

Improving Education in Canada: What we Know and What we Need to Do

BCSSA 2006

Ben Levin

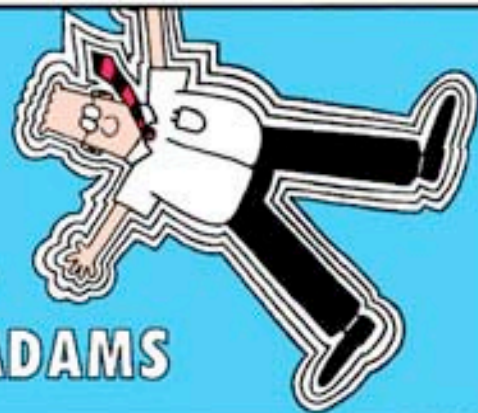
Ontario Ministry of Education



DILBERT[®]

BY

SCOTT ADAMS



WELCOME TO DOGBERT'S DEEPLY DISCOUNTED MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKERS BUREAU.

I NEED A SLIGHTLY MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER AND I DON'T HAVE MUCH BUDGET.

I WANT TO INSPIRE MY EMPLOYEES TO WORK HARDER, WITHOUT MOTIVATING THEM TO SEEK BETTER JOBS.

I RECOMMEND ROBBIE, THE FRIGHTENING HOBO.

DOES HE TALK ABOUT HIS DIFFICULT JOURNEY FROM THE DUMPSTER TO SUCCESS?

WE'RE NOT SURE.
HE MUMBLES.

BUT NO ONE HAS EVER BECOME AN ENTREPRENEUR AFTER HEARING HIM SPEAK.

MUST... KEEP... JOB.

E-mail: SCOTTADAMS@AOL.COM

© 2006 Scott Adams, Inc./Dist. by UFS, Inc.

www.dilbert.com
10-31-06



Describe the B C Context

- ◆ Strong points
- ◆ Challenges
- ◆ Key issues



Learning So Far

- ◆ Key points, implications that have struck you?



Outline

- ◆ What we know
- ◆ What we should do
- ◆ What it means for you




What We Know

- ◆ Good and equitable education matters
- ◆ We are doing well
- ◆ But we can do better
- ◆ And we know how



Why Education Matters

- ◆ Public education expresses our values
 - Human development
 - Opportunity for all
 - Fair to all
 - What you can do, not who you are
- ◆ Education as a key support to democracy
- ◆ The importance of lifelong learning
- ◆ None of these can be taken for granted



Public Education Rests on Public Confidence

- ✦ We ask people to:
 - Send us their children
 - Give us their money
- ✦ We can only do what people will allow us to do
- ✦ Confidence remains an issue
 - Strong among local parents
 - Less so in broader community



We Are Doing Well

- ◆ Outcomes generally good
- ◆ Inequities smaller than many countries
- ◆ High participation rates
- ◆ Reasonable levels of engagement
- ◆ Decent levels of public support



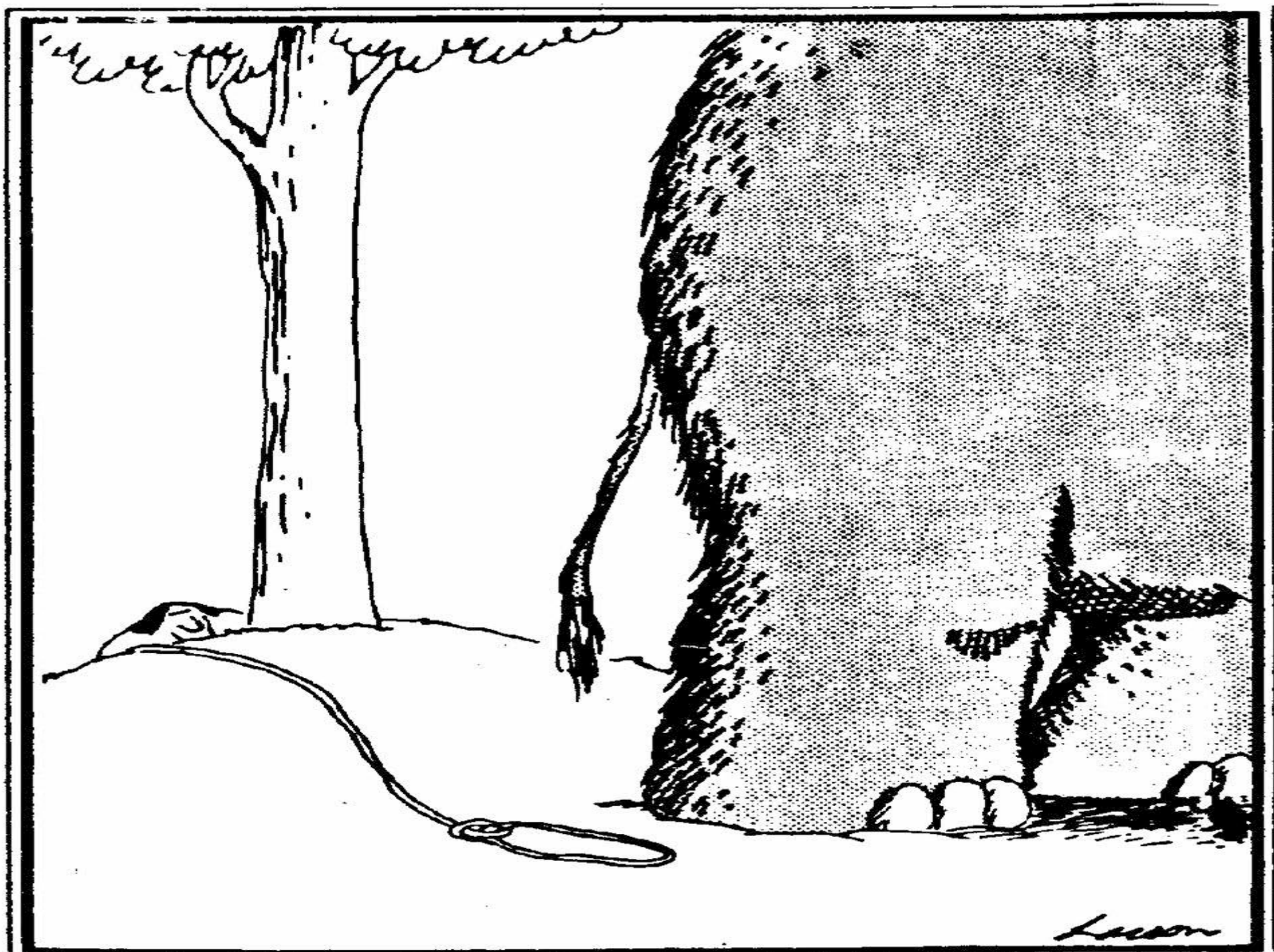
Challenges Remain

- ◆ Inequalities in outcomes still too large
 - Socioeconomic status, ethnicity, disability
- ◆ Public confidence not yet sufficient
- ◆ Level of challenge rising steadily
 - ‘Good enough’ isn’t good enough



Improving Student Outcomes

- ◆ Broad range of outcomes
 - Short and long term
 - Academic - skills, graduation
 - Attitudinal – love of learning, motivation
- ◆ Focus on reducing inequalities
 - Reaching every student
- ◆ Improvement must be system-wide
 - Anecdotes and individual successes are not enough





How Are You Doing in BC?



How Do We Do This?

- ◆ Essential to be strategic
- ◆ Moral purpose
- ◆ Focus on key goals
- ◆ Attention to multiple elements
- ◆ Focus and persistence
- ◆ Attention to implementation

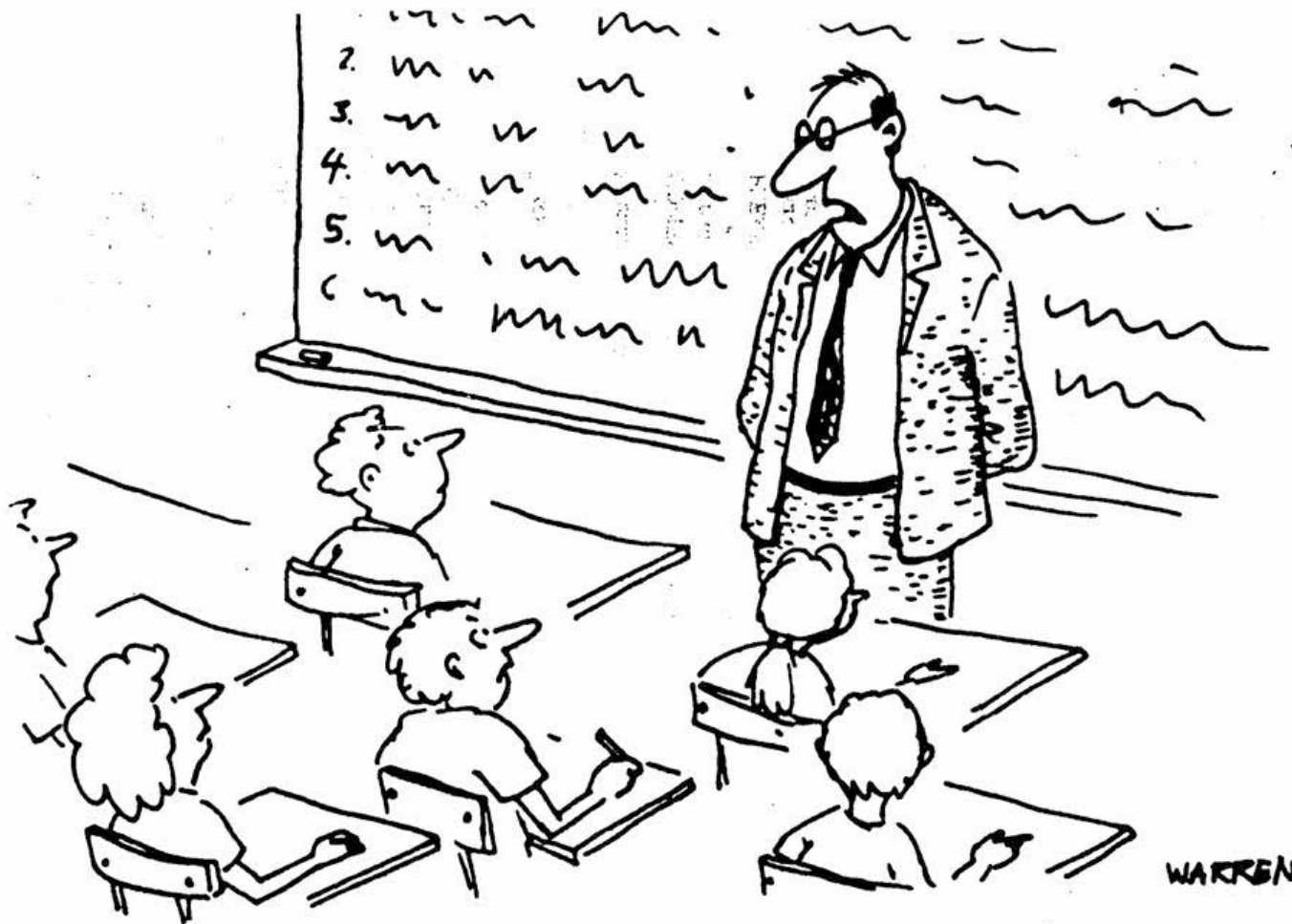
Tri-Level Reform





Key Elements – Changing Schooling

- ◆ Focus on student outcomes
 - A few key priorities
 - Clear goals and measures
- ◆ Strong leadership at all levels
 - Political as well as educators
- ◆ Changing teaching and learning practices
- ◆ Capacity-building for schools and districts
 - Teams
 - Job-embedded learning
- ◆ Using research and data effectively
- ◆ Student engagement and voice



"I expect you all to be independent, innovative, critical thinkers who will do exactly as I say."

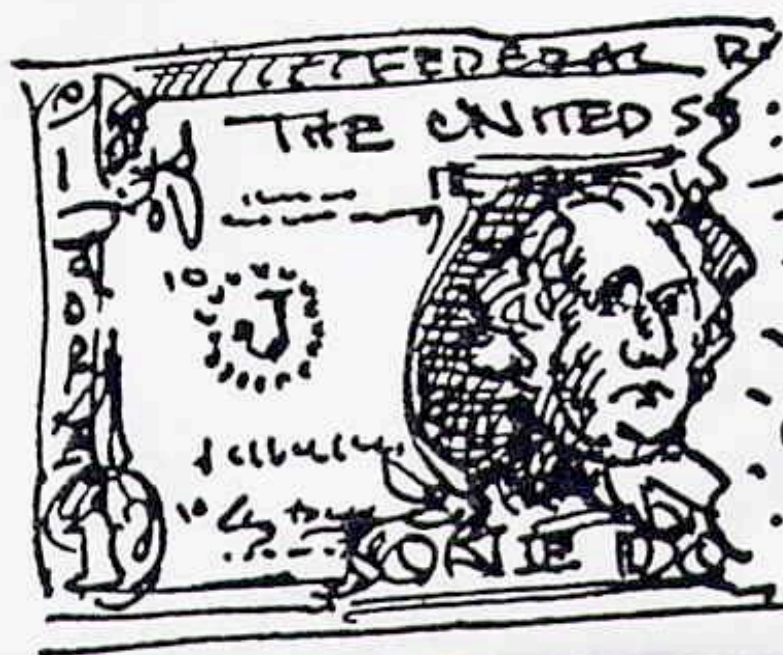


Key Elements – Political Context

- ◆ Creating alignment
 - Respect for all parties
 - Opportunities for real dialogue
 - Stress on partnership
 - Working out diverse views
- ◆ Community engagement
- ◆ Public reporting
 - Challenges as well as successes
- ◆ Enough resources, properly used

ABRELL'S AND
THOMPSON'S

Actual Facts!



IF PEOPLE WERE
ELIMINATED FROM
THE EARTH,
72¢ OUT OF
EVERY DOLLAR
COULD BE SAVED.



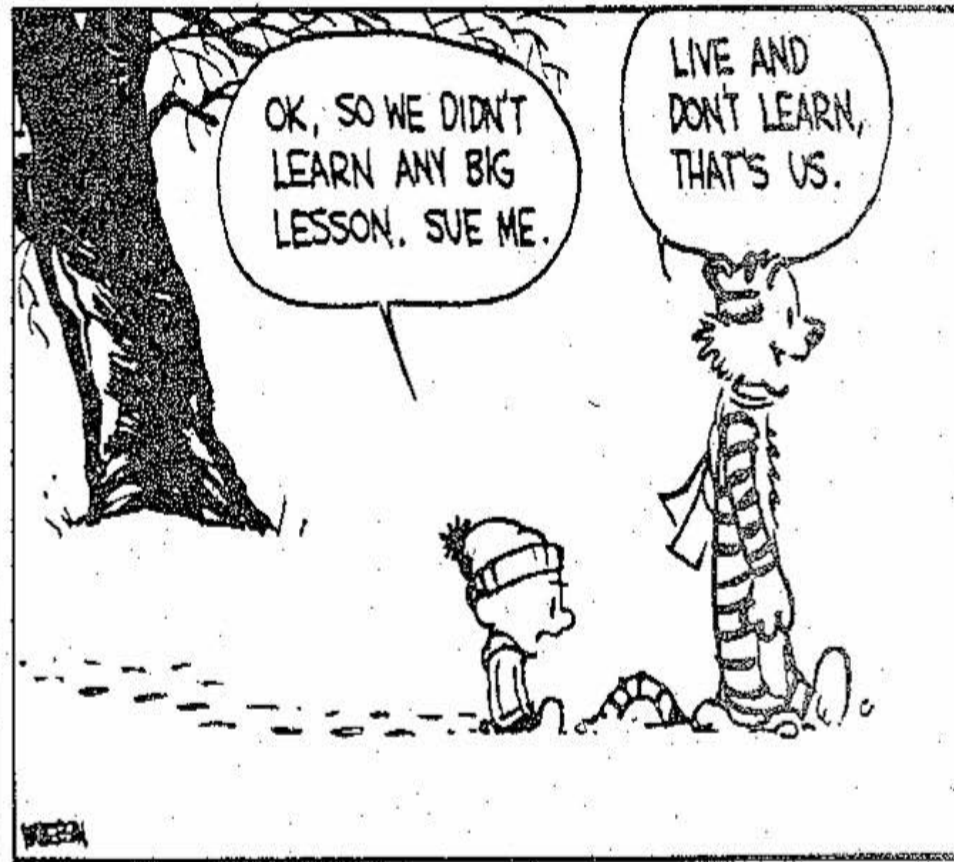
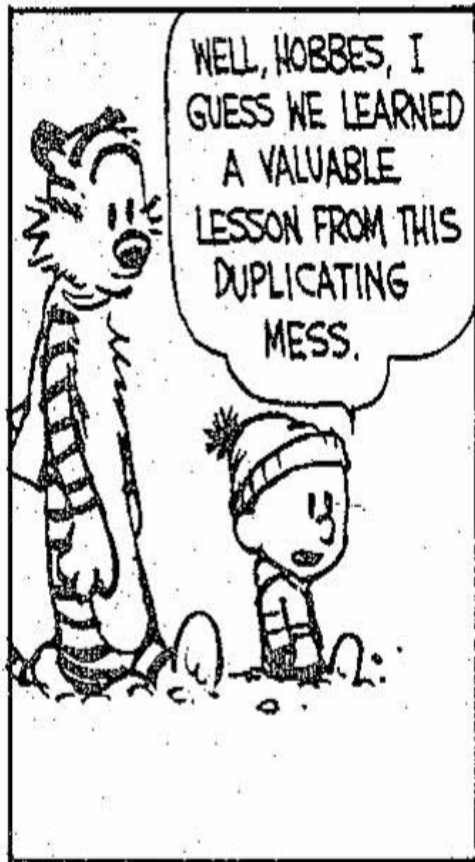
Managing Distractions

- ◆ Without losing focus, have to pay attention to:
 - Safety and health issues
 - Surprises
 - Stakeholder issues
 - Money
 - Local issues
 - ‘All politics are local’



Changing Teacher and Learning

- ◆ Working towards common practices
 - Sharing existing good practice
 - Supporting evidence-based practice
 - Building learning communities
 - Using student voice
- ◆ Constant feedback on impact
- ◆ Avoid imposition

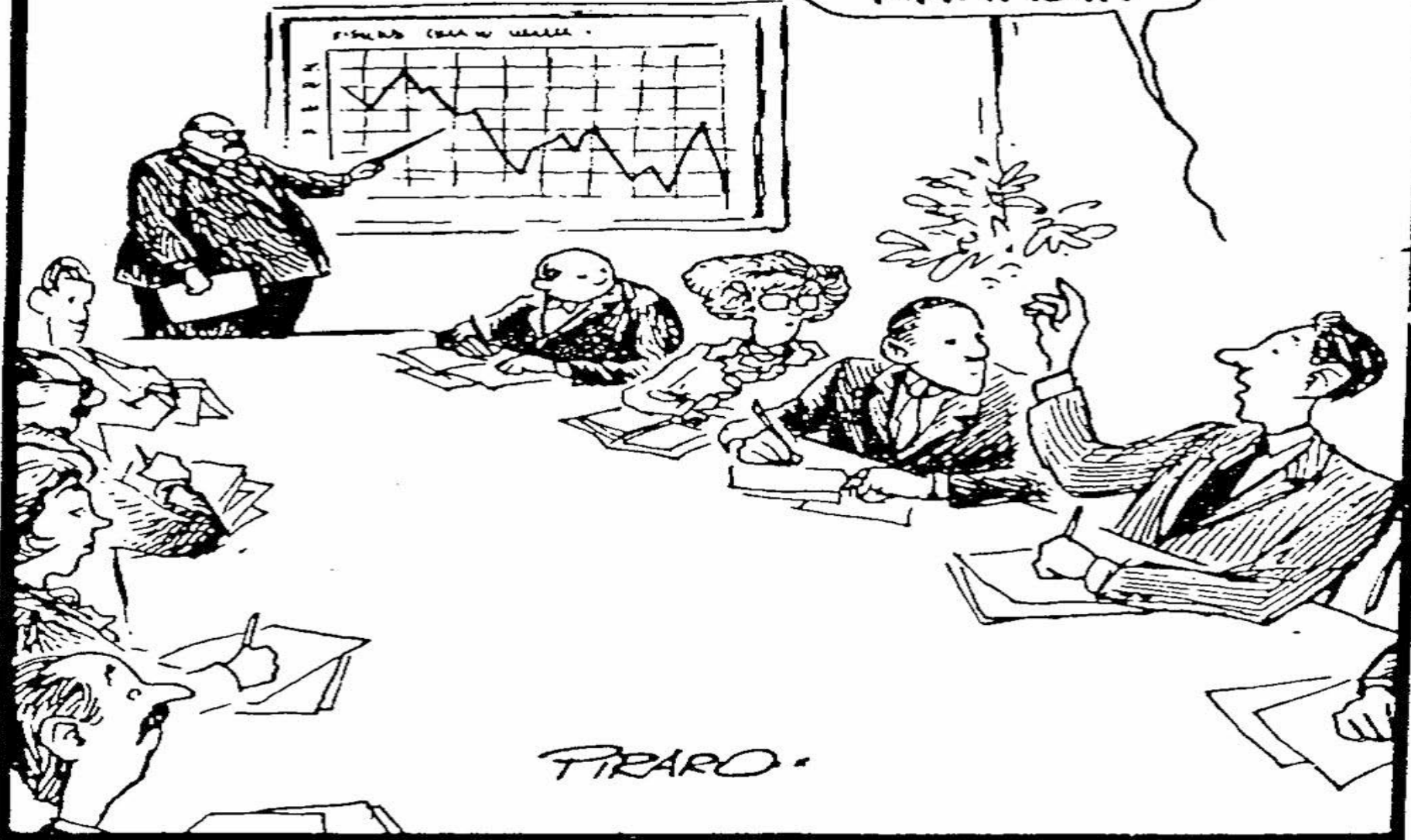




Importance of School Context

- ◆ SES matters
- ◆ High expectations for all students
 - Who are we underestimating?
- ◆ Variable strategies
 - Importance of good instruction
 - Importance of community engagement
- ◆ Reasons, not excuses

EXCUSE ME, WOULD YOU MIND
SPICING UP YOUR DELIVERY? I'M
HAVING A HECK OF A TIME STAYING
AWAKE...



TIRARO



Does This Picture Work for You?

- ◆ What looks possible?
- ◆ What looks most difficult or unlikely?



Resources



*"It's up to you now, Miller. The only thing that can save us
is an accounting breakthrough."*



Resources

- ◆ Amount matters
- ◆ But so does allocation
 - How we deploy staff
 - What PD we support
 - Keeping focus on teaching and learning
- ◆ General skill and awareness level here is not adequate



Leadership

- ◆ Recruiting, retaining and developing great people
- ◆ Leadership as shared
 - In and beyond the school
 - No room for authoritarianism
- ◆ Operations as well as vision
- ◆ Doing and communicating
- ◆ Importance of focus on students and learning



Challenges

- ◆ Will and skill
- ◆ Overcoming negative habits
 - Building partnerships
- ◆ Finding/creating capacity
 - Centrally and locally
- ◆ Managing the portfolio of issues
 - Each deserves more attention than can be given
- ◆ Using resources effectively



Further Reflections

- ◆ Stronger and weaker elements?
- ◆ What could/should we
 - Continue?
 - Strengthen?
 - Change?
 - Stop?



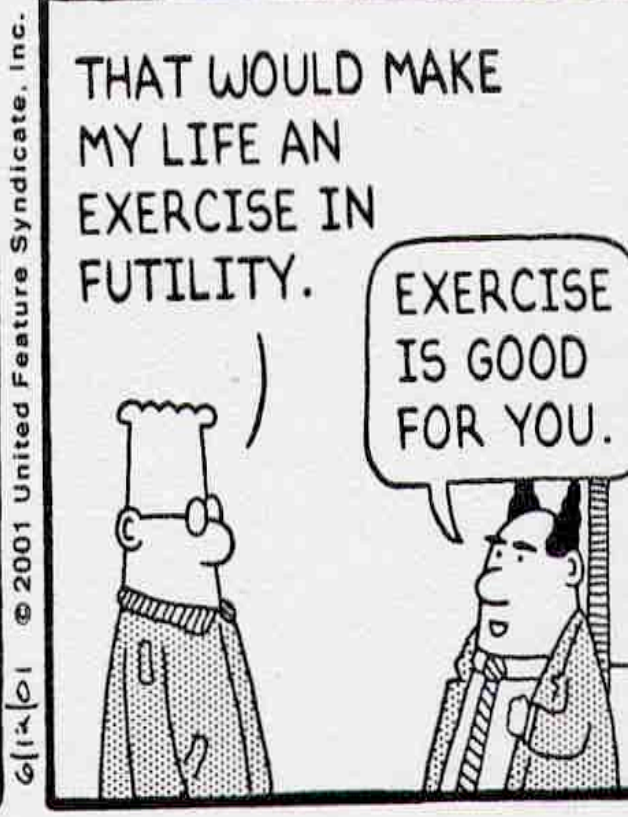
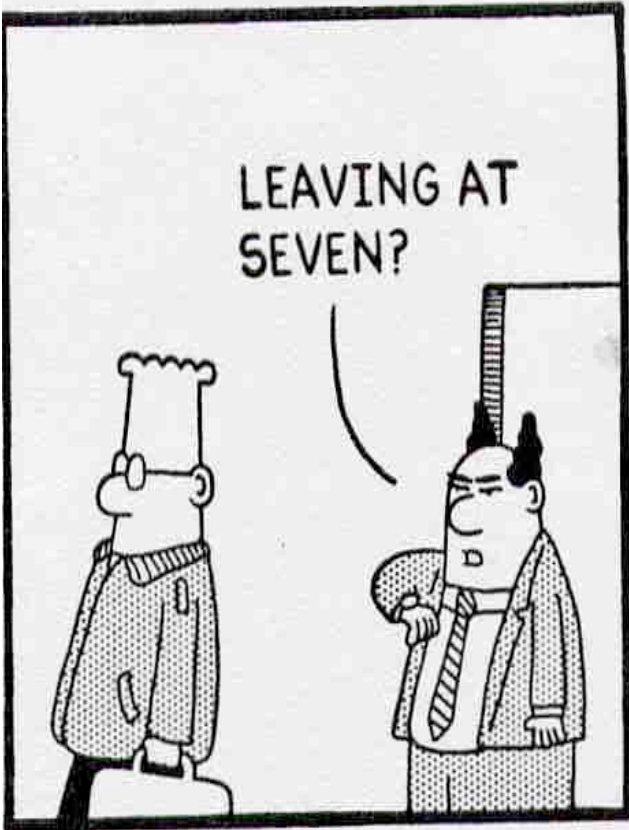
Balancing Contradictions

- ◆ Enthusiasm and scepticism
- ◆ Idealism and pragmatism
- ◆ Pressure and support
- ◆ Direction and participation
- ◆ Learner, staff, parent and system needs
- ◆ Vision and flexibility
- ◆ Long-term and short-term
- ◆ Impatience and patience



Implications for You

- ◆ Relentless focus on student outcomes
- ◆ Mobilizing energy and good will
- ◆ Managing distractions
- ◆ Coping with competing pressures
- ◆ Retaining optimism



© 2001 United Feature Syndicate, Inc.



A Theme

I know.

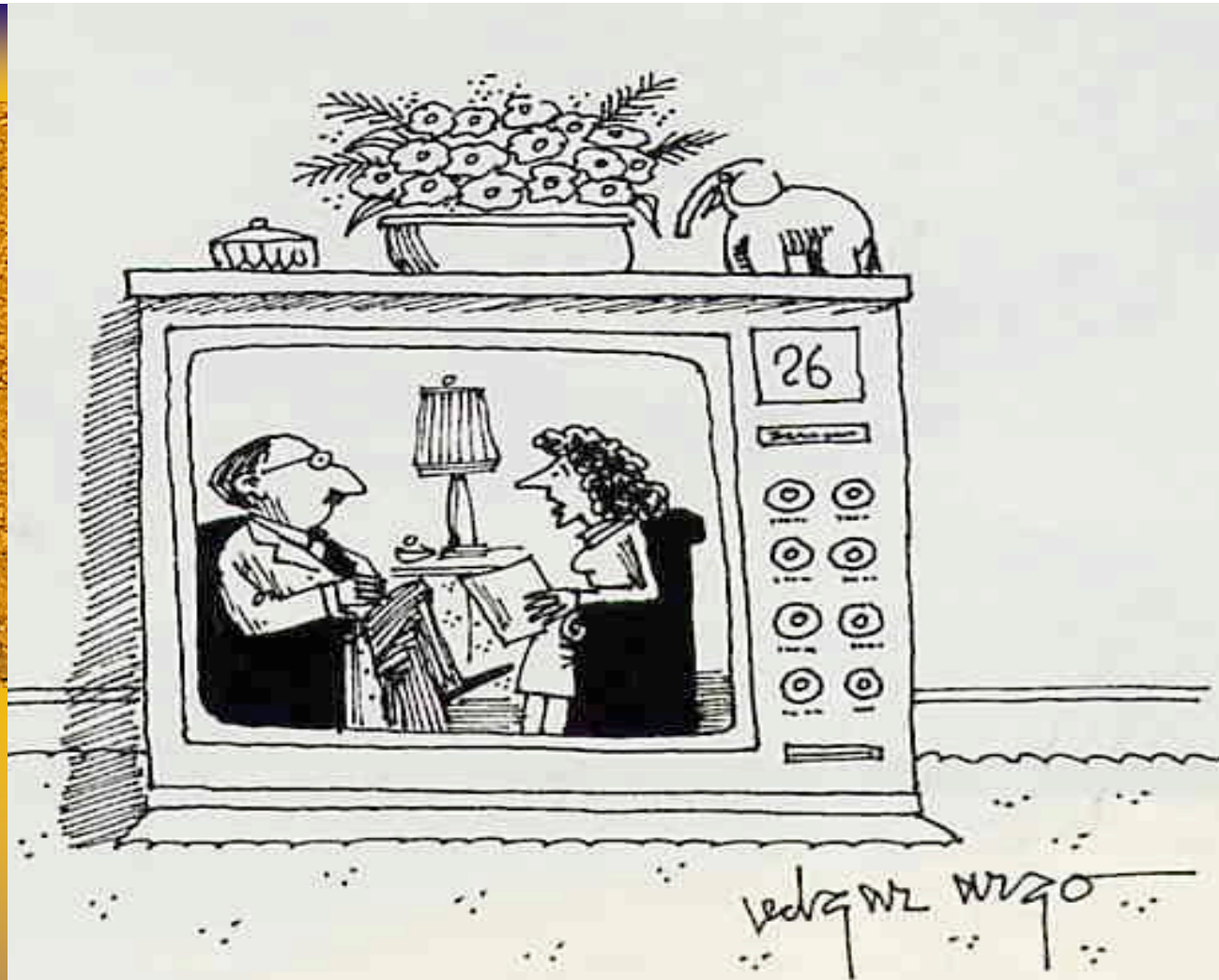
But I do not accept.

And I am not resigned.

Dirge Without Music

Edna St. Vincent Millay





*"In the few minutes remaining,
Dr. Nemo, could you briefly give us
some idea what you've been
talking about for the last hour?"*



A Concluding Story



Thank You



Questions and Comments?