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The Power of the "I"

Getting More Students to Complete Work at Higher Levels

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What is the Problem?

- Students learn in the early middle grades, they have an option *not to turn in their assignments*.
- More and more choose this option as it is one that requires little or no work or effort.

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What is the Problem?

- Teachers believe that they are getting students ready for the real world by giving zeros, since people who do not do their work are fired.

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Why Is there a Problem?

- Teachers believe that they are setting high expectations by giving zeros to students who do not complete their work on time.
- Teachers believe that allowing completed homework assignments anytime after the assignment was due is wrong because that learning set is over and no longer needed.

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What Are the Results of the Current Practice?

- Giving zeros or accepting work below standard *isn't working*.
 - It fails to motivate students to make a greater effort.
 - Dropout rates are increasing not decreasing.
 - Teachers report that students not doing/completing work is the number one reason for failure in the middle and ninth grades.
 - More students are entering ninth grade unprepared for challenging high school studies.

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What Are the Results of the Current Practice?

- This policy is actually *taking away from* teachers efforts to get more students to complete work at high levels.
- Students have learned that if something is hard to do or takes too long, they simply don't have to do it – at home or at school. They have learned to manipulate almost everyone.

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What Are the Results of the Current Practice?

No matter if teachers work 3-4 hours per night developing engaging, real-world activities that measure students at the proficient level, if students can OPT NOT TO COMPLETE THE ASSIGNMENT and simply take a zero and go on to the next one, those students *will not be ready for college prep or college level work.*

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How Do We Fix the Problem?

The Power of the "I"

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How Do We Fix the Problem?

- *By defining that in standards-based education,*

Zeros Aren't Possible!
- *By redefining high expectations as standards and having students meet standards.*

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How Do We Fix the Problem?

In High Expectations Classrooms

- **Students**
 - revise essays or other written work to improve quality.
 - work hard to meet high standards on assignments.
 - spend an hour or more on homework each day.

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How Do We Fix the Problem?

In High Expectations Classrooms

- **Teachers**
 - set standards and are willing to help students meet them.
 - encourage students to do well.
 - indicate the amount and quality of work necessary to earn an A or B.
 - Encourage students to help and learn from each other
 - Know their subject and make it interesting and useful

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How Do We Fix the Problem?

In High Expectations Classrooms

- **Teachers**
 - Send a consistent message about what all students must do and what level of quality is expected.
 - Require work to be revised until it meets quality standards.
 - Provide guidelines and examples of high quality work to students and families.
 - Use "incompletes" instead of zeroes.

How Do We Fix the Problem?

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In High Expectations Classrooms

- Teachers
 - Use multiple methods of assessment, including common end-of-grade and end-of-course testing.
 - Emphasize the importance of attendance, readiness to learn and effort.
 - Establish home work and ninth and tenth-grade exit criteria.
 - Inform parents and students of higher expectations and get their support.
 - Eliminate low-level classes.

What Prevents Schools from Fixing the Problem

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- Teachers Believe Giving Zeros Sets Very High Expectations and Instills Strong Values
 - We All Value Things Done on Time
 - Sacred Cows
 - "That's What My Teachers/Professors Did"
 - It is a just punishment for a bad behavior
 - Believing that giving students a consequence for not completing work will result in students *not repeating this behavior*

Is Giving Zeros, Fs and Ds Working?

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- It doesn't work most of the time
 - It works for students who are already A and B students
- If it doesn't change behavior, why do we continue this consequence?
- Why do we let students off the hook for not completing work at expected standards?
- What is the real effect of this policy?

Is Giving Zeros, Fs and Ds Working?

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- What data do we have that giving zeros is positively impacting students? Where is the data?*
- On responsibility
 - On grades
 - On Work Ethic
 - On values
 - On Learning
 - On Achievement scores

What Impact Should Grading Policies Have?

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Any policy regarding student work should result in increased student achievement, motivation, confidence and sense of self worth. Data should be evident.

If data is lacking in those areas, then the policy isn't working.

Is Giving Zeros, Fs and Ds Working?

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- It Sends the Wrong Message
 - On dropout and completion rates
 - On test scores and achievement
 - On attendance and discipline
- Instead, It Creates a Culture of Low Expectations
 - Students learn that they do not have to do their work
 - Students do not understand the impact of zeros

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The Power of the "I"

What can it do?

It can

- Hold students to high expectations
- Not let students "Off the Hook"
 - For learning
 - For delivering "quality work"
 - For completing hard work
 - For becoming responsible citizens
- Create Standards of Learning for all students

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The Power of the "I"

What can it do?

It can

- Create a Culture of High Expectations
 - "No excuses!"
 - "You don't get to choose not to work."
- Improve the Quality of All Student Work

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The POWER of the "I"

What can it do?

It can

- Allow Teachers to Really Teach to Standards
 - Teachers will finally know what students can do
 - Takes the guesswork out of retention

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The POWER of the "I"

What can it do?

It can

- Send the *Right* message to students
 - The blame game points back to the student
 - When students come home with an F or a zero, they (and their parents) often blame the teacher
 - When students come home with an "I", only the student is to blame

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The POWER of the "I"

What can it do?

When assignments aren't ready, or they are incomplete or seriously below the standard and quality of expectation, teachers can use the POWER of the "I" = Give a grade of incomplete

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What does the "Power of I" look like?

1. Students no longer receive zeros when work isn't turned in; they don't have an option not to turn in work.
 - Teachers have made this clear from the beginning of the year
 - Teachers have other "consequences" for work not done, not done completely or not done satisfactorily

**What does the
"Power of I" look like?**

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2. Late work is just that – late – but it must be *completed* if teachers are to correctly determine if students know and understand the standards being taught and assessed.

**What does the
"Power of I" look like?**

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3. Students must be given extra help opportunities (required) to complete the work during the school day (not during the class – ever), after school, Saturday School, or whatever fits your school's possibilities. (This piece is completely up to schools to determine how this help can best be delivered.

**What does the
"Power of I" look like?**

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4. Consequences change for students not having work ready to turn in on time:

- Require students to stay after school in an extra help setting to complete work (this takes some work, but many schools are having great success with this)
- Require students to attend an extra help class during the school day (these are taking several forms, but consistently, they are similar to a support class)

**What does the
"Power of I" look like?**

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- Some policies state that students are not allowed to participate in any extra-curricular activity (sports, band, chorus, clubs – events and practices), if they are missing any assignments or have attempted to turn in poor quality work.
- Must contact students' parents and solicit their assistance – this must begin early and will have the greatest impact.
- Requires a parent conference at a pre-determined number of missed assignments or failed tests, etc.

**What does the
"Power of I" look like?**

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5. Students will receive an "I" on any assignment not turned in, and One or more "I"s will result in an "I" grade for any report period.

6. Tests may be excluded from the policy.

- Teachers may choose to give students opportunities to raise test scores by coming in during extra help times.

**What does the
"Power of I" look like?**

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7. Students cannot receive an A (or a B in some schools) on any assignment that is late or turned in incomplete (some schools have instituted specific time periods)

8. Students never receive an F if an assignment is completed within the year or semester (determined by each school as appropriate).

What does the "Power of I" look like?

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9. A few students will still fail no matter what you do. So.....

Final report cards have asterisk or note reporting to parents that the F is a result of failure to complete work.

The goal is to get all groups of students to meet course standards at an acceptable level.

Setting School Goals

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Knowing that it WILL NOT WORK for all students, each school should set goals by tracking the success of this program using appropriate data. First,

- % of students currently making zeroes=

Then,

- % acceptable after first semester=
- % acceptable after first year=

Essential Conditions

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Just adding a Power of I policy won't do it all by itself. This policy works best under the following conditions:

- Developing *Engaging, Challenging and Meaningful Student Learning Activities* and ditching poor quality handout sheets
- Establishing homework criteria that recognizes homework should matter and be useful.
- Having teachers who know the subject and make it interesting and useful.

Essential Conditions

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- **Setting high standards and helping students meet them**

- Indicating the amount and quality of work needed to earn an "A" or "B"
- Encouraging students to do well in school and to help and learn from each other
- Sending a consistent message about what all students must do and what level of quality is expected.

How Do You Know If the Power of the "I" Is Working?

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- **Collect data to convince others that the policy is working**

- understand the impact of the policy
- keep it moving by having teachers give testimony on how it's working and share their data

How Do You Know If the Power of the "I" Is Working?

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- **Collect comprehensive sets of data**

- HSTW and MMGW assessment data
- Promotion/retention percentages
- College-preparatory course enrollment percentages
- Dropout Rates
- Completion Rates

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How Do You Know If the Power of the "I" Is Working?

- Distribution of grades
- Norm-referenced and state tests
- Attendance at extra help sessions
- Quality of Work
- Responses from student and parent interviews and focus groups

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How to Implement

"Finally!" Strategies for Implementation

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Strategies for Implementation

- Eliminate zeros and poor quality work
- Set up multiple extra help opportunities and require students to attend
- Implement a catch-up courses for students with high failure rates
- Implement first in courses with high failure rates

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Strategies for Implementation

- Standardize grading procedures by department, grade or school
- Reach consensus on weight of grading
 - Major tests
 - class work
 - Projects
 - research papers
 - homework

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Strategies for Implementation

- Create a Culture of High Expectations and Commitment for All Stakeholders
 - Get commitment from all staff members (have a plan)
 - Communicate expectations to students, parents, district office and to boards of education members.
 - Notify the feeder patter schools and invite teams to visit planning meetings

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Strategies for Implementation

- Emphasize New Content
 - Too much of some content is review, throughout middle school and especially in grade nine

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Strategies for Implementation

- Rubrics Are Required for *Power of I* to work
 - Level the Playing Field
 - Must Be Adapted for Self and Peer Review
- Samples and Sources for Rubric Design
 - Rubrics.com
 - Rubristar.com

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Strategies for Implementation

- Quality Teaching Is a Necessity
 - Highly Qualified Teachers
 - Highly Engaging Activities
 - Hands-on
 - Real World
 - Meaningful Assignments
 - Lose the Handouts, Worksheets, Drill Sheets, Word Searches

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Strategies for Implementation

- Higher Order Thinking Skills (Instructional Review Handout)
– In Every Class, Every Day
- "Teach to the rest what you teach to the best!"
- Design more activities and assessments at the proficient level; most activities are at or below basic.

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Strategies for Implementation

- Get organized for accepting late work**
- Require students to attach a cover sheet with the title and date of the original assignment
 - Designate a place in your room for quick student access to all assignments
 - Consider keeping an assignment notebook with a page for each day of class; assignment sheets, rubrics, handouts, etc. can be slipped into clear pockets

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Strategies for Implementation

- Get organized for removing "I"s**
- Work with school/district personnel on correct ways to record "I"s and remove them
 - Try to make this as easy as possible for everyone
 - The more difficult this step is, the less likely the policy will be successful

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Strategies for Implementation

- Get organized for contacting parents**
- Develop a plan that includes
 - Collecting or accessing email address and other contact information
 - Developing email groups of students to use for those with consistent problems
 - Designating a time to call parents at work or home
 - Work with other teachers to develop a script to be used with all parents so that phone calls are quick and non-threatening. Ensure parents they are partners in the students' success

Strategies for Implementation

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- Get organized for unexpected issues to arise
- Establish a focus team or committee that
 - collects and analyzes the data
 - develops drafts of solutions of new issues such as honor roll, selection into service organizations, etc. and presents to staff

Strategies for Implementation

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- Expect adjustments to the policy to be suggested and have a plan for how to deal with each recommendation (some will be good).
- Schedule conference calls with groups of teachers and SREB.
- Use the sample letters as samples, please, but please revise them to fit your school/community.

EXTRA HELP

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When expectations for all students are raised, some students will need extra help and extra time to meet these requirements.

Extra Help

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- Require Extra Help for those missing assignments or needing to improve quality
 - **Structured Program of Extra Help**
 - **Various, Multiple Opportunities**
 - **Counselors and advisors must assist in getting extra help**
 - **Use service clubs to assist in after school extra help (assign buddies in math, science and English classes)**

Why extra help?

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- Some students have no help at home to complete work. This has been their paradigm all of their lives.
- Reduce the failure rate.
- Encourage students to "stretch" themselves academically.
- Convince parents that the school cares.
- Build students' confidence.

What works in providing extra help?

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- Modifying schedules for re-teaching opportunities.
- Identifying students early.
- Having students redo work until it meets standards.
- Tutoring
- Mentoring

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What works in providing extra help?

- Before and after school programs that extend the school day
- Completely revised summer programs
- Longer blocks of time when needed
 - HSTW recommends block schedules so that students get more one-on-one time
- Immersion and "catch-up" strategies
- Contracts for learning

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Actions for Improving Extra Help

- Require students to redo work to meet quality standards in each content area and grade.
- Require students who earn less than a "C" to attend extra help sessions.
- Expect all students to read, write and present in every class.
- Provide samples of quality work and guidelines to students and families.

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Actions for Improving Extra Help

- Organize student-led study teams.
- "Double-dose" students who need more time to learn.
- Re-teach students who need more help learning.
- Never let students "off the hook."

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Strategies for Implementation

- Get Stakeholder Support
 - Principal, superintendent, BOE
 - Parents
 - Business community or local school advisory council
 - Local post-secondary institutions

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Strategies for Implementation

Communication Requirements

- Principal to Teachers
 - Reach consensus on the scope and exact implementation issues
 - Rogue policies or lack of implementation even by a few will send a mixed message to students and sabotage the policy

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Strategies for Implementation

Communication Requirements

- Principal to Teachers
 - Set up a committee to chart the progress
 - Be open to teacher frustrations and implementation snags; help to work out the bugs

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Strategies for Implementation

Communication Requirements

- **Principal and Teachers to Parents**
 - Initial letters sent home
 - Outline the policy and the availability of extra help
 - Open House
 - Newsletters
 - Student Handbook
 - Website
 - A progress chart update

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Strategies for Implementation

Communication Requirements

- **Teachers to students**
 - Course Syllabus (required)
 - Assignment sheets (required in writing to students)

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Strategies for Implementation

Communication Requirements

- **Teachers to students**
 - Rubrics (required, specific, vertical and horizontal)
 - Availability of extra help (required, multiple opportunities preferred)
 - Encouragement a **MUST** for successful implementation (for students *and* teachers)

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Strategies for Implementation

Communication Requirements

- **School**
 - Faculty meeting agendas
 - Department meeting agendas
 - Oversight committee or focus teams must keep all teachers informed of implementation issues – successes and snags

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Strategies for Implementation

Keeping Track

- **Benchmark and Set Goals**
- **Gather and Track Data (Current and over time)**

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Strategies for Implementation

Nuts and Bolts Assistance

- Keep rubrics or scoring guides filed and organized by course or period for easy access
- File or scan rubrics and assignments sheets into computer files
 - **Don't make it difficult for students or teachers**

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Strategies for Implementation

Get organized for accepting late work

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Strategies for Implementation

- **Expect adjustments to the policy** to be *suggested* and have a plan for how to deal with each recommendation (some will be good).
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- **Use the sample letters** as samples, please, but please revise them to fit your school/community.

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You can contact....

Grimsley High School in North Carolina (Schools' contact information is listed on SREB website) is currently implementing a version of a "no zero" policy

**Failure Is Not an Option
and they have a
"Zero Tolerance for Zeroes"**

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You can contact....

- Calera High School in Calera, Alabama and
- Millville Senior High School, Millville, NJ have also had training, but I'm not sure of their level of implementation.

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