

# DOINGWHATWORKS



Video

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

## Academic Interventions to Increase Student Success

Monica R. Martinez, Ph.D. • February 2009

Topic: Dropout Prevention

Practice: Academic Supports

### Highlights

- There are multiple ways to help a student find success. They include individualized attention, personalization, and structural changes to provide extra time and extra help to students.
- Differentiated instruction is an intuitive and natural way to provide intensive interventions for students.
- Formative assessment is a key to working with students who need intensive interventions.
- Intense remediation or interventions may be required for students with severe academic barriers to completing school.
- Schools must create a learning culture where everyone takes collective responsibility for students.

### About the Interviewee

Dr. Monica Martinez, Vice President for Education Strategy, guides the KnowledgeWorks Foundation's work to transform the national education landscape, overseeing the development of new initiatives and coordination of strategic planning that result from the 2006-2016 Map of Future Forces

## Affecting Education.

Prior to being named Vice President, Martinez was an advisor to the foundation as Senior Fellow, providing expertise on issues related to educational access and achievement for low-income and minority students.

Martinez founded the National High School Alliance—a partnership of more than 40 organizations sharing a common commitment to promoting excellence, equity, and development of high-school-age youth—while she was at the Institute for Educational Leadership in Washington D.C. She also served as a Senior Associate at the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL), overseeing IEL’s work with the Pathways to College Network. In addition, she was Project Director for the National Clearinghouse for School Reform (NCCSR), the Theme High Schools Network (THiSNET.org), and the Catalog of Core Research on Secondary School Reform.

Martinez has contributed to many policy and research initiatives to reform education, including a University of Maryland effort to improve the quality of teaching through engagement in collaborative action research and conducting research at the New York University Institute for Education and Public Policy to support the development of small schools in New York City.

Martinez received her Ph.D. and M.A. in Higher Education Administration from the School of Education at New York University and her bachelor’s degree from Baylor University.

## Full Transcript

Hi, my name is Monica Martinez. I’m the Vice-President for Education Strategy for the KnowledgeWorks Foundation.

Teachers have to understand that if they create the culture in a school where everyone is taking collective responsibility for students, nobody has to play the blame game. It’s not the students’ fault if they come to you unprepared. It’s not the students’ fault if they’ve had failure in their life; and instead, the most rewarding thing that a teacher can do is actually help that student find success. And there are multiple ways to help that student find success. And simply it’s individualized attention, it’s personalization, but there is also some serious structural issues you can do to provide extra time and extra help to students. And once students—or once teachers see how effective they can be with students who’ve had failure in the past and how students respond to success, that will motivate the rest of the teachers to also help students and to be more supportive of the different structures required.

A very intuitive and natural way to provide intensive intervention is simply by having teachers engaged in differentiated instruction. Differentiated instruction really takes a change in the classroom that it’s no longer teacher-centric, but it’s student-centric: What does a student need? What can I give that individual student, and how do I differentiate my instruction so I am not instructing the whole class but thinking about the individuals who make up that class? Key to differentiated instruction is not to use whole class direct

instruction, but to use multiple groups working together simultaneously, so the teacher can move around in the classroom to change up pedagogy and have students actively engaged in different projects at the same time.

In addition, formative assessment is key to how you work with students who need intensive intervention. Teachers must constantly know what the student knows and what the student doesn't know, and the only way to do that is through formative assessment. There are multiple ways to do that. It could be simply by asking the students questions on the spot. It could be through something very advanced that Northwest Educational Association uses called MAP, which is an adaptive computer testing mechanism, or it could be simply offering short quizzes at the end of the day or at the beginning of the day. But most importantly, teachers have to keep looking individually at the students, thinking about what they know and what they don't know, and adjusting the instruction for that student and for that skill level.

Sometimes differentiated instruction isn't enough. Sometimes there are very intense remediation or intervention issues that you have to do, and that means students simply need extra time on task. This may be double-blocking classes such as math or reading; this may mean Saturday schools where students have to come in on a Saturday—maybe not every Saturday, maybe just once a month, maybe every other week—but just to be able to spend that extra time to catch up and to stay on course. It may mean learning labs, something that a Sacramento school I've been to does. And when they realize there are certain students failing, then they require the students to participate in a learning lab, which takes place one hour, five days a week, after school, and all students who are failing have to stay in that learning lab until they are on grade level for whatever subject they are. The bottom-line is differentiated instruction is very helpful. However, you might have to add on a few other programs to your weekday, to your weekend, or even before the weekday. But students need extra help and extra time for that help.

When teachers have success with students who've had nothing but failure in their life, teachers will be so enthusiastic it will spread through the culture of the school themselves. And other teachers will become believers in the fact that extra time, personalization will help students achieve.