

DOINGWHATWORKS



Video

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

The Enacted Curriculum

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Topic: Turning Around Chronically Low-Performing Schools

Practice: Focus on Instruction

Highlights

- Improving instruction is the core of generating better results for children.
- School and district curriculum guides must be checked for alignment with standards, in addition to monitoring what is actually being taught in the classroom.
- Schools must strike a balance between covering all of the material and making sure that students learn what is being covered.

About the Interviewee

Dr. Joseph Johnson is the Executive Director of the National Center for Urban School Transformation and the QUALCOMM Professor of Urban Studies at San Diego State University, in San Diego, California. In this position, he works with school district leaders, researchers, and educators throughout the nation to improve academic achievement in urban schools. As well, he teaches in the university's doctoral program in educational leadership.

Previously, Dr. Johnson has served as a classroom teacher in San Diego, as a school and district administrator in New Mexico, as a state department official

in both Texas and Ohio, as a researcher and technical assistance provider at the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas, and as the Director of Student Achievement and School Accountability at the U.S. Department of Education where he was responsible for directing the federal Title I Program and several related programs.

Dr. Johnson earned a Ph.D. in educational administration from the University of Texas at Austin's Cooperative Superintendency Program. He earned a Master of Arts in Education from San Diego State University and graduated Magna Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh.

Full Transcript

I'm Joe Johnson. I am the Executive Director of the National Center for Urban School Transformation at San Diego State University.

There are many things that educators do to try to improve achievement in a low-performing school, but perhaps the most important is focusing on improving instruction. Bottom line is even though there's all these various ways that people can address the needs of schools, ultimately if instruction in classrooms stays the same, achievement will stay the same. So improving instruction is the core work of generating better results for children.

When it comes to the issue of curriculum alignment, there are two central issues that schools ought to be concerned about. One is just the general notion that if we don't teach it, our students are probably not going to learn it. And so if there are elements of the curriculum that we never get to, that we never address, then we shouldn't be surprised if when students take State Assessments at the end of the year, they show that they haven't learned those things. And so it's important to look at that issue, not simply in terms of the curriculum guides that we might have within our school or district, but in terms of the enacted curriculum—the curriculum that people are actually using within their classrooms, what students are actually getting the opportunity to learn.

But there's also a balance here, because there certainly are schools and districts where leaders have understood the importance of curriculum alignment, and they've taken their state standards, and they have created pacing charts where they said, "Okay if we are going to cover all of this, then we need to make sure that we spend two days on this particular concept. And we have to spend a day and a half on this and maybe just a half a day on this particular skill." And so they map out the school year in a way to cover everything. Well the problem with that is that in many schools, especially many of our schools that are struggling, it's resulted in what I call a Drive-By Curriculum... focused on, "Are they covering the material?" not focusing on, "Are students learning the material?"