

An Education Vision

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No Child Left Behind (NCLB) got it half right. Its focus has been almost entirely on compliance: periodic assessment, and efforts after the fact to correct the results of errors in the system (through remediation of students and schools). Even if there were no flaws in execution of NCLB (far from the case now), this strategy only adds cost to the system, depresses efficiency, and exacts an unacceptable human toll.

The focus *should* be on continuous improvement of educational processes in small, regular increments, through means such as daily use of granular information (as opposed to data) to guide and manage instruction. The result is improved effectiveness, greater efficiency and thus lower cost.

The challenge is to help the educational system make the transition from *compliance* to *continuous improvement*. To do so, we need to change the way teaching and school administration is done. Of course we need highly qualified teachers, as NCLB says, and we need principals who are strong instructional leaders.

But in the present framework, such people are the exception, and conventional professional development is prohibitively expensive in the quantities needed. We need to redesign the basic work of teaching and school leadership so it can be done well by the educators we actually have, not the ones we wish we had.

Achieving these goals for change requires new solutions that integrate technologies, instructional and assessment resources, and professional services to create a new kind of work environment for administrators, teachers — and students.

We need to develop solutions that educators will readily embrace because they reduce work and save time, while improving effectiveness. Our guiding principle should be that educators are the most valuable and scarcest resource in the system, and we need to treat them that way. We need to scaffold and support educators just as much as we need to scaffold and support the learners.

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We need to develop tools, services and techniques that maximize educators' and students' time for high-value activities, while offloading or eliminating lower-value activities (often by using technology). Ultimately, the benefits will be not only improved effectiveness, but better delivery of educational services to a wider range of students, and greater satisfaction for professionals – all at reduced cost per student.

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