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Leading for Creativity

Show-Me Professional Learning Conference

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Your Professional Learning Agenda

- "This seminar will be a success if . . ."
- "The barriers I must overcome are . . ."
- "The rewards of success are . . ."
- "The risks of success are . . ."

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Learning Protocols

- Stop any time for comments, questions, challenges, and personal application
- Breaks scheduled, but take whatever time you need
- Participate via talk, text, Twitter, note, or e-mail
- Choose your collaborative style

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This seminar will be a success if . . .

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The Price of Admission

"I used to think . . . But now I think . . ."

Please complete the "Creativity Quiz" on page 5

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Overview

- Research
- Rhetoric-Reality Gap
- Assessing Creativity
- Encouraging Creativity from the Classroom to the Boardroom

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Defining Creativity

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One Working Definition of *Creativity*

- The process of **experimentation, evaluation, and follow through,** which leads to a significant **discovery, insight, or contribution**
- **Note what it doesn't say**: ***original, novel, superstar*** …

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Fundamental Research Findings

- Creativity is essential for society and the planet
- Creativity is valued by businesses, schools, and governments
- Unfortunately, …

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Enormous Gap Between Intentions and Reality

Student grading systems deliberately undermine the essentials of creativity: trial, error, feedback, and improvement.

The “average” punishes every experimental error.

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Diminishing Teacher Creativity

Teacher evaluation systems undermine experimental approaches to teaching, learning, and engagement because they punish failure.

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Creativity Is Systematically Devalued

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The most creative students were the least popular with students and teachers; the least creative students were the most popular.

(Research results from Union College and Skidmore College study of Albany, NY elementary school teachers, 2012)

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More Bad News

- Emulating creativity (such as Google's 20% of free time) is incredibly difficult when people already have full-time jobs.
- Evaluation systems punish the errors that are an inherent part of creativity and risk taking.

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Creativity Is Declining for Individuals

- Creativity among students has declined significantly in the past 20 years.
- The biggest decline is in "creative elaboration" – the ability to develop and elaborate on ideas with detailed and reflective thinking.

(Kyung Hee Kim, College of William and Mary, after analysis of nearly 300,000 American adults and children based on the Torrance Tests of Creating Thinking (TTCT), October 2010.)

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Creativity Is Declining for Organizations

- Fewer than half of companies surveyed said their corporate culture robustly supports their innovation strategy.
- But most organizations make decisions based on avoiding mistakes rather than embracing risk and innovation.

(Booz & Co., Global Innovation 1000, InnoCentive, 2013)

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"Creativity is not just the way that the great geniuses of the past have used to enrich and give meaning to our culture, but it is an obligation we all have to enrich and give meaning to our own lives and the lives of our community."

—Reeves & Reeves, *The Seven Virtues of Creativity* (Solution Tree, 2016)

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The False Dichotomy Between "Big C" and "Little c " Creativity

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Big C:

- The creator as rock star, or at least a Nobel Prize winner
- Social, artistic, or scientific recognition

Little c:

- Insights that are functional, often based on previous major insights

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Assessing Creativity Assessments

- 100+ creativity assessments, including K–12 and college, evaluated on 8-dimension scale, with four points on each, for >3,200 data points
- >95% inter-rater reliability
- Maximum score of 32 (Level 4 on all eight dimensions)

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Dimensions of Creativity Assessment

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- Research basis
- Multidisciplinary perspective
- Source material
- Clarity of guidelines
- Product
- Process
- Collaboration
- Practice and error

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Understanding the Creativity Meta-Rubric

- 1) Review the meta-rubric
- 2) Find an element of the meta-rubric that especially resonates with you
- 3) Find an element of the meta-rubric that is unclear
- 4) Find an element of the meta-rubric with which you disagree

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Dimensions of Creativity Assessment – % Proficient

+

- Research basis – 42%
- Multidisciplinary perspective – 49%
- Source material – 34%
- Clarity of guidelines – 52%
- Product – 17%
- Process – 41%
- Collaboration – 9%
- Practice and error – 20%

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Dimensions of Creativity Assessment – Exemplary

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- Research basis – 0%
- Multidisciplinary perspective – 9%
- Source material – 2%
- Clarity of guidelines – 3%
- Product – 8%
- Process – 3%
- Collaboration – 0%
- Practice and error – 0%

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STOP and Consider

How are the results of international research similar to or different from your observations in your own school?

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A Few Research Footnotes

- Positively biased sample – These were publicly available and willingly shared. Don't be disappointed if your initial results are lower.
- Don't try this alone. Checks for inter-rater reliability are essential for meaningful results.
- Use this meta-rubric as a starting point—not the ending point. When there is disagreement in applying a rubric, the rule is, "*The enemy is not one another; the enemy is ambiguity*." Rework the rubric until you achieve 80% agreement.

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Everybody Knows Creativity Is Important, but …

- We'll get to it after standardized tests are done.
- It's really the responsibility of the art and music teachers.
- *Creativity* is just a code word for poor discipline, and if you ask me, kids need a lot more discipline than they need creativity.
- I'll wait until I see the evidence that creativity helps achievement.
- Great, just what we need—one more initiative.

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Practical Guidelines for School Leaders

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Time for Assessment and Scoring

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Decision Discipline – Mutually Exclusive Alternatives

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Non-Linear Gains – Beware of the "Little Bit Better" Impulse.

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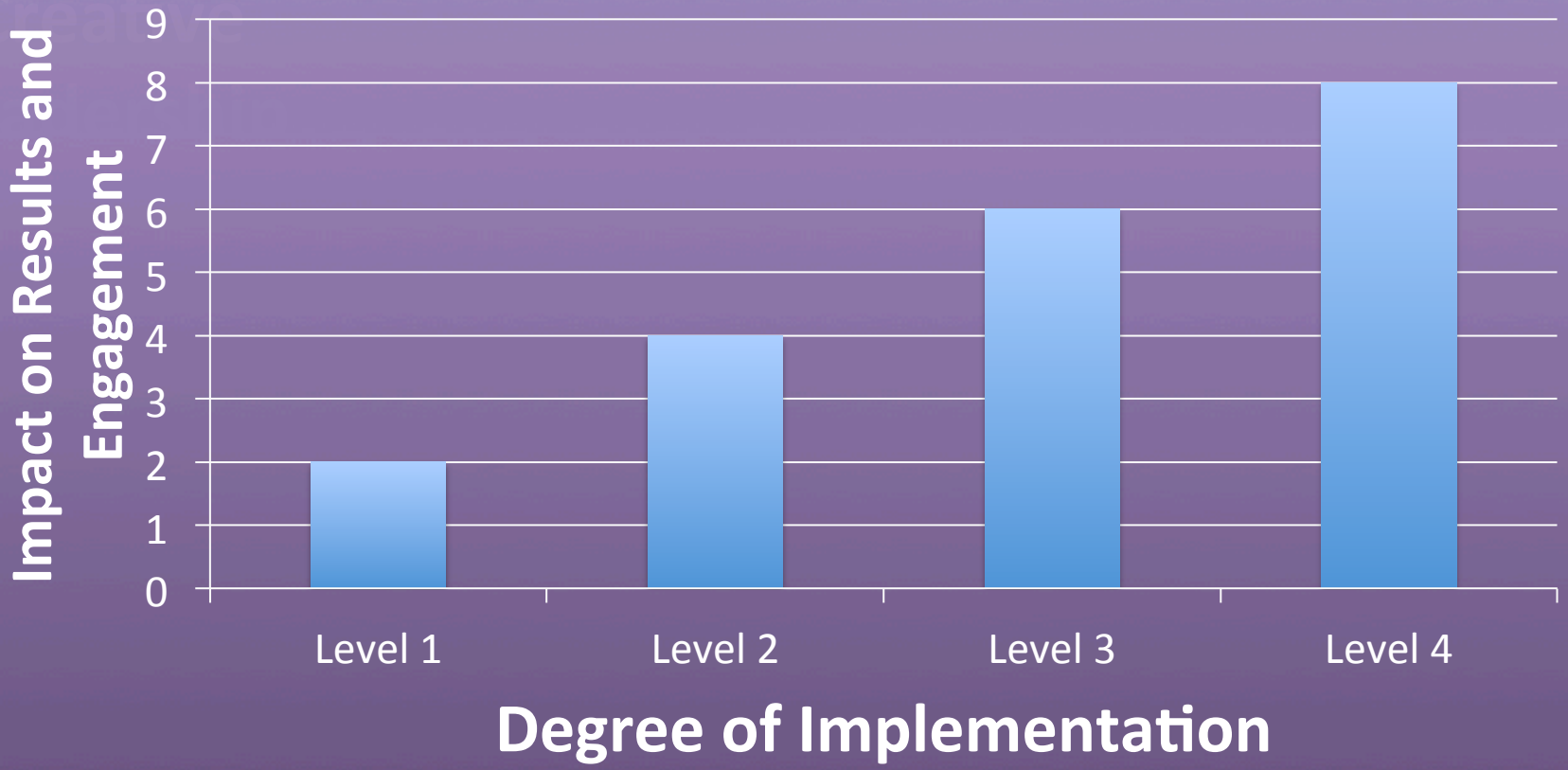
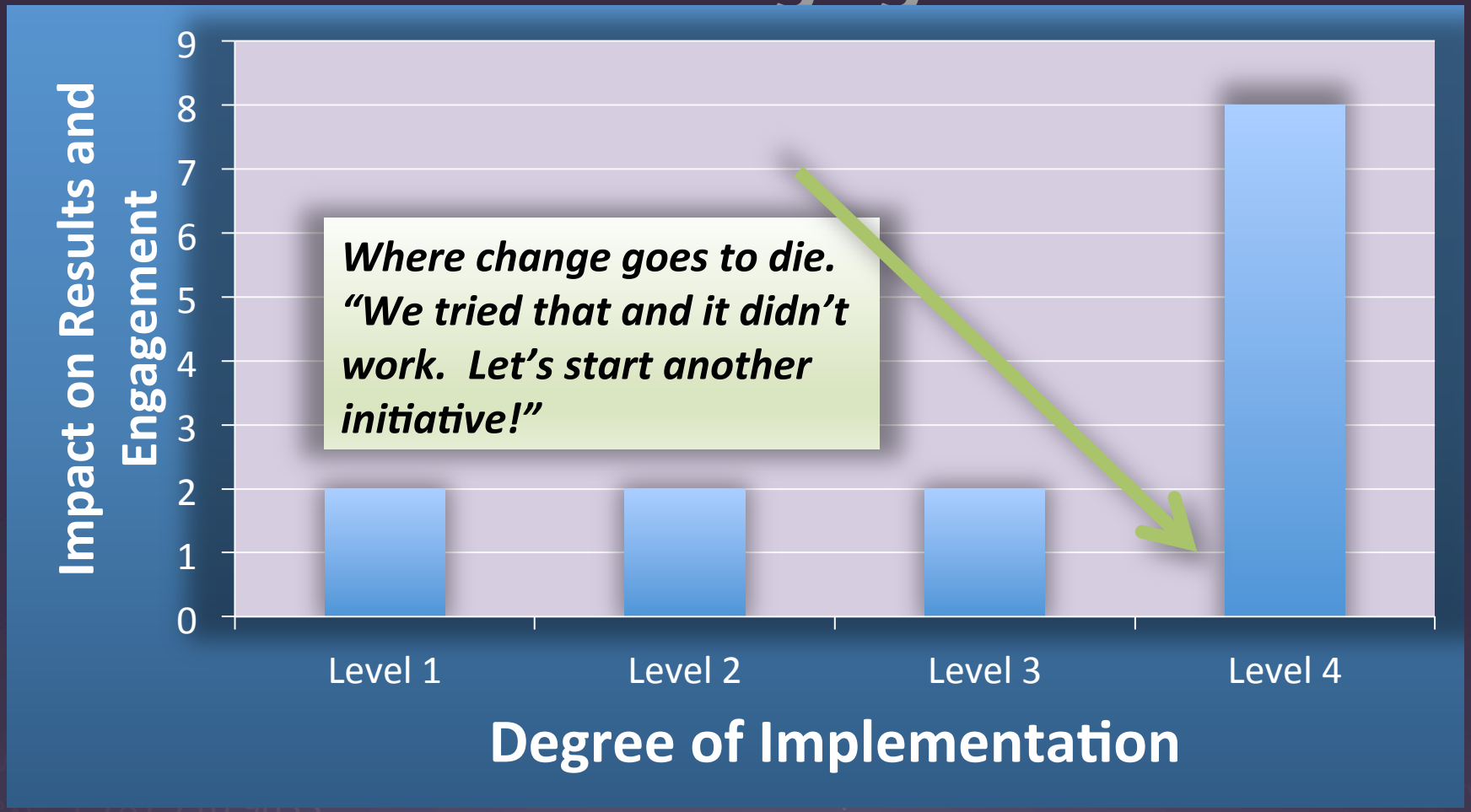
The Linear Hypothesis of Change:

"A Little More Implementation Yields A Little More Results"



The Reality of Change: *"Only Deep Impact Yields Results and Engagement"*



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Ban the Average – for Students and Teachers

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Encourage Risk – "Evaluation-Free Zones" for 50% of Observations

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Supporting Curiosity

- Confidence in the value of failure, including public displays of "I used to think …, and now I think …. (Elmore, 2011)
- Replacing supreme self-regard with rigorous self-examination
- Social media as an echo chamber
- Question assumptions
- Making guesses before heading to Google
- Being aware of punishing curiosity

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How do we punish curiosity and creativity?

- What student behavior is most consistently rewarded?
- Describe the student who is not quite academically proficient, but who nevertheless receives good grades

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The “good girl” effect—we effectively undermine the creativity of half the planet.

(Reeves & Reeves, *The Seven Virtues of Creativity*, 2015)

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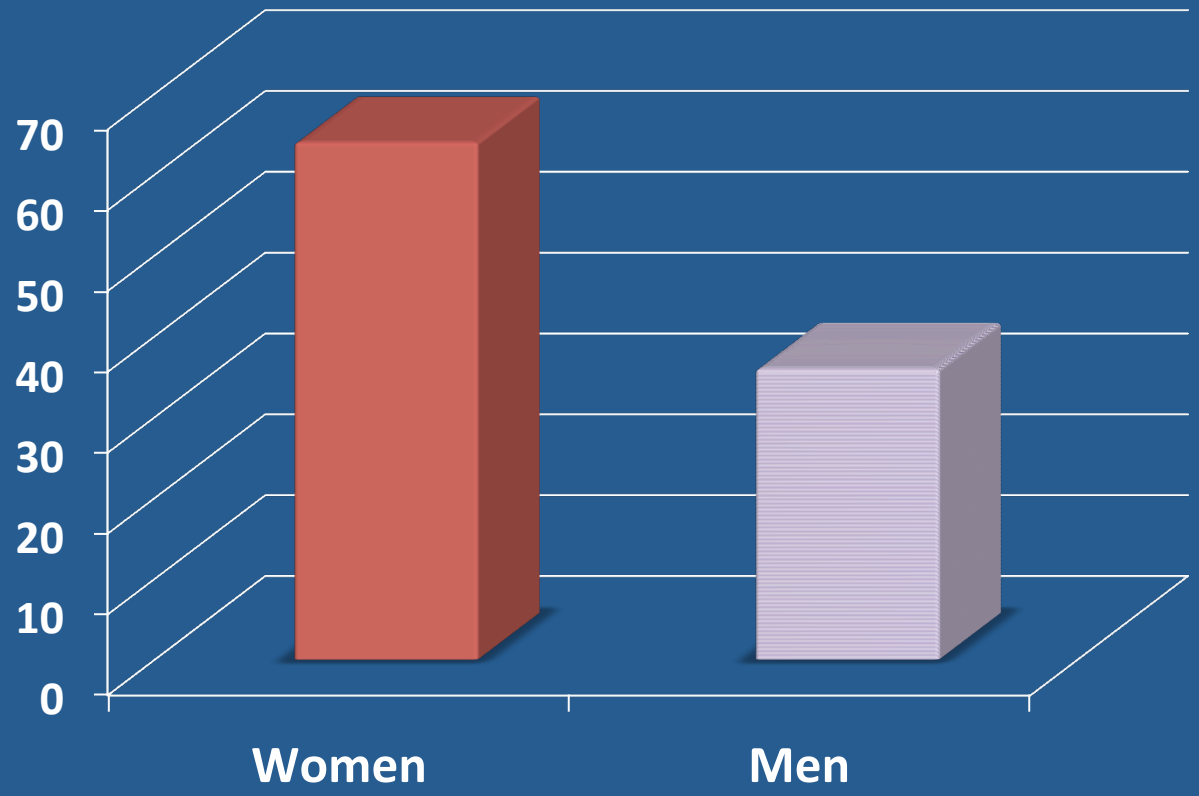
The "Good Girl" Effect – National Honor Society Membership



Kristof, "The Boys Have Fallen Behind," *New York Times*, March 27, 2010)

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Interviews With Successful Girls and Women

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"There were many times I knew that a colleague was wrong, but I didn't speak up because it was inappropriate to challenge someone else."

—Helen, an Ivy League graduate
(Reeves & Reeves, *The Seven Virtues of Creativity* (Solution Tree, 2015)

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"The playground hasn't been updated for six years and some of it is dangerous. I'd like to write a story for the school newspaper, but I don't want to criticize the teachers or school leaders."

—Jessica, an exceptional student
(Reeves & Reeves, *The Seven Virtues of Creativity* (Solution Tree, 2015)

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"Being a good girl got me good grades in high school and college, but when I went to an elite MBA program as one of two women in the class, it took more than a semester for me to have elbows as sharp as the guys."

(Reeves & Reeves, *The Seven Virtues of Creativity* (Solution Tree, 2015)

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STOP and Consider

- Are there examples of the "good girl" effect in your school?
- How would you know that this phenomenon is happening?

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Versatility: Applying New Perspectives

- The *"ab initio" fallacy*.
- Unless you observed the Big Bang, stop claiming originality.
- Examples: From plane geometry to multidimensional statistical modeling.

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Building Blocks Vs. Plagiarism

- Same tools, different application.
- Illegal copying requires instruction and reassessment –
  - First, let me break into your locker and steal your stuff.
  - Second, write another paper and credit everyone from whom you stole.

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There is no contradiction between creativity and academic discipline.

In fact, disciplinary knowledge is essential for creativity.

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"Creation is unlikely to emerge in the absence of some disciplinary mastery and, perhaps, some capacity to synthesize; it's not possible to think outside the box unless you have a box."

—Howard Gardner,
Five Minds for the Future, 2007

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The Elements of Discipline

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- Focus
- "Beginner's mind"
- Deliberate practice
- Incremental practice
- Recording progress
  - From the basketball court to cognitive behavioral therapy

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Stop and Process: Enhancing Creativity With Discipline

- Measure creativity goals – number of ideas generated, number of experiments conducted, or other meaningful metric.
- How can you practice activities related to the goal? For example, for at least one of the next three Board decisions, consider mutually exclusive alternatives with "constructive contention."

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Some Practical Steps for Creative Collaboration

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- Challenging the illusion of collaboration in the classroom

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STOP and Consider

- Where do you see collaboration actively encouraged in your school?
- Where do you see collaboration stifled?

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Encouraging Experimentation

- If you already know the answer, then it's not an experiment.
- Disconfirming hypotheses is as important—often more important —than confirming hypotheses.

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Versatility in Action

- Experiment with games:
  - Rock, paper, scissors … water
  - Replace the Monopoly B&O Railroad with the TGV.
- Experiment with media – every advertising and political claim is a hypothesis to be tested.

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Assessing Tenacity

- How has your governing board agenda changed in the past 20 years?
- What is the ratio of board- and cabinet-level time from presentations to deliberation? How has that ratio changed?

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- How have “class rules” changed in the last 20 years?
- How does your evaluation system reward tenacity and perseverance in the face of failure?
- What happened with a recent failure in your school—was it rewarded or punished?

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Encouraging Creative Tenacity

- Culture of multiple attempts before a final product is accepted.
- Require constructive contention, debate, and dissent.
- Ban the use of the average for evaluating students, teachers, and administrators.
- Celebrate the right kind of failure.

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Guaranteed Ways to Ensure Zero Creative Opportunities for Students

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- Have them drop out of school because they lack sufficient literacy skills to survive high school.
- Have them repeat courses, so that they have no room in their schedules for visual and performing arts.

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How We Discourage Creativity Among Teachers

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- Discourage taking risks and failure.
- Punish feedback and dissent.
- Use the “average” in multiple teacher observations.

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How We Discourage Creativity Among Leaders

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- Annual (or end of contract) performance reviews
- Strategic plans that elevate execution over creativity
- Micromanagement
- Unclear job descriptions

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How We Discourage Creativity Among Policy Makers and Board Members

- Standardized agendas
- One administrative recommendation submitted for up-or-down votes
- A culture of congeniality over discussion and debate
- Discussion and debate is more than criticism and contradiction

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You cannot expect critical thinking in the classroom or faculty room if there is not critical thinking in the board room.

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Perceptions of Collaborative Leadership

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- Estimate the percentages of decisions at these levels:

- Level 1: Teacher Discretion
- Level 2: Teacher-Leader Collaboration
- Level 3: Leadership Decisions

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Perceived Decision Structure

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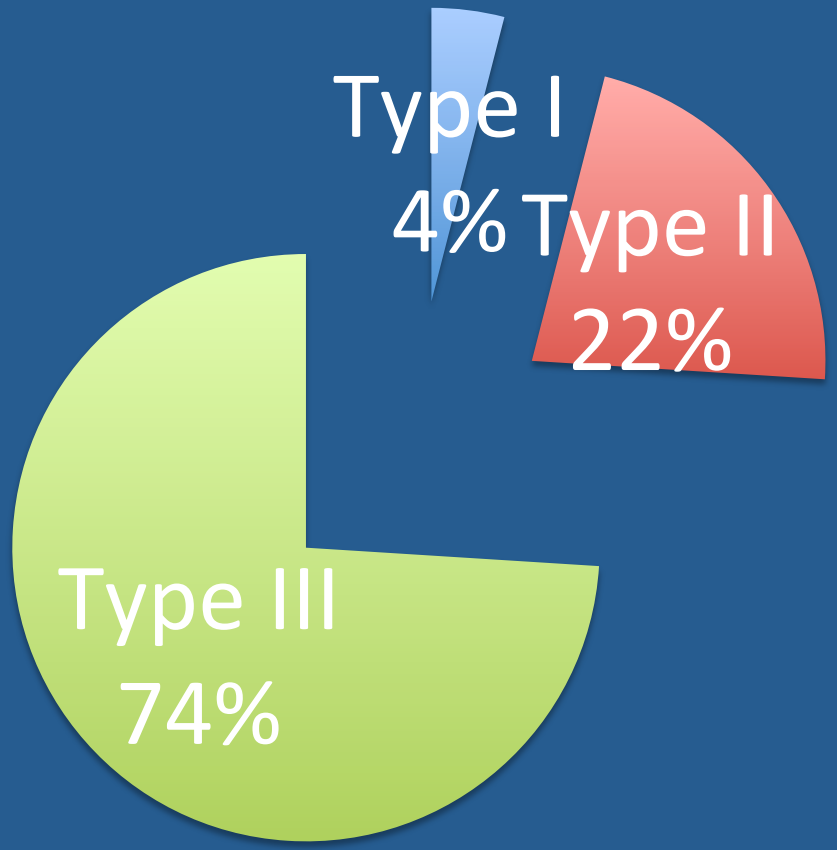

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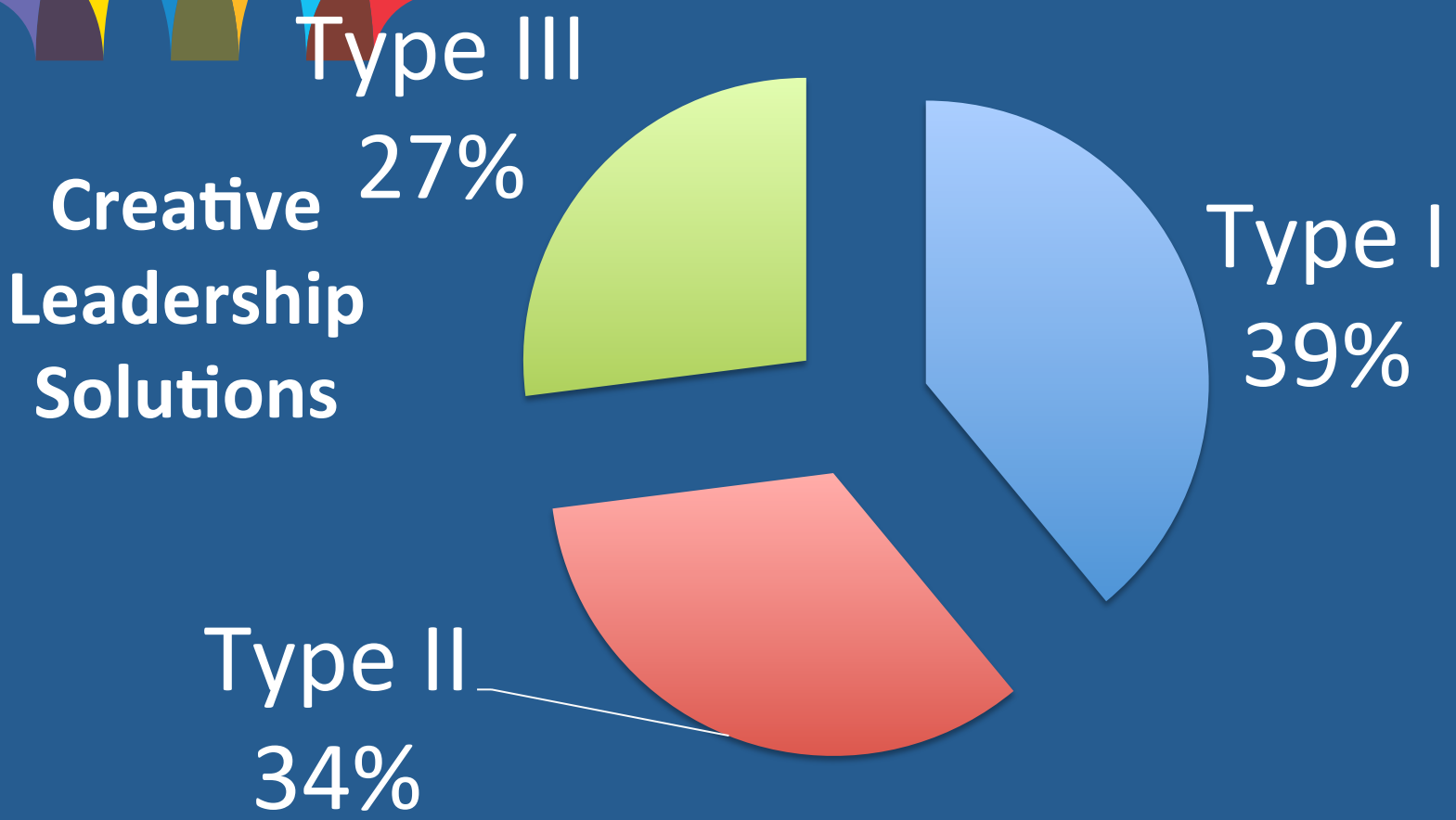
Actual Decision Structure



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What's Changed About Change Leadership?

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Evaluate These Claims About Systemic Change:

- Effective change takes 5-7 Years
- Implementation dips are inevitable
- Strategic planning is essential
- Vision precedes specifics
- 100% Buy-in is imperative

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New Rules

- Long –term change depends upon short-term wins
- Execution, not excuses
- Focus, not just strategy
- Christopher Wren, Not Monet
- Behave “as if” change has occurred
- Urgency *and* Importance

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We cannot expect students to become critical thinkers if teachers and leaders are not willing to think critically.

Are we willing to say, “I used to think . . . But now I think . . .”

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Please take 3 minutes – "I used to think . . . But now I think. . ."

PS: Beware the expert who is always conveniently right

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I used to think . . .

- Testing is a waste of time – we need to spend time teaching, not testing
- Students understand that effort and work lead to success
- Good teachers diagnose the "learning style" of students and then teach to that style
- The Tooth Fairy is real

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What students think is the best strategy to learn:

- 84%: Reread the material
- 11%: Quiz on content (only 1% regarded this as the most important strategy)

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“But testing takes time away from teaching!”

- “If you want to concentrate on how to get people to learn durably, you need to concentrate on testing as a learning activity,” said Roedinger. “Testing not only assesses what we know but changes what we know.”

[Source: 2014, Brown, Roedinger, McDaniel, *Make It Stick*, Harvard University Press]

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What does the evidence say about student belief systems?

I used to think : "The harder we work, the smarter we get"

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The Reality: Career Beliefs of Inner City Adolescents

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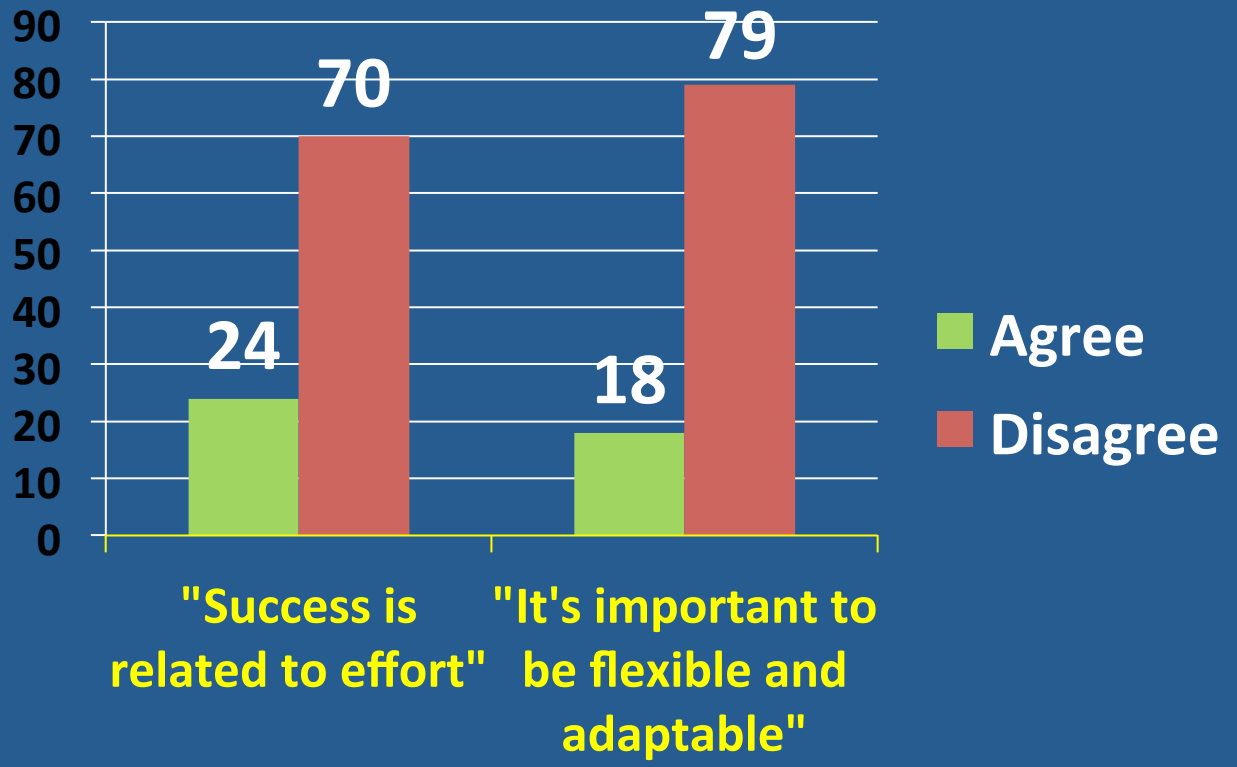

[Source: "The Career Beliefs of Inner-City Adolescents" by Sherri Turner and Julia Conkel Ziebell in *Professional School Counseling*, Oct. 2011 (Vol. 15, #1, p. 1-14)]

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I used to think. . .

Every student has a learning style – auditory, visual, or kinesthetic, and I needed to identify and teach to their particular learning style.

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Combatting Pseudo-Science in the Classroom

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- "More than 80% [of pre-service teachers] believed incorrectly that students should be taught based on their brains' "leaning styles," and another one in five mistakenly thought a student's brain would shrink if he or she drank fewer than six glasses of water a day."

[Source: *Education Week,* June 6, 2012, p. 16]

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Two Predictions About 2016 (and the rest of the century, for that matter)

- School leaders will have too much to do and not enough time to do it
- Teachers and leaders will remain the dominant impact on student achievement, regardless of external variables

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Discussion and Questions

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