Going Far by Going Together

Following What Matters Most Improvement Pathways

MENA TEACHER SUMMIT

Dubai, United Arab Emirates

October 7, 2016

McREL INTERNATIONAL

What McREL does & what this session is about

We turn information

… into inspiration & ideas

… & help people turn ideas into action

… so they & their students can flourish

Today's objectives

Provide you with insights about the pathways schools and systems follow on their journey to success.

Help you focus your school on the right *next steps* for *your* journey.

Inspire you to take a first step to help your students *and teachers / colleagues* flourish as lifelong learners.

Personal Reflection

Consider a talent you've developed. How did you get there?

What routines did you master?

How did you develop expertise? Who helped you? How?

Did you develop your own unique style? When / how did that occur?

Finding focus

If you had only one activity in your improvement plan, how likely would you be to accomplish it?

□ 10%	□ 20%	□ 30%	□ 40%	□ 50%	□ 60%	□ 70%	□ 80%	□ 90%	□ 100%

How about if you had 2-3? How likely would you be to accomplish all three?

□ 10%	□ 20%	□ 30%	□ 40%	□ 50%	□ 60%	□ 70%	□ 80%	□ 90%	□ 100%

How about 5-10? Where would you put your chance of doing all 10 really well?

□ 10%	□ 20%	□ 30%	□ 40%	□ 50%	□ 60%	□ 70%	□ 80%	□ 90%	□ 100%

How many activities are in your school improvement plan?

□ Plan? What plan?	□ 2-3	□ 3-5	□ 5-10	□ 11-20	□ 21-30	□ 31-40	□ Stopped counting after 40

How likely are you to do all of those activities extremely well?

□ 10%	□ 20%	□ 30%	□ 40%	□ 50%	□ 60%	□ 70%	□ 80%	□ 90%	□ 100%

Are you doing too little or too much? (Or just the right amount?).

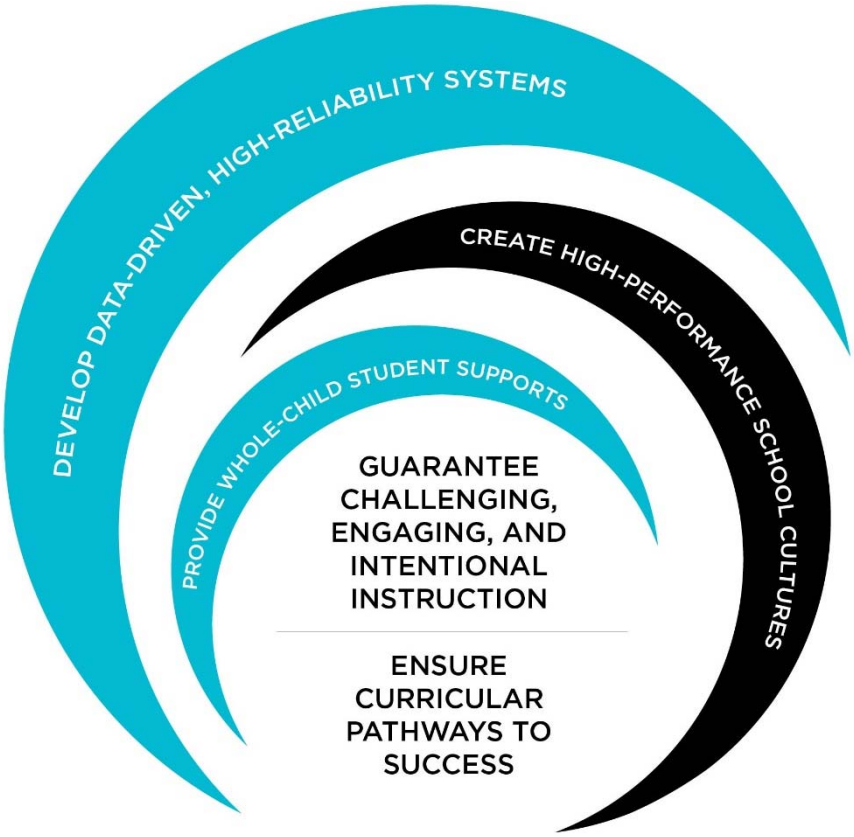
Reflecting on your school improvement plan

What basic routines are you trying to master in your improvement plan?

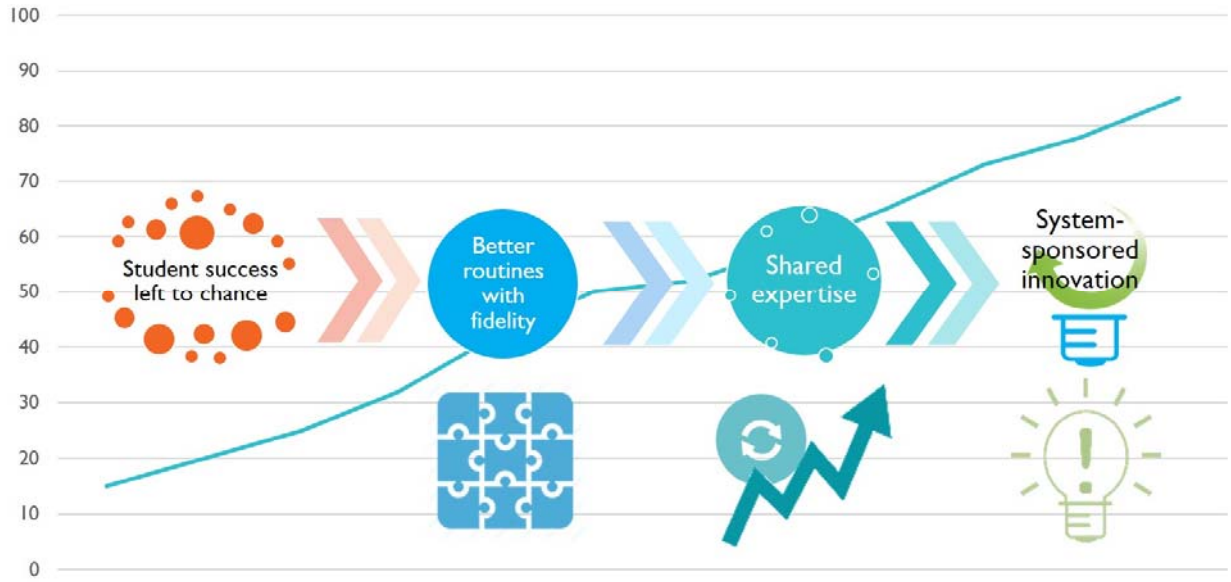
In what ways, if any, are you trying to develop expertise?

In what ways, if any, are you doing something innovative or experimental?

The What Matters Most® Framework



Success is a Journey



Where is your school on its journey to success?

Why do performance plateaus occur?

Have you experienced "getting stuck" as an organization? In your personal life? What did you do?

Focus on teaching: What makes a teacher great?

- What teacher had the most impact in your life?

- What qualities would you use to describe them?

Focusing on guaranteeing challenging, engaging & intentional instruction

Be Demanding

Teachers use standards to guide every learning opportunity.
Teachers ensure students have personal learning goals & objectives for each lesson.
Teachers make performance expectations clear.
Teachers measure understanding against high expectations.

☐ The touchstones in this imperative are new to us or not very prevalent.	☐ Most teachers use these touchstones but often in a rote or simplistic way.	☐ Our teachers are focused on these touchstones & actively becoming more precise with them.	☐ These touchstones are a strength for us & an area where teachers are innovative in their practice.

Be Supportive

Teachers engage student interest with every lesson.
Teachers interact meaningfully with every student.
Teachers use feedback to encourage effort.
Teachers create an oasis of safety and respect in their classrooms.

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Be Intentional

Teachers make the most of every minute.
Teachers help students develop deep knowledge.
Teachers coach students to mastery.
Teachers help students extend and apply their learning.

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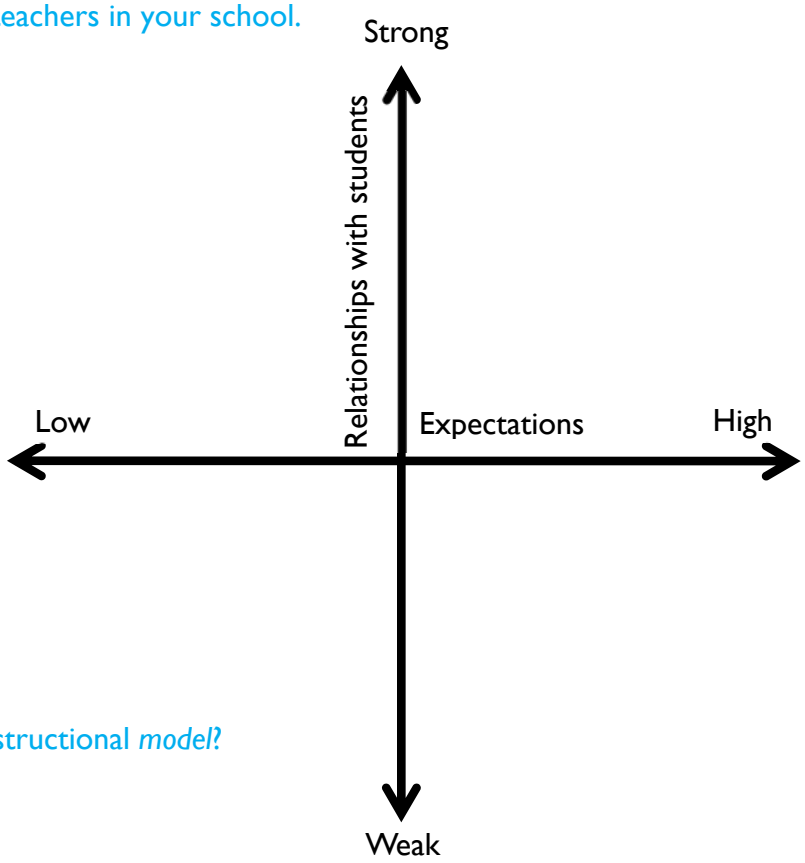
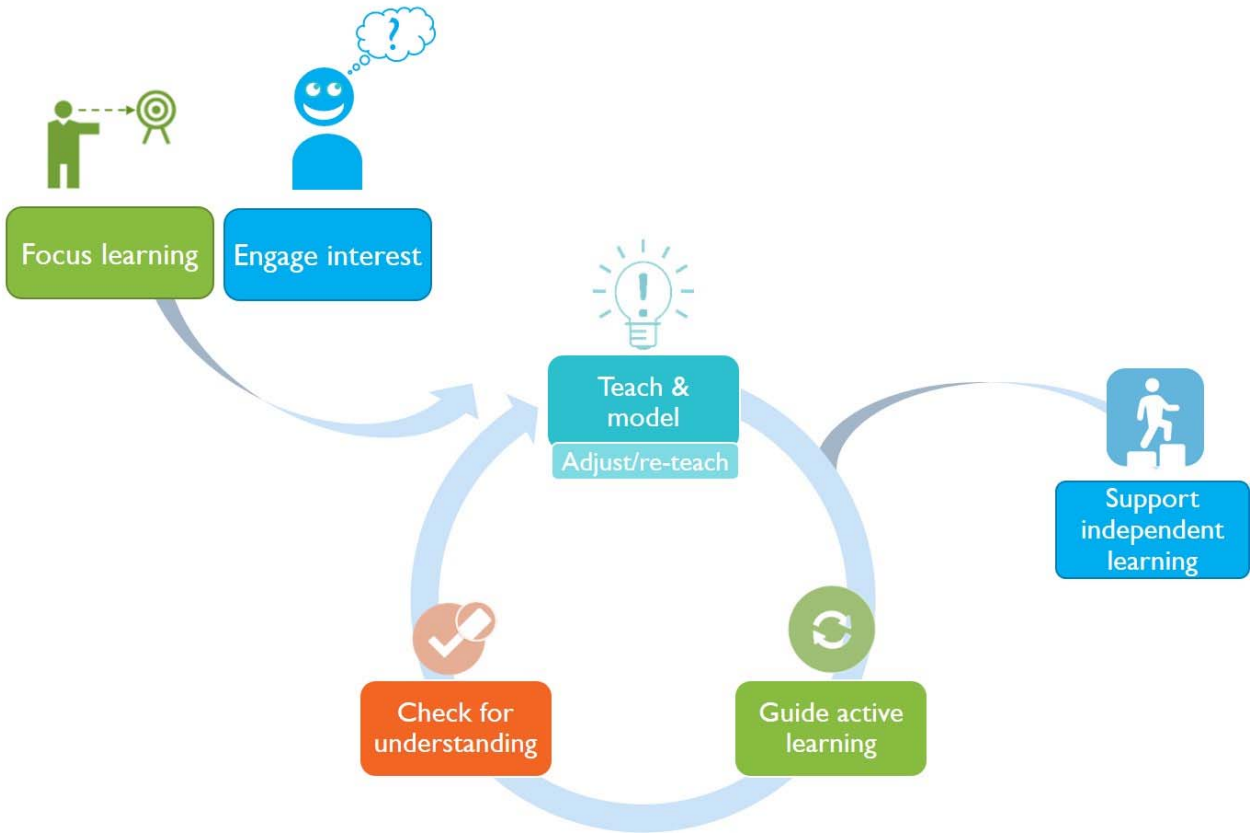
Draw Xs to show the distribution of teachers in your school.



Do teachers intentionally follow an instructional *model*? Here's an example.



Challenging, Engaging, & Intentional Instruction

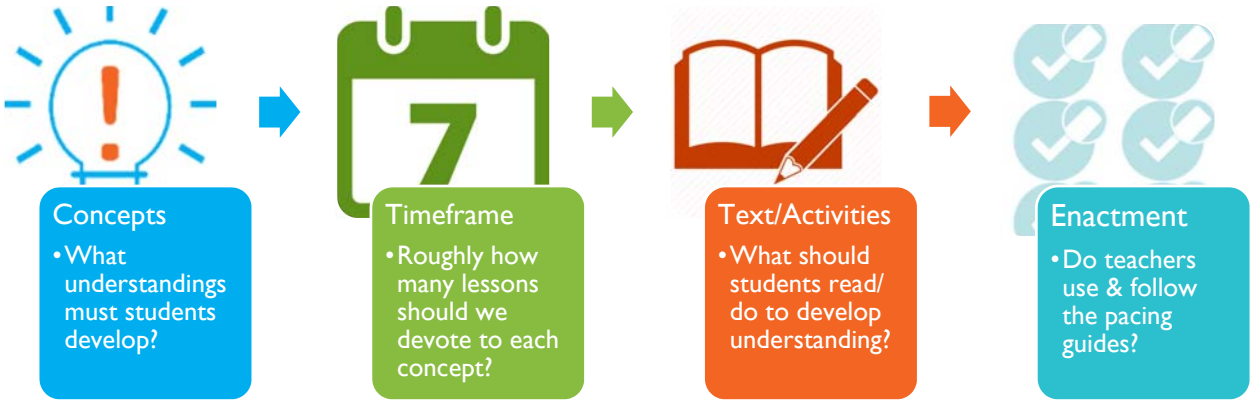
Build a Foundation	Develop Expertise	Unleash Innovation
☐ Create/adopt a model for instruction ☐ Create/adopt a common lesson planning template ☐ Create/adopt a framework for good teaching ☐ Focus on calibration ☐ Support struggling teachers	☐ Develop rubrics that support teacher self-reflection & improvement *(precision without prescription)* ☐ Use peer coaching to develop teacher expertise ☐ Create mentorship roles for effective teachers	☐ Use action research to develop teaching approaches that engage learners & foster curiosity ☐ Accelerate instruction with technology

Possible next step(s):

Why focus on guaranteeing challenging, engaging and intentional instruction? At the heart of most successful school improvement efforts is an explicit focus on curriculum and instruction—guaranteeing challenging, engaging, and intentional instruction and providing all students with curricular pathways to success. It is difficult to imagine improvement efforts that do not, in some way, address teaching and learning being successful.

Using this Tool. Beginning with the "Build a foundation" column, check the boxes next to the items that you believe your teachers and or school consistently operationalize. As each item on this list can be a substantial undertaking, be honest and consider the depth and quality at which your school exemplifies each of the items on this performance improvement trajectory rubric. Moving from left to right, unchecked boxes likely point toward opportunities for improvement.

Focusing on curricular pathways to success



How much shared understanding do teachers in your school have about what students need to learn?	*How much shared understanding is there about how much time to devote to particular concepts?*	*How much shared understanding exists about texts/activities best suited to develop understanding?*	*How much do teachers in your school use or follow curriculum or pacing guides in their classrooms?*
☐ A lot ☐ Some ☐ Very little ☐ Teachers decide	☐ A lot ☐ Some ☐ Very little ☐ Teachers decide	☐ A lot ☐ Some ☐ Very little ☐ Teachers decide	☐ A lot ☐ Some ☐ Very little ☐ Teachers decide

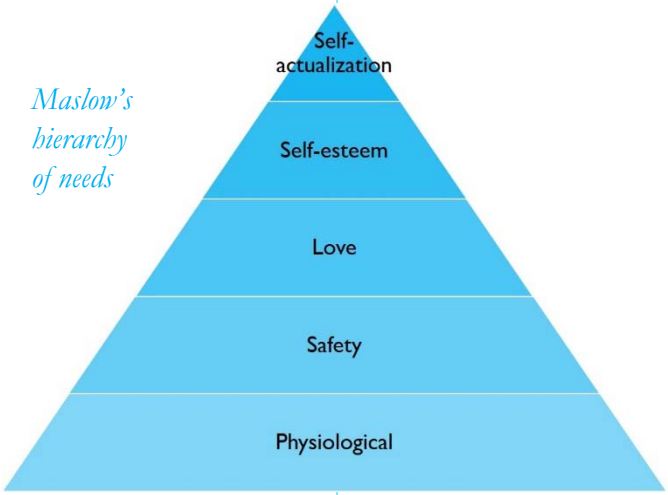
Curricular Pathways to Success

Build a Foundation	Develop Expertise	Unleash Innovation
☐ Curriculum is mapped pre-K-12 in all core subjects ☐ Curriculum guides identify essential content, timeframes, & activities ☐ Teachers follow curriculum guides for daily lesson planning	☐ Curriculum is aligned with assessments / expectations ☐ Curriculum guides are regularly reviewed & revised to improve student learning ☐ Model lessons are created & shared to support teacher development	☐ Curriculum is embedded with student choice & self-paced learning ☐ Students can pursue interests through personalized / project-based learning

Possible next step(s):

Why focus on curricular pathways to success? Research shows a powerful driver of school excellence is having a rigorous curriculum consistently used in all classrooms. Not all students are alike, though, so we need to offer students curricula that engage their own unique interest. Moreover, one of the most powerful interventions we can provide students is the opportunity to work at their own, accelerated pace. Thus, excellent schools offer not a one-sized fits all curriculum, but rather, curricular pathways to success.

Providing whole-child student supports

What do schools look like that fall into this category?	*What might you see if you observed your school through the eyes of a student?*	*What key early warning indicators do you have / need in your school?*	*Describe "fate control" in your own words.*
Maslow's hierarchy of needs 		*How is your school already employing an "ounce of prevention" approach?* *What additional supports might you provide students?*	*How would you describe your students' level of fate control?*

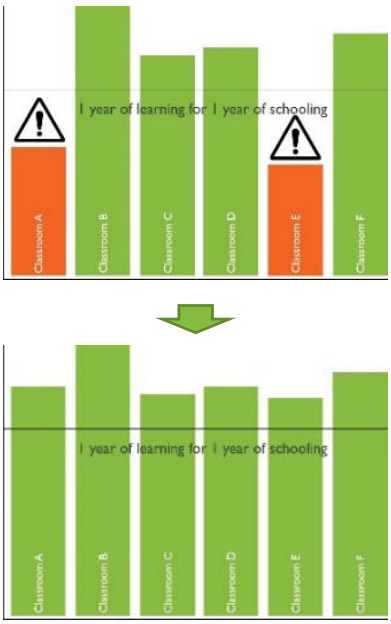
Whole-Child Student Supports		
Build a Foundation	Develop Expertise	Unleash Innovation
☐ Students basic needs are met ☐ Students feel safe & respected at school ☐ Struggling students are identified and provided with real-time supports to catch them before they fall	☐ Teachers collaborate to better intervene with and support struggling students ☐ Parents are meaningfully engaged as partners in learning ☐ Students are engaged in creating a positive school culture	☐ Outside partners are engaged in meaningful partnerships to address student learning needs ☐ Educators develop & test strategies for developing positive student mindsets, intrinsic motivation, persistence, & fate control
Possible next step(s):		

Why focus on whole-child student supports? Many students face barriers that can stifle the emergence of their natural talents. The good news is that schools can help to remove these barriers by providing real-time supports for learning that catch students before they fall, including early interventions for struggling students. A growing body of research is also pointing to the power of so-called non-cognitive interventions, including helping students develop a growth mindset, a stronger sense of fate control, and greater passion and persistence for learning.

Creating high-performance school cultures

Focusing on instruction

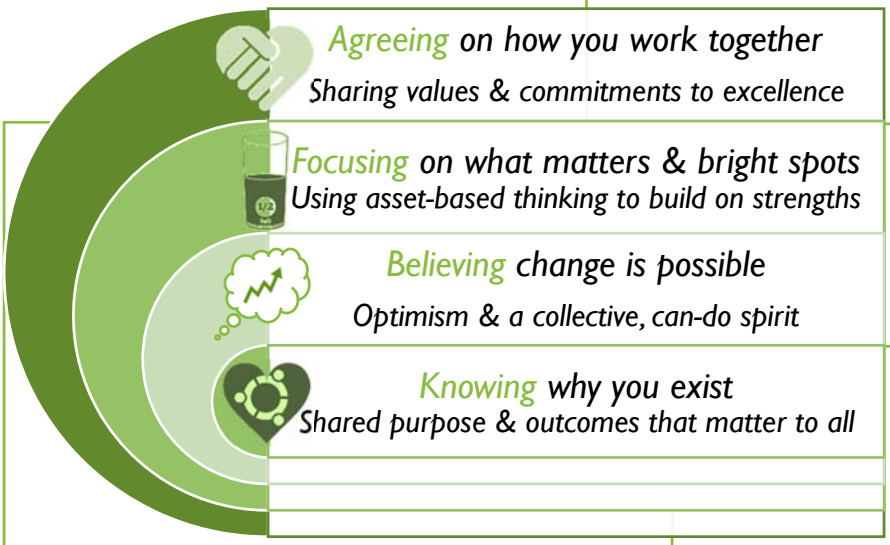
What's job #1 for school principals?



What strategies can we employ to ensure high-quality instruction in every classroom?

Creating a high-performance school culture

What might be some "accidental" values for us?



What weakness might we reframe as a strength?

Why do we exist as a school?

Deficit thinking	Asset-based thinking
Our students are ELLs	Our students are bilingual
Our parents are immigrants	Our parents want a better life
Our teachers are young & ineffective	
Our teachers are old & set in their ways	
We have a lot of behavior issues	

High-Performing School Cultures		
Build a Foundation	Develop Expertise	Unleash Innovation
☐ Clear expectations for instruction are articulated ☐ Leaders regularly observe classrooms & offer feedback on instruction ☐ The school has a strong press for achievement ☐ Clear expectations for behavior are enforced ☐ School values are clear	☐ Staff meetings are collegial and focus on using data to guide improvement ☐ Staff support & contribute to improvement plans ☐ Teachers regularly observe each other's classrooms to find bright spots and offer feedback on instruction	☐ School staff engage in rapid-cycle innovation / action research to develop & study new approaches ☐ Teachers freely share ideas and commit to continuous upgrades to the school's standard operating procedures
Possible next step(s):		

Why focus on school culture? A key difference between high- and low-performing schools is the consistency of teaching quality, which means a school leaders' job #1 is ensuring high-quality instruction in every classroom. McREL research has also shown that low-performing schools often do many of the "right" things, including involving parents and providing professional development. What's often missing, though, are elements that add up to a high-performing school culture, one with a clear sense of mission, purpose, clear expectations for teaching, learning and behavior, and a shared commitment to continuous improvement.

How do organizations become highly reliable, getting it right (nearly) every time?

They reduce chaos & respond to unpredictable circumstances	*… by adopting standard operating procedures …*	*… and developing expertise for when SOPs don't work …*	*… and encouraging systemic rapid-cycle innovations*
What SOPs do you have in your school? *Which new ones might you need?*	*What norms have you created for working together to solve problems?*	*How comfortable are people in your school with using data for self-reflection?*	*What innovation would you like to see developed in your school?*

Data as a *window*	
What it says about someone else	Wow, the kids really blew that!
What others should do	Call in the reading specialist!
How do we fix the data?	How many kids are on the bubble?
How do we cover up our mistakes?	Who can we exempt from testing?

Data as a *mirror*	
What it says about me	Boy, I didn't teach that well.
What I should do	I'll have to change my approach.
How do we fix the real problem?	We're not teaching XYZ skills.
How do we learn from our mistakes?	Let's observe each other's classrooms to get better.

What Matters Most Improvement Pathways

Curricular pathways to success			
❑ Misaligned or poorly implemented curricula	❑ Curriculum enacted but not engaging	❑ Curriculum adapted, yet not personalized	❑ Personal learning pathways being created
Guarantee Challenging, Engaging & Intentional Instruction			
❑ Weak or inconsistent teaching quality	❑ Teaching consistent, but still mostly rudimentary	❑ Teaching is individualized, but limited in innovation	❑ Teachers collaborate to design engaging learning
Whole-Child Student Supports			
❑ Chaotic environment w/o student support	❑ Safe climate & student supports w/o expertise	❑ Students are supported but not always inspired	❑ Students are persistent & passionate learners
High-Performance School Cultures			
❑ Dysfunction & mistrust in school culture	❑ Directive coaching with few shared decisions	❑ Peer coaching supports precision w/o prescription	❑ Teachers anticipate & solve problems together
Data-driven, High-reliability Systems			
❑ No shared goals, data use or collaboration	❑ Regular, but not reflective, use of data	❑ Data drives teaching, but innovations are isolated	❑ Innovations are shared, studied & scaled up

Reflections

What 3 new insights have you gained today?

1.

2.

3.

What 2 things are you most energized to do when you go back to your school?

1.

2.

What 1 question still remains for you?

1.