

Douglas Reeves on Six Critical School-Success Factors

In this thoughtful *American School Board Journal* article, author/consultant Douglas Reeves lists six core strategies that have the greatest impact on student learning and educational equity:

- *Feedback* – “When students receive feedback that is accurate, specific, and timely, the impact on achievement is so great that it is more significant than the socioeconomic status of children,” says Reeves, quoting a meta-analysis of meta-analyses by John Hattie that drew on data from millions of students. “The purpose of feedback is to improve performance... Ask yourself if your present feedback systems are leading to improved performance by students, teachers, and leaders.”

- *Educator efficacy* – “When teachers believe they are the primary causes of student achievement, student gains are three to five times higher than when they assume that the causes are factors beyond their control,” says Reeves. The key here is providing teachers with accurate, timely ways of seeing their impact on student learning.

- *Time* – Students who have fallen behind need extra instructional time before, during, or after school to catch up, says Reeves. “If a quarterback needed to improve passing skills, a basketball player needed to work on free-throw shooting, or a musician had a difficult time playing a particularly challenging piece, we would not hesitate to prescribe ‘more practice’ as the remedy.” The same goes for struggling students.

- *Nonfiction writing* – “[F]ew activities have a greater and more consistent positive impact on every other discipline than nonfiction writing,” says Reeves. “Description, persuasion, and analysis help students at every level improve thinking, reasoning, and analytical skills.” Students need to do a great deal more of this kind of writing in school, he says – and get feedback on it.

- *Formative assessment* – On-the-spot classroom checks for understanding and interim assessments can have a powerful effect on teaching and learning, says Reeves. The key is effective follow-up: “What are teachers and principals doing differently today as a result of the most recent formative assessment data?”

- *Expectations* – Reeves says that 40 years of research have shown that “when teachers and administrators expect more, they get more; when they expect less, they get less.” The key is having clear, rigorous grade-level standards and ensuring that teachers’ unit and lesson plans are aligned with those expectations.

“Focusing on the Essentials” by Douglas Reeves in *American School Board Journal*, July 2010 (Vol. 197, #7, p. 39, 41), no e-link available; Reeves is at dreeves@leadandlearn.com.