual aspects of a child. There are so many approaches that we can take in creating a positive school culture; again it takes a village to raise a child. Leaders must communicate to their staff by sending out a staff email or announce it in a staff meeting for volunteers to host a mentor program or behavioral intervention program for children who need it. Teachers need to be culturally aware of their students and not place the blame on the students; they need to learn how to mobilize their community resources (Smith & Smith 2008). Williams (2002) suggest that students need to feel a sense of belonging, investment in the school, they must feel challenged, and have access to cooperative learning. It is essential for teachers and staff to create a school environment that is safe and a haven for learning. The teaching staff should buy into the philosophies that all children can succeed and that it takes a village to raise a child.

Williams (2002) indicates that peer pressure is a positive thing amongst teachers in the building. The peer pressure of getting the job done and holding teachers and students to high expectations cultivates progress within the school building. It is absolutely necessary to hold students to high expectation, teacher, administrators and parents for the success of children. The pressure of creating collaboration amongst the teaching and administrative staff will cultivate a situation of intellectual thought and the enhancement of curriculum. Jesse, Davis & Pokorny (2009) found evidence that students who were in a class with a teacher who had high expectations for students' work and behavior were amongst the most favorite of the students. Teachers that not only buy into the high work expectations for themselves must also buy into holding students to the theory of high expectations.

### **Developing The Staff:**

Staff development is another step that a school leader must focus on to turn the school around (Fleischem, Heppen, 2009). A transformation of the school does not entail a clean slate of new staff and teachers. It is a process where the policies, rules and programs are re formulated. Most of the teachers are retained and should be trained to a professional standard. Selecting the right staff development programs is essential to a key turnaround within the school. There will be money within the school budget for development and the school leader must balance the money wisely and select the best seminars for their teachers. They must also seek additional grants and seminars that may be held by the local universities. Staff development also comes from within the school setting itself. The transformational leader must have all of the staff and teachers on the same level of understanding of the systems developed by administration. The Systems developed should have the mission and vision in mind and be clearly understood and communicated to the teachers. A school leader must take advantage of any opportunity they have

to speak to teachers to bring them up to speed with school progress, data, statistics and what they can do to better themselves as teachers. Each meeting should be a recalibration of teacher motivation which will lead to the development of the teacher.

It is highly important for the turnaround school leader to hire the right staff for the job. During the interview process the interviewee must be able to understand the ultimate vision of the school and communicate how they will be a key in helping that vision and mission. The principal must be highly selective in hiring key personnel that have the ability to take the initiative of understanding the ins and outs of the new school policies.

### **Proper Finances:**

The next step is to, seek additional school funding through grants is necessary to accomplish the school vision. Since the school vision's bar is set at a high standard the school leader needs to ensure that the school is well funded. Additional funding may come from community, state and federal grants. It is the principal's responsibility to motivate the administration, teachers and community leader to band together to write for these grants. There are millions of extra dollars available for grants to be written for and acquired by turnaround school leaders. The author Kozol who traveled the United States interviewing many parents, teachers and community members quoted a woman stating, "It is not my fault that the people in the less fortunate schools don't know how to write a grant letter (Kozol, 1991)." This statement alone should be very powerful to transformational leaders that want to transition a school. The leader needs to also focus effort on obtaining outside finances to sustain the large robust

community and student programs that are needed to turn a school around otherwise the programs alone will burn out the teachers.

Communication is essential, in turning a school around and the right set of tools is needed to accomplish this task (Kutash, Nico, Gorin, Tallant, Rahmatullah, 2010). The school leader must devise a plan to formally and informally communicate with the staff, whether the communication be through online services, an in school data system, cell phones or through on the spot information. The school leader should consider consulting with the I.T department in central office to construct an in school data system that can be used for teachers and administrators. This system will be able to track student's progress using grades, discipline referrals and standardized test scores. Some information will be limited to administration only while other information can be accessed by the teacher. The information will serve as a tracking device and communication to teacher. The teacher can take note of parent notifications, disciplinary actions taken, and essentially record keeping of each of their students. This is a formal way of administration and teachers to communicate with one another of the student's achievements or fallacies. The measurements need to be in as many diversified aspects as possible. Measurement of discipline, grades, standardized testing; social growth (activity involvement) and much more are all contingent on data analysis.

On spot communication of administration to teachers can also be used as a toll. This can maintain that every teacher and administrator is on key with one another. If there is a pressing issue that needs to be addressed without the formality it can be addressed on the spot. This may also create a relieve valve for the teachers that need some direction and clarification by the administrators. It is having an open door policy within the hallways.

### **Empower The Staff:**



The leader must also be able to empower their staff to make decisions around the school. “The specific practices include in this category are concerned with establishing work conditions which, for example , allow teachers to make the most of their motivations, commitments and capacities (Leithwood, 2008).” When the leader empowers their staff and teachers it gives them a sense of entitlement to the school and a piece of authority. The teacher will feel that the objective needs to be reached appropriately and swiftly because things are on their shoulders. The teacher will also likely show a great sense of pride in what their objective is as well and feel vested in the program. The leader is responsible for seeing that everything is on key and that the objective is moving in the right direction. The objective of the teacher must fit the mission and vision of the school. “Transformational leaders may challenge teachers to examine their assumptions about their work and to rethink instructional process: they may establish expectations for quality pedagogy and support teacher’s professional growth (Leithwood, Jantiz, & Steinbach, 1998; Leithwood, Leonard. & Sharatt, 1998).”

If there are teachers who cannot conform to the new policies within the school and cannot get on the same page as the rest of the staff then they need to be relocated. A school leader must make the right staff adjustments whether to fire a teacher, relocate or demote personnel to a position. “The specific practices aim to create productive working conditions for teachers, in this case fostering organizational stability and strengthening the school’s infrastructure. Specific practices are staffing the teaching program, providing teaching support, monitoring school activity and buffering staff against distractions from their work (Dukem, Reynolds, 2004).” A leader wants to move their teachers where they will be challenged and motivated to get the job done.

### **Create A Positive Discipline Plan:**

When a turnaround school leader enters their school for the first time the chances of the school being riddled with discipline problems is great. This should be one of the first plans of attack for the school leader to adjust. The discipline referrals that have been submitted from inside of the school are a determinant of the stability of staff and students. The leader must examine how many referrals were submitted looking back three to five years and what the referrals were for. If the leader examines that there has been a dramatic increase in student misbehavior, then the leader should consider swift disciplinary actions with the students. The leader must change many policies within the school and tighten the safety of the school for the students. “What is the desired outcome of the exclusionary components of school-wide discipline programs? The answer to this question should be to ensure safe, well-run classrooms. It is appropriate to remove students from a classroom or school when their behavior poses a danger to themselves or others or when their behavior severely compromises the integrity of an instructional lesson (Maag, 2009). The school leader should examine the referrals within the office, profiles of students, gang activity, community violence, media reports and the current policies set in place. They should ask themselves if the disciplinary actions been upheld and to what extent. The school leader should consult with the campus officers and assistant principal of discipline about proper actions. After consulting with both entities major adjustments in policies should take place and at the beginning of the school year administration must consult with the staff in creating a school wide discipline plan.

A Positive behavior intervention System has been proven to curve unwanted behavior by the students, but at the cost that it is also an exclusionary system designed to align student behavior. There has been research that has supports a more positive, less exclusionary support system for school discipline. Maag (2012) states, “Apparently, the ‘get tough’ exclusionary

practices are not resulting in teachers believing they are better behavior managers. Yet exclusions continue to be used despite evidence indicating their ineffectiveness and potential deleterious effects on student outcomes.” The zero tolerance initiative of the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century exist in our school system and some obvious flaws have been found that have created what we now coin as the prison to school pipeline. Mukuria (2002) states in his research that in an ideal situation discipline problems are originated and solely a student issue but in reality a discipline issue is a student’s over all environments and it could be very complex in nature. For these reasons and many more we need to create a system of supports for our students as well as a system of consequences. A P.B.I.S system is an effort in creating a system that curtails unwanted behavior and sets forth school wide norms. It is a process in creating a positive school culture for all. Thoonen, Slegers, Oort, Peetsman, & Geijsel (2011) state, “Building school wide capacity to promote professional learning is also considered an important prerequisite for addressing the continuous stream of changes and different restructuring demands, including large-scale reforms and tightened “output” controls, introduced by accountability policies, with which schools in and outside the United States are faced.”

Irby (2014) argues that educators should not abandon punishments all together, they instead need to examine whether the punishment of the child fails to advance the mission of the school and the district. She also noted in her research that students often do not learn from the discipline consequences that they were given by the teacher or the administrator. Fenning & Rose (2007) discuss the fact that the discipline staff within the schools that they have researched rarely discussed with the child the details of their misbehavior. They instead focused on the punitive approach of suspension, past suspensions and where they stand in relation to their overall achievement. Fenning & Rose (2007) also state within their research findings that once a

student is sent to the office for a referral in a low social economic school that it appeared that there were very limited options in policies other than suspensions. Educators must create a structure set in place that creates a culture of positive behavior. School-Wide Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (SWPBIS), is what many school districts are now conforming to. Heather George 2003 notes that there are six steps in creating a SWPBIS system within a school. Step one of the school wide positive behavior intervention system plan or S.W.P.B.I.S plan is to establish school goals and campus improvement. A team is assembled to align a discipline plan that caters to the school's ultimate mission. Dunlap, Goodman, McEvoy, & Paris, 2010 "Strong and active administrative support is essential to successful implementation of School-Wide PBIS. Ideally, there should be a district level commitment of support to implementing PBIS."

The second step is to build faculty involvement George, (2003), "it is essential that the majority or all of the schools acknowledges the action plan and goals that have been implemented by the action committee." All faculty members and administrators need to be familiar with the discipline problems within the campus. The third step is to create a data system to track the behavior of students. According to George 2003, the database system is used as a tracking device to pinpoint the most problematic areas of behavior within the school. Dunlap, et al (2010), suggests that administration creates a thorough referral system with detailed information. The administrator will compile the discipline data into a central database and graph the overall behavior of students within the school. This would give school officials a graph to identify the problematic areas of discipline. Fenning & Rose (2007) find that collecting data is a critical process in creating equitable discipline processes. Fenning & Rose (2007) describe in their research findings that gathering data within an entire school system is similar in creating a

behavioral plan for an individual student in a classroom, data determines whether the policies for the campus are appropriate or need to be altered to pin point specific behaviors. The fourth step is to establish and teach positive behaviors and expectations to students Dunlap, et al., (2010), Step four is one of the most important and robust steps in SWPBIS because it creates a matrix of behavioral expectations for the school as a whole. The matrix is assembled depending on the data collected and dependent on the grade level of the school. For instance Dunlap, et al (2010), identifies three specific rules that work within the elementary school which are, respect, responsibility, and safety. These three rules are incorporated into a matrix of classroom, hallway, playground, cafeteria, arrival, dismissal, and office behavior. Within the matrix, specific rules and expectations are identified for the students. This matrix is posted throughout the school and is incorporated into the school's culture and works in conjunction with the vision. The three expectations that have been identified within the elementary school are also formatted into many visuals and incorporated into the syllabus of every teacher Dunlap, et al., (2010). The fifth step in the plan is to develop positive reinforcement to students for following the rules and expectations. A teacher vocalizing positive reinforcement for students is the first form of reinforcement for students, the next is positive acknowledgement using visuals such as certificates, the next would be coupons and drawings, and the last set of reinforcement would be activity awards Dunlap, et al. This step is the foundation to ensure that students are meeting the expectations set forth for them and creates a sort of scaffolding of positive behavior for students. According to George (2003), the last step is to monitor, evaluate and modify the program. The administration must keep evaluating the referrals and processing the data to ensure that change is occurring and problematic areas are being addressed. The system and mission statements and award systems can swiftly be changed to meet the culture of the student's within the school. Fenning and Rose

(2007) suggest that it is imperative for schools to create a system of positive behavior in an effort to curb unwanted behavior and to create a strong school culture.

An aspect of the P.B.I.S system is to foster an environment of compassion, caring, empathy and success and to do that the staff must motivate students by their interactions. Fairbanks (2008) notes in her research study that every student in a classroom and school must be noticed, must be involved in practices, and no matter what their differences may be. It is imperative to foster an environment of cultural and background understanding of children; it has proven by Fairbanks (2008) research that students are receptive to small class sizes and one to one interventions. Educators must continue to provide behavioral, emotional and academic interventions for students within the school. It is the responsibility of the school community and culture to put into place those strategies to meet the expectations set forth for students. Fowler (2011) examines that failing to create interventions for students is too great to ignore and that educators need to be educated and trained on how to provide interventions. Fowler (2011) also notes that there is no better place in a child's life to foster a child's ability to handle frustrations, anger and overall behavior than the school environment.

### **Engage The Students:**

Another step that needs major attention when the leader has full control of the school is the curriculum (Steiner, Hassel, Tuttle, 2008). With the help of teachers, staff and department heads the school leader needs to devise objectives that will help students achieve within the classroom. This achievement can stem from out of the box thinking and going against the traditional norms of teaching. Giving students a more hands on approach of learning can be beneficial to them. The hands on approach have been proven on some low poverty predominantly Latino schools. These schools have shown dramatic results through

transformational leadership and hands on learning in the classroom. The school leaders encourage teachers to teach outside of the classroom and to be creative (Jesse, Davis, & Pokorny, 2004).

It is imperative to student's success to have them actively engaged in the classroom. Much of student disruptions have shown to come from the classroom and end up in the office with a referral. Fairbrother (2008) discusses that a teacher from an alternative high school has created a room that is warm and inviting for students, has created a positive rapport with students, posted images of Latino and African American leaders on his walls and has displayed a positive interest in his student's success. In return the students within his class have produced quality work and no discipline issues. Fairbrother (2008) describes a school and classroom setting of actively engaged students and teachers having a vested interest in student success.

There are many fundamental aspects in creating a school culture that is conducive to learning. DuFour, DuFour & Eaker (2008) describe the process of creating a professional learning community for the school as a whole, a community that is focused in on the achievement of students. DuFour, DuFour & Eaker (2008) suggest that teachers, administrators and other stakeholders who are invested in the child's education need to come together in a collaborative effort and assume responsibility for the learning of all students. Teachers need to understand the importance of creating a school environment conducive to learning will engage students in learning which will in turn lower the possibility of the school to prison pipeline. DuFour, DuFour & Eaker (2008) describe in their book that allowing students to fail in class or in life does nothing to teach them, educators need to teach students how to be responsible for their own actions. DuFour, DuFour & Eaker (2008) also suggest that when a school is truly invested in their students the school as whole will convey the message that learning is not

optional and the school will create policies that direct students to learn rather than to invite them to learn. The authors also describe that teachers and administrators need to evaluate their children and understand that when students are invited to learn they may not take the invitation to learn because of factors that disrupt their strategies to learn. It is the responsibility of the educator to provide children with strategies to learn and allow them to comprehend the work at hand. The process of creating an environment of student engagement is an effective strategy in lowering suspension rates and achieving high quality classroom management techniques.

### **After School Programs:**

The development of after school programs for students is necessary to keep them off of the streets and out of trouble. These programs can be structured in a way that promotes academics and athletics. The personnel that man these after school organizations will have to come from community volunteers and teacher liaison volunteers to be at the school. “School leaders help develop a sense of community in their school by establishing communal cultures and structures, through strategies such as smaller schools, schools within a school , or personalized learning environments in which children’s individual needs are taken seriously (Leithwood, 2003).” It is important for the school leader to establish programs in which reaches students who want an extraordinary learning environment. A magnet program or something similar to it would be beneficial to the school, to cater to the students who wish to go above and beyond what is expected of them. It is a chance for kids who have potential in the academic world to come out of their shell and explore the many opportunities available to them.

### **A Call for Leadership:**



“There are not enough proven turnaround experts or organizations, and existing organizations are still building capacity and infrastructure (Kutash, Nico, Gorin, Rahmatullah, Tallant, 2010).”

Transformational school leadership is necessary to get a school back on track. Once the school has made significant gains the transition is not over, the school leader needs to keep pushing the teachers, staff and school to perfection. Not every school will be alike in its transition; there is no cookie cutter formula to transition a school. There is however a foundation of best practices that leaders can follow to create a solid school. Some of the important aspects of school turnaround is to use: transformational leadership, focus on vision, mission, data analysis, school discipline, public media, early wins, community involvement, grants for additional funding, staff development, seeking the right staff for the vision, communication, a sound student curriculum and to be a facilitator of the ultimate vision and mission of the school. All of these are just some tools and actions that a school leader can use, there are many more considerations and adjustments that need to be examined when working with a turnaround school. In Order for a school leader to accomplish these tasks they need to come in strong, confident, articulate and have a drive to accomplish all of the tasks. When the school leader has obtained the attention of all the focus of collaboration comes in and things will become much more fluid. “If we want America to lead in the 21st century, nothing is more important than giving everyone the best education possible — from the day they start preschool to the day they start their career (Obama, 2012).”

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