Quit Tinkering with Buzzwords and Riding on Bandwagons

You’ll never get to the moon by just repainting your Model-T.

Paul Tweed and Liz Seubert, Wildlands School
You say you want this...
so then why are you doing that?

Joe Bower
www.joebower.org
Abigail is given plenty of worksheets to complete in class as well as a substantial amount of homework. She studies to get good grades, and her school is proud of its high standardized test scores. Outstanding students are publicly recognized by the use of honor rolls, awards assemblies, and bumper stickers. Abigail's teacher, a charismatic lecturer, is clearly in control of the class: students raise their hands and wait patiently to be recognized. The teacher prepares detailed lesson plans well ahead of time, uses the latest textbooks, and gives regular quizzes to make sure kids stay on track.

- Alfie Kohn from The Schools Our Children Deserve
What’s wrong with this picture?
There is a time to admire the grace and persuasive power of an influential idea, and there is a
time to fear its hold over us. The time to worry is when the idea is so widely shared that we no
longer even notice it, when it is so deeply rooted that it feels to us like plain common sense. At
the point when objections are not answered anymore because they are no longer even raised,
we are not in control: we do not have the idea; it has us.

- Alfie Kohn from Punished by Rewards
We tend to parent the way we were parented, and teach the way we were taught.
I DON'T WANT TO GO TO SCHOOL! I HATE SCHOOL! I'D RATHER DO ANYTHING THAN GO TO SCHOOL!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL</th>
<th>PRISON</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>authoritarian structure</td>
<td>authoritarian structure</td>
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<tr>
<td>dress code</td>
<td>dress code</td>
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<tr>
<td>emphasis on silence and order</td>
<td>emphasis on silence and order</td>
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<tr>
<td>negative reinforcement</td>
<td>negative reinforcement</td>
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<tr>
<td>walk in lines</td>
<td>walk in lines</td>
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<tr>
<td>loss of individual autonomy</td>
<td>loss of individual autonomy</td>
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<tr>
<td>abridged freedoms</td>
<td>abridged freedoms</td>
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<tr>
<td>no input in decision making</td>
<td>no input in decision making</td>
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<tr>
<td>set times enforced for walking, eating etc.</td>
<td>set times enforced for walking, eating etc.</td>
</tr>
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Can we admit:

• school can be improved

• to improve school, we need to change school
Rethink School
Can we agree:

• we want children to become lifelong learners
We need school to look a little less like school
What if kids who hated school became teachers?
The more you use power to try and control people, the less real influence you’ll have on their lives.

-Thomas Gordon
Key idea… From Compliance to Community!
The grading period ends tomorrow.

**No, you cannot do extra credit to bring up your grade.**

If **your** grade is so low that **you** need help, it’s most likely because **you** have chosen to do little to no work this grading period in which case, history tells me that even if I did give **you** an assignment for ‘replacement credit,’ **you** probably wouldn’t do it anyway.

**Do us both a favor...**

Remember how disappointed and upset **you** feel right now. Take a moment and really let it sink in. Every time **you** fail to turn in an assignment in the new grading period, think of how **you** feel right now and know that, if **you** continue to make the decisions that have led **you** to this moment, **you** will be facing down this sign again in nine weeks.

**What can you do to bring your grade up?**

**Maybe you should start with your work...when it’s assigned.**
What has made you feel so bad in your life that you feel someone has to share your pain?

-Sean Grainger
Students should experience success and failure not as reward and punishment but as information.

-Jerome Bruner
Grades cause an emotional reaction - either positive or negative.

Feedback causes you to think, which is reflective learning.

-Dylan Wiliam
Reducing children to a test score is the worst form of identity theft we could commit in schools.

-Steven Covey
Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing it is stupid.

-Albert Einstein
We must constantly remind ourselves that the ultimate purpose of evaluation is to enable students to evaluate themselves.

-Art Costa
Assessment is not a spreadsheet -- it’s a conversation
The greatest trick standardized testing ever pulled was to convince the world it resembles anything we do in the real world.

Standardized testing is what constitutes an amazingly contrived and unrealistic form of assessment.

Standardized testing has almost nothing to do with education and almost everything to do with politics and profiteering.

Standardized testing tells us about learning as much as reality TV tells us about reality.

Standardized testing is as much for the kids as the Running of the Bulls is for the Bulls.
There is a big difference between measuring what we value and valuing what we measure.
There is no substitute for what a teacher sees and hears everyday while working with students while they are still learning.
Learning should be done in a context and for a purpose.
STUDENTS

(A word with a million meanings….depends how we define it!)
If we want to make things better for our children, we need to start questioning what we consider to be the obvious.
Be ready to answer questions:

Who wants to be on the PBIS committee? Who’s next for CESA inservice? When are you turning in your articulation documents? Do you have your lesson plans ready? Did you cover that yet? Is that on the test? Can you cover lunch duty today? Did you call back that parent? What time is that IEP meeting? What standards are you covering today? How many Tier II PBIS referrals did you have last month? Have you been trained on the reading series? Can you make the RTI meeting? Do you have your bin of dog treats for the kids?
CHANGE THE QUESTIONS
What would it look like if...

More active learning?

Pushing limits?

Being mobile?

Access to different supplies and equipment?

Collaborative multi-age learning?

Variety of teamwork opportunities?
What is One IMPORTANT Thing YOU Would CHANGE?
Innovation + Autonomy = Results
7 Essentials
Essential #1

Relationships

Treat students as people.
Essential Questions: Relationships

- Envision the best learning environment you can for your school. How do people interact with each other?
  - Students and teachers?
  - Students and students?
  - Teachers and teachers?

- What do you think are the most important factors needed to develop quality relationships in your school?
Essential #2

Values

We all act like decent human beings.
Essential Questions: **Values**

- What Values would you like to guide your school culture?
- How do you want your students to perceive or feel about your school?
- When thinking about the optimum school atmosphere or culture, what would you like to be at the center, the core?
Essential #3

Opportunity

Put students first and allow them the opportunity to make decisions regarding their education.
Essential Questions: **Opportunity**

- What is one thing you would like to do if you could expand opportunities for your students/colleagues?
- What are the most important opportunities schools should offer students?
Essential #4

Adventure

Adventure = Learning by doing, being involved, and taking initiative.
Essential Questions: **Adventure**

- Thinking back on your experiences in school as a student and as a teacher, when we say *adventure*, what comes to mind?
- What needs to change in the basic structure of your school to include more adventure?
- **NO LIMITS**
- Ask **WHY NOT?**
Increased freedom means increased responsibility.
Essential Questions: **Challenge**

- If you could create new or different challenges in your school that would benefit students, what would they be?

- How much autonomy, independence, and control would you like your students to have in their learning environment?
Essential #6

Confidence

Help students develop a learning path they OWN.
Essential Questions: Confidence

● What is something that you as a person or teacher have experienced that has built your confidence?
● What kinds of experiences do you think build student confidence?
● Confidence through ownership and success? Or through pointing out areas of weakness?
Essential #7

Place

School is not just a building. It is a place students have deep connections and want to be.
Essential Questions: **Place**

- What does your ideal school/classroom look like, feel like, smell like, look like, sound like...?
- How would you like students to feel when they walk into your school?
- What could you do to make your school a place where students “want to be” instead of “have to be”?
- Is it their school, their culture, their home, or just a building they go to?
Has anyone ever asked you: What do you really want out of education for your students? For YOU?
Is your current bucket full?

What can you dump?
Design your own bucket?...Fill it....with new variety

21st century skills, student independence, lifelong learning, love of learning, student responsibility, self-directed behaviors, autonomy, collaborative learning, collaboration time, team building, leadership, teacher powered, internal motivation, a sense of place.
Have conversations about the school you really want.

For your students, staff, and community.
Innovation + Autonomy = Results

Autonomy = Trust + Accountability + Responsibility

Innovation = Stepping outside common assumptions

Results = Student success + Parent Satisfaction + Community Support
CHANGE THE QUESTIONS
What’s YOUR Improbable School?
Available Today:

An Improbable School
Transforming How Teachers Teach & Students Learn

Paul Tweed
Liz Seubert

Or on Amazon & Kindle