

# Creating a High Flat Gradient *Lessons from Improving Schools*

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UBC Symposium

January 24, 2003



# WORLD CLASS CONCEPTS FOR BC

1. INNOVATION  
and
2. EFFECTIVENESS  
and
3. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT  
and
4. INQUIRING, COHERENT LEARNING COMMUNITIES
5. RESEARCHING USING ASSESSMENT  
OF (a little)  
FOR (a lot)  
AND AS (a lot)  
.....LEARNING

# WORLD CLASS CONCEPTS FOR BC...

6. USING COHERENT STRATEGIES AND STRUCTURES  
to get
7. VALUE ADDED SCHOOLS  
for
8. BOOSTING THE LEARNING OF ALL LEARNERS  
and especially
9. THE MOST VULNERABLE LEARNERS  
so that we get
10. A HIGH FLAT SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE, EXCELLENCE GRADIENT  
soon
11. SO THAT EVERY K STUDENT IN BC HAS A GREAT CHANCE FOR  
LIFE SUCCESS – NOW.

# Innovation – solving a new problem in new ways

“Innovation is now widely seen as the key to  
building a stronger Canada.”

Innovation Nation: Canadian Leadership from Java  
to Jurassic Park, 2002

Country: Australia  
Researcher: Peter Cuttance

# SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT THROUGH SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS

.....Systematically and in a sustained way applying the best of what we know over a sufficient time period to get the results we want.....

“to engage in ‘best practice’ we must find best practice....Each nation must seek new ways to improve schooling by casting the broadest net possible.”

Reynolds World Class Schools

International Perspectives on School Effectiveness

Country: US

District: Baltimore

Researcher: Sam Springfield

# **Vulnerability Considered – Value Added Schools**

**29% of Canadian children enter school with some significant degree of vulnerability.**

**Willms, National Longitudinal Survey, 2002**

**Where: Australia, Singapore  
Case Studies: Lynette Watts/Lysia Kee**

# HIGH FLAT LEARNING OUTCOMES GRADIENT

There is an underlying premise that equality of social outcomes can never be attained but that as a society we must strive for equality of opportunity.

Worried: UK, New Zealand, US

# LARGE SCALE ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING

**A judicious amount of large scale assessment gives positive direction to both educators and policy makers.**

**Wondering: UK**

**Researchers: Stoll, Reynolds, Barber, David Hargreaves**

# ASSESSMENT AS LEARNING

**Self assessment for metacognitive growth and improved results is critically important.**

**Where: California  
BC**

**Researchers: Eva Baker, CRESST, Lorna Earl (forthcoming)  
students, teachers, principals, district leaders**

# ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

**Assessing to improve teaching and learning  
IN A TIMELY FASHION.**

**Improving schools assess for learning regularly  
– at least monthly.**

**Where: UK, New Zealand, BC  
Researchers: Stoll, Tamperley, Halbert, Kaser**

# NETWORKED LEADERSHIP

**To create the “high, flat gradient” for BC learners we need leadership across roles ethically invested in the growth of student learning for all students.**

**Kaser/Halbert, Networked Learning Leadership  
forthcoming**

**Where: Australia, BC, UK, Norway (“organic”)**

**Researchers: Stephen Huber and others. Preparing School Leaders for the 21<sup>st</sup>  
Century. An International Comparison of Development Programs in 15  
Countries**

# WORLD VIEWS – WORLD CLASS SCHOOLS

## Recommendation #1

*Creating world class schools  
requires strong systems  
not just people.*

“Strong systems minimize the variance in the quality of education provided, increase the likelihood of continuance over time.”

## World Views – Recommendation #2

***Creating world class schools requires a taken-for-granted view of good educational practice.***

**“English speaking countries evidenced huge variations in what was seen as acceptable practice...children in the early-age phases of schooling may be the losers.”**

## World Views – Recommendation #3

***Creating world-class schools requires technologies of practice.***

**Put simply if there is an absence of a shared view of practice transmitted through programs of professional education, then the ‘hole’ will be filled by practices that are determined by the personal views of teachers and principals.**

## World Views – Recommendation #4

***Creating world class schools requires societal support.***

**In some societies education is seen as a task for society as a whole, in which teachers and schools are important and highly respected.**

# What is Needed for Educational Effectiveness...

**is a paradoxical, complicated set of societal features; namely, the perception that education and teachers matter and are worthy of support, but a culture that in its day-to-day functioning does the job of educating its young because it feels that education is not JUST a school responsibility.**

## World Views – Recommendation #5

***Creating world-class schools requires thinking the unthinkable.***

**Knowledge of such things as how to teach reading has advanced tremendously over the past fifty years.**

**Teachers need time to think about and plan lessons that require active engagement and higher order thinking on the part of students.**

# CONCLUSIONS

If in virtually every area of its existence (medicine, new schools of thought, effective business practices, ethical fitness) humanity is using a world of experience to draw on to improve itself –

**why should we in education not do the same?**

## Our Challenge

**Rather than being frightened by a world of educational experiences, surely it is time for us to learn from them.**

## Looking Outside

**It is time to look broadly across the planet, and then integrate what we see with what we do, so that we may do it better.**

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# The British Columbia Network of Performance Based Schools *Building Confidence Through Inquiry*

*Applying World Class  
Concepts to BC Public  
Schools*

*Dr. Judy Halbert and Dr.  
Linda Kaser*



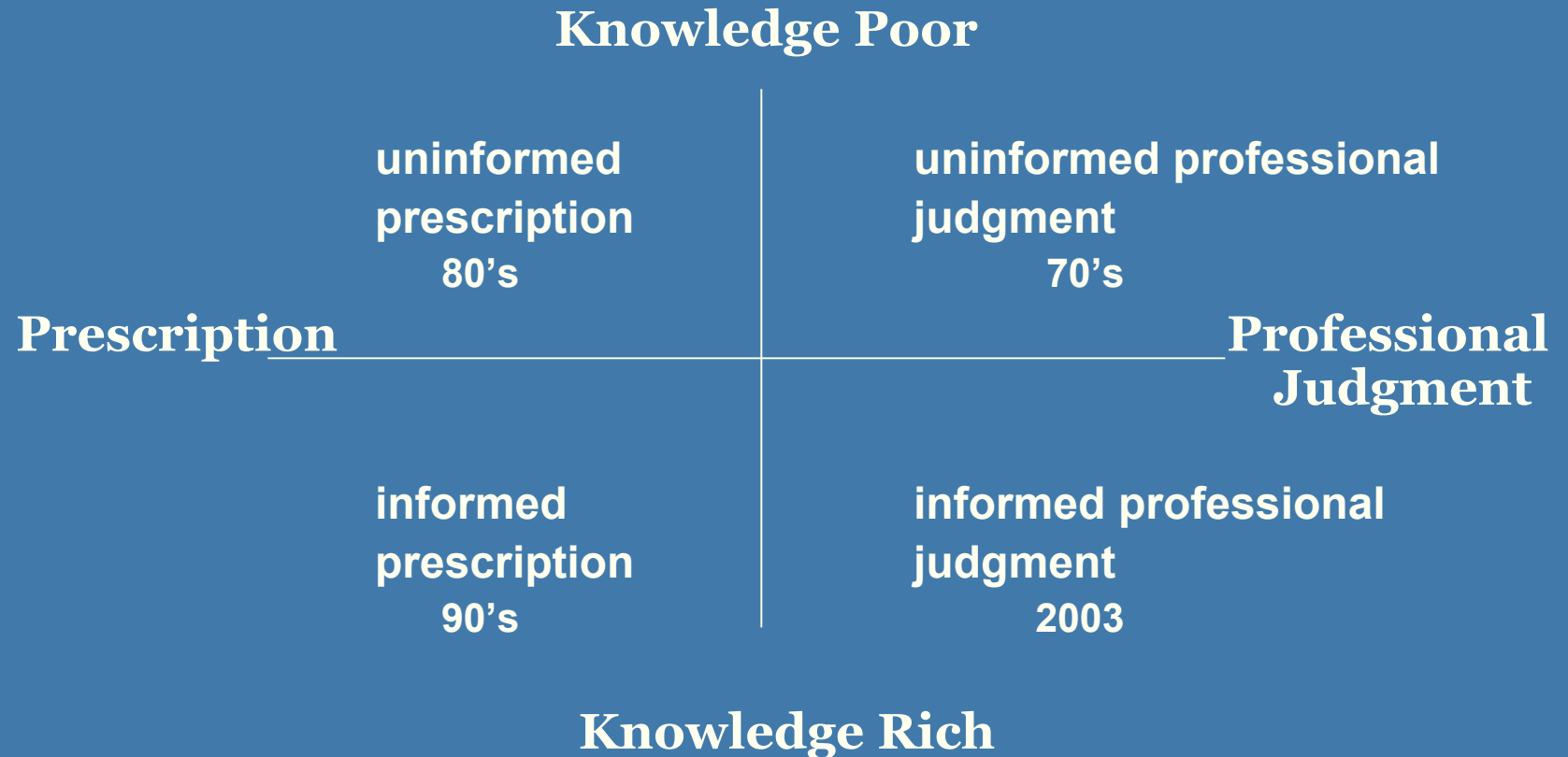
# The Network in the Canadian Context

National Mood - Search for certainty; focus on quality

“Canadians are less interested in the ranking of schools than they are in knowing that all schools could achieve five stars.”

*Searching for Certainty – the New Canadian Mindset* — Bricker, D and Greenspon, E, 2001

# What is needed now



(from M. Fullan, 2002)

# The Network

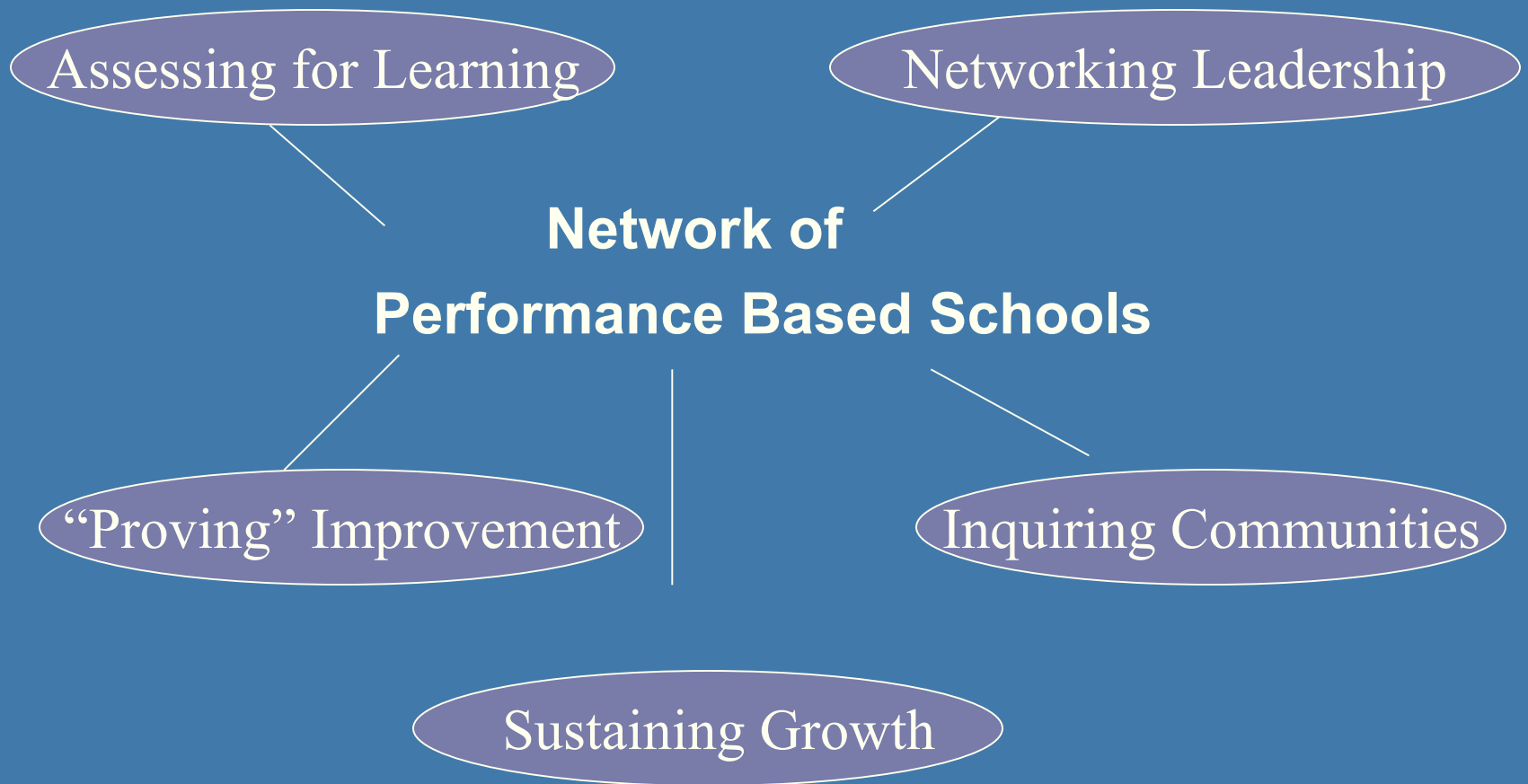
“Networks engage school-based educators in **directing their own learning** allowing them to side-step the limitations of institutional roles, hierarchies and geographic locations while encouraging them to collaborate with a broad variety of people...Participants have opportunities to grow in a professional community that focuses their development providing ways to learning that are more in keeping with their lived professional lives.”

Lieberman, 1997

# The BC Network of Performance Based Schools

- Teacher-principal teams from 100 schools across 24 districts in BC exploring the power of shared classroom based assessment measures (BC performance standards) to improve student learning in key areas.
- Schools develop a research question, collect baseline data as a team, focus instruction, and share strategies, and communicate their findings – with words and numbers.

# BC Network of Performance Based Schools – Key Concepts



# Assessing for Learning

What will it take for every learner (student, teacher, and school) to be able to say honestly:

**‘I know how I am doing and I know what I need to do to get better’?**

# Assessing for Learning

BC Performance Standards in Writing, Reading, Numeracy and Social Responsibility:

- Teacher developed and tested; *not* mandated
- Classroom based measures with face validity
- Contain scoring guides, quick scales, sample tasks, and examples of student work in each of 4 levels
- Available free at [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/perf\\_stands/](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/perf_stands/)
- Provide basis for voluntary sharing across classrooms, schools, districts, and province

# Networking Leadership

**What does leadership look like in schools (districts, provinces) that are improving student learning?**

# Networking Leadership

- Ethically focused on improving student learning
- No fame, no blame, no shame, no false claims
- Networked across roles
- Networked across the province

# **Inquiring Communities**

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**Can we approach school improvement in the same way we want children to learn – from curiosity to active inquiry?**

# Inquiring Communities

- **Schools as research centres**
- **Internal inquiry enriched through the provision of the most promising current international research and resources**
- **Active, real, ‘just in time’ research done by teams of practitioners**
- **Evidence based – learner focused**

## Some current questions

- ✓ Will the use of performance standards data and common instructional strategies improve the information writing of boys in Grade 5-7?
- ✓ What % gains will we achieve at both primary and intermediate levels using school-wide cross-grade tutoring as an early literacy intervention?

# More current questions

- ✓ Will the introduction of a structured school wide instructional approach to math problem solving lead to improved student results?
- ✓ By using 'kid friendly' social responsibility standards, will students be better able to articulate specific examples that demonstrate an expanded understanding of what it means to be a good citizen?

# **“Proving” Improvement**

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**How do we know that what we are doing is making a difference?**

# **“Proving” Improvement**

- **Collecting evidence, creating simple visual displays**
- **Acting on the data**
- **Improving learning**
- **Telling stories with words and numbers**

## **Sustaining the Work**

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**How can we develop an approach to school improvement that will last?**

# Sustainability is

- Change that promotes continuous learning
- Change that lasts over time
- Change that can be supported by available or achievable resources
- Change that doesn't impact negatively on the surrounding environment
- Change that builds future capacities

Hargreaves, A & Fink, F. *Sustaining School Leadership*, in press

# Sustaining the Work

- Simple, cost effective structures, small research grants
- Personal contact – 4 meetings per year
- Organized story telling and celebration– “Findings and Stories from the Network of Performance Based Schools”
- Use of technology – listserv and website: [www.npbs.ca](http://www.npbs.ca)
- Invitational, diverse, inclusive
- Connected to and supportive of other initiatives

*“Successful leadership is sustained leadership; nothing simpler, nothing less.”*

Hargreaves, A & Fink, F. *Sustaining School Leadership*, in press

## Where to next.....

- How can we move classrooms, schools, and districts from isolation or dependence to healthy interdependence?
- How can we learn quickly from each other provincially and globally - building on diversity, social inclusivity, and inquiry?

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