What tethers us to ineffectiveness and low morale? What is no longer supportable in education practices?
“What’s that foul odor coming from the middle school?”

Never sacrifice sound pedagogy because someone above you isn’t there yet.

- Denying student access to personal technology
- Conveyor Belt of Schooling by age, unwavering adherence to pacing guides and “fidelity” to a scripted program
- Denying students opportunities to re-learn and re-assess
- Relying primarily on “telling” as our way to information across to students
- Avoiding candid conversations about racism, cultural bias, and LGBTQ issues
- Teachers as the sole arbiters of all there is to know
Succumbing to Intellectual Bias

Making Middle Schools junior versions of high school

Honor Roll

Assuming that just because students are in the secondary levels that they know how to read

Removing students from fine/performing arts and p.e. in order to spend more time on provincial exam preparation

Antiquated, ineffective homework practices

Classrooms without periodic movement

Disrespectful Tasks: Asking advanced students to “spin their wheels” while classmates catch up

Punishment, instead of restorative justice

Reducing everything to a number

Not being creative because it makes others look bad

Staying quiet when education pundits/bullies distort the truth

Thinking that because you express a strong opinion about an education issue indicates you’ve taken action that means something.

Lack of focus on teacher wellness

Using grades to motivate students and teach them self-discipline
“Courage is not the absence of fear. It’s the judgment that something else is more important than that fear.”
-- Ambrose Redmoon

So, what are courageous acts in our schools?
Create moral imperative.

Is this the moral thing we do?
What goes unachieved in students because we chose to be politically safe?

**Working Premise:**

Examined pedagogy elevates; students thrive.

Unexamined pedagogy harms; students whither.

Do we have a culture of candor and revising one's thinking in light of new evidence or perspective?
Here’s a scary thing:

Critique each other’s lessons and teaching....

In some schools, there is a pervading, anti-intellectual bias.
In order for someone to accept feedback or take a risk with a new idea, he must admit first that what he was doing was less effective than his ego thought it was.

“We can’t be creative unless we’re willing to be confused.”
- Writer and educator, Margaret Wheatley
We are hired for how we are similar to a company, but we advance based on how we are different.
Highly recommended new book, ‘worthy of a book study – One of the most impactful books on teaching I’ve read in years.

“It's not what you don't know that gets you into trouble, it's what you know for sure that ain’t so.”

- Mark Twain
Specious statements (biases/assumptions) that are hard to overcome...

• Rubrics are the best way to assess and report student learning.
• “Show me the research that this works!”
• Grades and mandated standardized tests improve student learning.
• “We have more control when students sit quietly in their desks for the whole period.”
• Some sub-groups are more worthy of rights, opportunities, and privileges.
• Technology integration will improve student achievement.
• Anyone of a non-dominant culture is suspicious.

Engaged…

Compliant…
There is no such thing as laziness.

Consider how personal technology is changing the way our students do things.

We’ve entered a 24-7 work cycle. Official homework as we know it will soon fade.
“We went to school. We were not taught how to think; we were taught to reproduce what past thinkers thought….Instead of being taught to look for possibilities, we were taught to exclude them. It’s as if we entered school as a question mark and graduated as a period.”

-- Michael Michalko, *Creative Thinkering*, 2011, p. 3

Our future depends on this one here.
Embrace the fact that, “[l]earning is fundamentally an act of creation, not consumption of information.”

-- Sharon L. Bowman, Professional Trainer

**Active Creators, NOT Passive Consumers!**
 Whoever does the editing, does the learning.

Teach Debate!  
https://speechanddebate.org/  
National Speech and Debate Association
“I used to think..., but now I think...”

‘Bold Actions that are Possible When We are Brave Together:

• Remove Honor Roll. It has little to do with students’ academic achievement and personal maturation.
• End averaging of grades. End the use of the 100-point scale.
• Build and use full ropes initiatives courses on school property.
• Put vocational training and maker spaces back into middle schools.
• Be open to students skipping grade levels.
• Get trained in gifted education so we can meet advanced students’ needs in regular education classrooms, if necessary.
• Articulate pedagogy, and invite its critique.
• Turn middle schools into true middle schools, not junior versions of high school, a.k.a. junior high.
• Invite students to use personal technologies in the classroom and teach them to use them ethically.
• Walk side by side with a student who makes a mistake — moral or immoral -- rather than label him and assume the label builds moral fiber.
• Actively seek hidden biases in our practices.
• Make it an annual event to question, and even unlearn, something with which we’ve grown too comfortable without much evidence.
• Facilitate professional development in the manner in which we want teachers to do it for students.

• Teach in the ways students best learn, regardless of whether or not it’s the way we best learn.
• In a world in which everything can be looked up, emphasize the power of memorization.
• Speak up about schools and good teaching at community events; confront education bullies and pundits who spread myths and misconceptions about middle schools.
• Negotiate with subject-like colleagues what is important and less important in the curriculum.
• Give up being the oracle and arbiter of all knowledge. Perceive lessons as launching pads for students own pursuits, not collections to be stacked and retrieved later.
• Adjust the school’s master schedule to support best practices; don’t sacrifice best practices to support the master schedule.
• Participate in the national/international conversations of your field.
• Conduct serious, extended, uncomfortable, candid conversations about racism, classism, cultural bias, democracy, and LGBTQA concerns with colleagues.
• In an English or Language Arts class, spend the majority of time actually reading, writing, and critiquing. *Seriously, tally the minutes on each.*
• Become something more than a “clicktivist when it comes to education.

• Accept the fact that schooling is not limited to learning job skills so they can contribute to our economy. Ultimately, it’s about passion and meaning-making.
• Embrace the very real positive effects of fiction reading on critical-thinking, scholarly analysis, problem-solving, empathy, and civil discourse.
• End the relentless reduction of every learning element to a singular number, and fight the use of single test scores for high stakes decisions.
• Take steps to resolve the growing disparities between the have’s and have-not’s
• Dedicate yourself and your faculty to ethical, accurate grading practices. Real futures are at stake.
• Accept a teaching or leadership position in a low performing school.
• Accept a teaching or leadership position in a high performing school.
• Develop a Personal/Professional Learning Network (PLN), contribute to it, make yourself open to its ideas.
• Make it the policy that we cannot take students out of P.E., fine/performing arts, and tech classes to double-up on remediation for exams.