

# *ENOUGH!!!*



## How to turn obstacles into opportunities

A process for enacting your values

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### Abstract

This presentation will give teachers an opportunity to begin thinking through obstacles in their educational setting and how they can turn those obstacles into opportunities. Teachers will identify their educational values, the obstacles which inhibit enacting those values and the importance of student feedback in making change. Teachers will be taken through a problem solving process to make small but powerful change in their classrooms by embracing 2 important principles of teaching.

1. Enacting your values as an educator to enhance the learning environment
2. Positioning yourself to listen to kids, their wants and needs, to empower and assist students in taking ownership of their learning

Map out a typical day or specific class period in your classroom (content, curriculum, routines).

When you look at your schedule what is missing that you **value** as a teacher?

Look at the way your time is scheduled from your **students perspective**. What do you think students are taking away from your class? What does this teacher want me to value?



# Essential Question:

When in my carefully constructed schedule  
can I steal moments of **time** to enact  
my **values** as a teacher?

Teaching as I see it, is an ongoing series of microexperiments that extend and modify the repertoire of teachers. When we stop experimenting, we stop living as teachers (Newkirk 31)

# WHAT ARE YOUR VALUES?

*Reestablish your values as a teacher and a learner*

What are your top 4 values as an educator?


...the teacher-proof curriculum, merit pay, state testing etc. reminds me of a diet commercial.” Lots of money is spent on diet products and a lot is spent on new educational tests. Weighing yourself constantly doesn’t make you lighter and testing children constantly doesn’t make them smarter. You have to establish a new ethic, it’s not a quick fix, it’s a commitment. It’s a way of life (Berger 4)

# Obstacles

When reflecting on your values, identify the areas in your setting that are preventing your values to shine through.

OBSTACLE	YES	WHY OR HOW	NO	WHY ISN'T IT
<b>Curriculum</b>				
<b>Colleagues</b>				
<b>Time</b>				
<b>Resources</b>				
<b>Expecta- tions</b>				

# Obstacles

Pick one issue that is preventing you from integrating your values into your setting.

How are we going to work through this obstacle to transform it from an obstacle to an opportunity?

“By our current methods, we may be training (not educating) a generation of children who are repelled by learning, thinking that it means only drudgery, worksheets, test preparation, and test-taking.”  
(Ravitch 231)

# Student Feedback

- \* Ideas on how to retrieve feedback from students
  - \* Surveys
  - \* Teacher/Student Interviews or discussions
  - \* Student writing
  - \* Listening when students Think/Pair/Share
  - \* Small group discussions
  - \* Whole class discussions

What questions could you ask your students that would help you identify what students value and what obstacles are getting in their way of learning?

Once a student sees that he or she is capable of excellence, that student is never quite the same. There is a new self-image, a new notion of possibility. There is an appetite for excellence. After students have had a taste of excellence, they're never quite satisfied with less; they're always hungry. (Berger 8)

# Values, Obstacles, Student Feedback...

Step 1: Which value is yelling at you? Why is this important to you?

## **Develop readers, thinkers, and lovers of learning**

The value that was screaming at me was to somehow transform students from going through the motions of school to students who are readers, thinkers, and lovers of learning. I became saddened that in our current school structure, my 4th graders didn't have a love for reading or learning. If our youngsters don't thoroughly enjoy reading and learning at the elementary level, the rest of their school years are going to be treacherous.

Step 2: What obstacles are in your way?

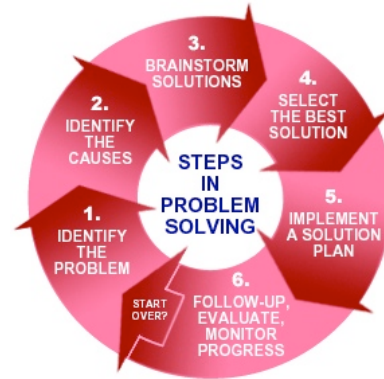
My biggest obstacle was time. My schedule was planned out for me and I didn't have much flexibility within the day. I had to find a way to restructure my time to increase independent reading.

Step 3: How do your students feel, need or want in regard to this value?

After receiving honest opinions from my students via anonymous surveys I found out that my students felt that the scripted reading program (Imagine It) was not capturing their attention as learners. The students wanted to read books they could connect to. I learned from my students that they wanted time to read books of their own choice.



# The Problem Solving Process



How I overcame an obstacle in my classroom and created an opportunity to develop a love of reading in my students

## **1. Identify the Problem: What is the value you want to enact?**

I knew that I wanted my students to become lovers of reading but there was no “allowed” time in my day that could be devoted to students reading chapter books of their choice. Our reading time is very structured and we don’t have much flexibility within the curriculum.

## **2. Identify the Causes: What are the obstacles preventing you from implementing your values?**

My students have lost the love of learning and reading with the inception of the Reading First grant and adoption of OpenCourt/Imagine It curriculum. The strict guidelines and expectation to teach the program to fidelity have caused a lack of student ownership in their learning.

Time has also been a factor. My schedule does not have much flexibility or time built in for students to read for pleasure or to expand upon their inquiries to make learning meaningful.

## **3. Brainstorm Solutions**

- Implement Inquiry Model which would create opportunities for students to read
- Try to fit independent reading into the 90 minute Reading Block
- Literature groups during workshop
- Look at my schedule again and find a chunk of time I could steal to give students time to read

#### 4. Select the Best Solution

*A word of caution: Pick your battles! Although I would have loved to switch to an inquiry learning model in my classroom, we had attempted to create a marriage between the 2 philosophies and it was unsuccessful. I knew that if I wanted to have more leverage to pitch inquiry next year, I had to start with small, meaningful changes in which the student progress would be apparent.*

☐ Implement Inquiry Model which would create opportunities for students to read

My team attempted to implement pieces of Inquiry Learning but quickly learned that it's too difficult to follow the inquiry model in a world of structured curriculum, pacing guides and resistance from administration and reading coaches that were not on board.

☐ Try to fit independent reading into the 90 minute Reading Block

My administration is very clear on how our 90 min. Reading block is structured and that we are only allowed to teach the Imagine It curriculum, so I decided that was a boat I shouldn't rock.

☐ Literature groups during workshop

My team leveled students during workshop and I really wanted to focus on my home-room students since they were the basis for enacting this change.

☒ Look at my schedule again and find a chunk of time I could steal to give students time to read

I looked closely at my schedule, examined routines and moments of the day that weren't being used to the fullest learning potential. I realized that from 8:00-8:15 when I am supposed to be teaching math concept board or students should be practicing math facts, our time was being wasted. During that time, I need to take attendance, talk to students about homework, check in with students about various things, etc., and there was no way I could teach during that window of time. Students had been practicing math facts (in a drill and kill method-which wasn't working well anyway) during this time and I decided to steal those 15 minutes to let my students read!!!!

#### 5. Implement the Solution: What are the steps you are going to take to implement the change.

I gave my students one school day to pick a book of their choice and explained to them that each day from 8:00-8:15 we would be reading our chapter books. The only requirement was to read during that time.

## 6. Follow-up, Evaluate, Monitor Progress: What activities or strategies can you use to get feedback to see if it's working?

According to my administrator, fluency is the #1 indicator of a good reader, so I decided to collect fluency data so I could show her how stealing 15 minutes of my day to incorporate independent reading increased their fluency scores.

	% OF STUDENTS AT 4TH GRADE BENCHMARK
February	49%
May	90%
Growth	41%

## STUDENT OBSERVATIONS

My students are more motivated than ever to finish assignments so they can have time to read their books.

They are finding examples of figurative language and parts of speech and want to share a simile, prepositional phrase or complex sentence they found while reading.

The kiddos are applying the comprehension skills and strategies they have been taught and talking about them with their peers and teachers. I have overheard many amazing conversations.

## On Reading...

We can spend hours determining what students should know and be able to do, crafting instruction to accomplish the desired results, but without considering students right to an engaging, trustworthy, risk-free place in which to learn, what we teach will always fall short (Miller 37).

Students must believe that they can read and that reading is worth learning how to do well (Miller 37).

If we create a passion for reading within our students, they will be able to carry on the kind of inquiry that is needed to function in our democracy (Miller 180).

# An obstacle turned into an opportunity...

Value: Develop readers, thinkers and lovers of learning

FROM	TO	OUTCOME
Scheduled drill and kill (15 min.)	Student choice in chapter books	1. Fluency rates have increased from 49% reading at the target fluency level to 90% achieving the standard.
		2. Student dialogue with peers about comprehension skills and strategies has been rampant
		3. Students defend the comprehension strategies they are using.
		4. Students went from dreading reading to LOVING reading.

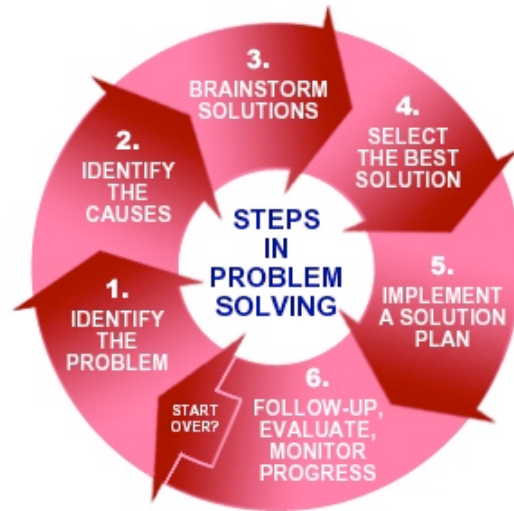
A high level of literacy is central to academic, economic, and social success (Wilhelm p. 19)

Working through the problem solving process  
one step at a time...

Step 1: Which value is yelling at you to pay attention to?  
Why is this important to you?

Step 2: What obstacles are in your way?

Step 3: How do your students feel, need or want in regards to  
this value?



**I. Identify the problem you want to tackle: What is the value you want to enact?**

**2. Identify why you feel this is a problem: What are the obstacles preventing you from implementing your values?**

**3. Brainstorm Solutions**

**4. Choose the Best Solution (be practical)**

**5. How are you going to implement the solution? What are the steps you are going to take to implement the change.**

**6. How will you evaluate if your solution is working? What activities or strategies can you use to get feedback to see if it's working?**

**What is your vision?** What do you want the content, routines, peer interactions, teacher, student relationship, etc to...

LOOK LIKE	SOUND LIKE	FEEL LIKE

What scares you or makes you nervous?



## Resources:

Berger, Ron. (2003). An Ethic of Excellence. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann.

Miller, Donalyn (2009). The Book Whisperer. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass

Newkirk, Thomas (2009) Holding on to Good Ideas in a Time of Bad Ones. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann

Ravitch, Diane (2010). The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice are Undermining Education. Basic Books

Wilhelm, Jeffery (2007). Engaging Readers and Writers with Inquiry. New York: Scholastic