I hope to talk with you about putting all the information that you've been hearing for the last two days into practice at the middle/high school level. Periodically, I'll jump to high school. I'm sorry I wasn't here yesterday, but I am a teacher and was teaching all day yesterday.

I'd like to talk about three big ideas for improving the achievement of students at the middle school and high school level, specifically, English learners. For the last eight years, I've had the privilege of working in City Heights with 5,300 kids, all of whom qualify for free lunch, 72 percent of whom are English language learners who speak 39 languages. These were the lowest performing schools of their kind in the City of San Diego and among the lowest performing in the State of California; they no longer are. They've made remarkable progress: they've made AYP and API. Every once in a while, there'll be a year that they're off or there'll be a year that they're on. But Monroe Clark, for example, is up 295 points on the API. Those of you outside of California, that doesn't mean much to you, but in California, it means a lot to us.

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Here are the three things that I think really have mattered. The first one is that we need some level of instructional consistency. We've heard about that a lot at this conference. I've read some of the papers. I heard the last couple of sessions. We need to figure out ways that we can help teachers have some consistency in their instructional routines between biology, earth science, history, math, visual and performing arts, and so on. The second thing I think we need to do is help teachers internalize an instructional framework. And then third, we need to look at student work on a regular basis.

The questions we started asking ourselves around this first idea: "Are all teachers teachers of reading?" We've been saying that for decades now, you know, since at least the '50's. I can trace that phrase back to the '50's, "All teachers are teachers of reading" and I don't believe it's true. I wish we would stop saying that because it just makes the math teachers angry. You know, they just don't want to be told this again. Instead, one of the things we've struggled with is that everything we learn, we learn through language. We learn by reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. And that message that learning is language-based gets my math colleagues to pay attention, gets my science colleagues to pay attention. When you tell a physicist that, now, she's a reading teacher, she just looks at you like you're crazy. But when you say to that same physicist, "The way you teach physics, the way you engage students, and the concepts around physics relate to reading and writing and speaking and listening and viewing." …

The second thing I think we've worked on are building habits that are transportable and transparent, things that go class to class to class with kids: habits. And I don't care which, if you pick the seven we've picked or seven different ones or nine different strategies, it doesn't particularly matter to me. The thing that I think we've learned is that when you do some things first period and there's some predictability to a kid's second period and some predictability to third period, they begin to take those things with them class to class to class. At some point, that strategy, that habit, becomes transparent. I would submit that our students don't really pay attention to how to take Cornell notes anymore. They pay attention to the content because they are taking Cornell notes now. That's one of the habits we've built. And third, as students develop these habits, what are the discipline specific practices we need to teach? Because reading like a scientist differs than reading like a historian, which you've all talked about.

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Here are our seven [strategies]. You have an article that explains each of these seven. We wrote this plan in 1998 with these seven ideas. If I could do over, I would. But they're good enough and they've resulted in lots of achievement changes. For example, I wouldn't call it "anticipatory activities" anymore. We live with that because we called it "anticipatory activities" in 1998. Today, I'd probably call it "building background." I still believe "read-alouds" and "shared reading" are one of the most important things we do for students. We model our thinking on a daily basis, yes, in chemistry, yes, in world history, in every class. So these are the seven that we used. They're not for sale for $25,000. In fact, we didn't even make them up; We 'stole' them from everybody else. What we did is we put them in practice in class after class after class. If you look at the reading that we provided, the first thing I ever wrote about our experience in 2001, the reading that you have in your packet, it says, "Well, should you continue these same strategies year after year after year?" That's one of the questions they've asked you to discuss. But what would be the alternative? Do these for a year and throw them out and get seven new ones? Throw those out after a year and get seven new ones?

We didn't know, quite frankly, in 1998 that we would do these seven strategies for this long. We've gotten deeper and deeper and deeper into these strategies. The things we've learned, as we've read people's work, as we've visited schools, as we've tried things out, we are so much better at these seven. I think they work really well. If they don't work for you, pick five or pick nine or pick an entirely different seven but pick them so that you can start to build those habits with your students.

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Because we're talking about English learners, and you've all been bombarded with vocabulary information, I decided to add to this and bombard you with more vocabulary information. These are familiar ideas to you, right, 'general words', 'specialized words', and 'technical words'. In California, we don't like 'specialized'; we usually say 'academic' in California. So let's look at this sentence. This is taken exactly out of the social studies 6th grade book, verbatim. It says, "Catherine the Great, a minor aristocrat from Germany, became Empress of Russia when her husband, Peter, the grandson of Peter the Great, was killed." Which word do you think most teachers would teach in that sentence? "Aristocrat," the big sexy word, right? It's all-important, "aristocrat." It occurs five more times on the page. On the same page, the word “aristocrat” occurs five more times. What word do I think the students need to be taught in this context: “minor.” I was interested in this sentence. I took this sentence and I made a multiple choice test which I gave to 100 4th graders, 100 7th graders, and 100 10th graders. The 4th graders—72 percent of them—defined ‘minor’ as ‘a person underground looking for gold’. Catherine the Great was under the ground looking for gold and marries her husband: 4th graders, 72 percent of them. Why? If you know California curriculum, we are all about the gold rush in 4th grade; right? The only thing that matters in California history is the gold rush. That’s what we teach. The 7th graders did the best on this test. The 10th graders did the worst: 88 percent of the 100 10th graders said she was underage when she got married. She’s a minor because when you’re 15 years old, what’s your whole world about? Can’t drink, can’t smoke, can’t drive, can’t vote, can’t __, can’t__. You’re underage: you’re a minor, right? So in addition to the context, think about the living situation of the kid. Their world—their 4th grade or 10th grade experiences—influence what they think about those words. That word “minor” is kind of important for this sentence. You kind of want them to know she wasn’t very important. It’s not terrible if they think, you know, she was digging for gold. It’s wrong; it’s not terrible. But think about those things. That’s what we’ve been working on, a five-part vocabulary initiative, so I was pleased to hear some of the presentations earlier.

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We, school wide, have worked on a five-part vocabulary initiative. The first thing we want to do is have independent reading and silent sustained reading every single day for every kid. That means teacher-selected readings from a collection of independent reading [material] and silent, sustained, free-choice reading. Every day, kids read to increase their volume—things they can read. Teacher read-alouds and shared readings: we model word solving as a part of our teacher read-alouds and shared reading. We do content specific vocabulary study. Those are those big, sexy words that we teach usually in the things like word sorts and concept analysis and semantic feature analysis and all those kinds of things. And then academic vocabulary: we use the academic word list. You've heard about it a lot the last two days, right? I can't wait 'til Freddy's new list that I was just hearing about comes out because we're going to change up some of our words. I can't wait to hear what Catherine Snow teaches us about how to teach these words better. But we took those words from the academic word list—the Coxhead list—and we divided them among the grades—6th grade, 7th grade, 8th grade, 9th grade, and 10th grade—and as a school system, we looked at all the permutations that we could think of with those words to show kids how those academic words play out in curriculum.

The last thing we do, and I get criticized nationally when I talk about this, because some of the researchers in the room may hate this. We do five words of the week. They have a common prefix, suffix, root, or base. They are common to the whole school. We're on "mal-" right now, m-a-l: malodorous, malaria, malcontent, malevolent, and malicious. The whole school is on "mal-." I know they're out-of-context. I get a lot of criticism about this. But we're trying to build some predictability. If you come across a word you don't know, you can make an educated guess about it. The way I live with this, when I go to sleep at night, is that my mother paid for me to go to an SAT prep course; my students don't have that opportunity. So if it's a little, tiny bump [up] on their vocabulary,… It's not the only thing we do. In fact, it's the fifth most important thing, I would argue, that we do. We do have five words of the week. We try to build them into context. We have students write raps with the words. We put them in the school bulletin in humorous sentences. They play on the marquee out [in] front of school: "Football 7pm! malodorous, malaria, malcontent…" so we try to bring them in. We notice the words in our readings. We're really trying to show kids that there are some prefix, suffix, roots, or bases that they can use to make educated guesses about unknown words. So that's our vocabulary initiative.

One of the things that we've worked on is helping people internalize an instructional framework. This work started in 2000 when a book came out called *Strategies That Work* and we watched a whole bunch of our teacher friends become strategy junkies. They would go to conferences and all they cared about is strategy, strategy, strategy, strategy, and they were going to cram reciprocal teaching or cram reader's theater or whatever strategy they went to a conference on— they were going to cram it into their already-busy 60-minute or 90-minute class. We wanted to help people think through instruction: "What do you think about instruction? How do you fit those strategies in?"

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The second thing, and I think probably the most important thing we've contributed from San Diego, is helping teachers internalize an instructional framework. It's based on the work that Pearson and colleagues did on gradual release of responsibility. We present it in a slightly different way, and there's teacher responsibility on one side and student responsibility on the other. We called it a focus lesson. It's the whole class time. We set a limit of 15 minutes. The focus lesson can last up to 15 minutes of whole class time. Only two things occur in a focus lesson. Number one, you establish the purpose. You know where we got that? We set a content goal and a language goal. Have you heard of this? You've heard of SIOP, Jana and her colleagues. It's not unreasonable to say to students, "Here's our content goal today. Here's our language goal today" and maybe even "Here's our social goal today." That's the first thing we do in the focus lesson. The second thing we do is we model our own thinking. And, by the way, we're not very good at this as teachers. We like to interrogate students more than share our thinking. "Here's a reading. What's your summary? What's your prediction? What's your connection?" right, rather than, "I have done this reading. Here's something I think about. Here's a prediction I'm making. Here's a question I have." So the focus lesson: full class, establish the purpose, model your own thinking.

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We then move into guided instruction, which can be whole class, but it's more efficient, I believe, in small groups. We define this as 'the strategic use of cues, prompts, and questions,' *not* 'telling the student what you already told them louder in a small group,' right? They already heard the focus lesson. Now, they have to do the work through strategic use of cues, prompts, and questions. While students are working with the teacher in small groups, we want to see the rest of the class in productive group work [as well]. We call that *collaborative learning*, not *cooperative learning*. Remember the old days in *cooperative learning*: those five kids got together, and they turned in one thing, so we were convinced at least one kid got it, but we accepted it: evidence says all the students got it.

When I was in high school, I went to an experimental school. All the teachers went by their first name and everything was cooperative. I was not a dominant learner in high school. So I attached myself, usually, to a girl who had this huge desire to please the teacher. She would write the most amazing papers! …And I got great grades in high school. That's not what I'm talking about; I'm talking about independent products from group collaboration. We're having a vote a week from Friday to change that word from "collaborative" to "productive group work" because I think it more clearly communicates what we're trying to accomplish here. "Productive": You make something—produce something—based on the group time you have together, away from the teacher, before we do independent [work].

This year, I'm spending my year learning about independent learning. I think we give homework and assessments prematurely in the instructional cycle, and kids practice things incorrectly at home in the absence of their teacher because it was too early in instruction, so I'm spending a lot of time on independent tasks this year. I'm going to learn a lot myself about independent learning.

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Let's look at some non-examples. Have you seen classrooms like this? Have you seen this kind of classroom? "I do it; now, you do it." This was my algebra class in high school. Picture an overhead projector here. Remember those things? You know, the ones with the wheels on the side and the [transparencies rolled] across. See, we would come into class, and he would call on us and say, "Fisher, problem one; So and So, problem two; [(pointing)] three" —no, we never did the even: "three, five, seven," right? And we'd go to the board and we'd work out the problems in the chalk, right? And he would criticize us for how we solved the problem. Then we'd sit back at our desks, and he'd have the overhead projector, and he would show us that *he could solve algebra problems* …over …and over …and over. And then he would assign us the odd numbered problems. And if we talked, he would say, "Shhhh" because he was busy erasing the overhead and rewinding. "Shhh." That was hour after hour of algebra for me. I was convinced at the end of the school year that he knew how to do algebra—convinced! I had no idea how to do algebra: none. I learned algebra in college from a really good teacher. I didn't learn it in high school. Because this was the structure of my classroom. It's really hard for kids to learn in this environment. Students who do well in this environment already know the content or have tremendous at-home support.

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But there's a classroom that's worse than this: a do-it-yourself school. "Welcome to class. You do it. Read chapter 12 and answer the questions at the back of the book." I would be so embarrassed to teach this way, I would not want to cash a paycheck. This is embarrassing to me. Computers can teach better than we can in this respect because they don't get tired of giving independent practice. Teachers get tired. What the computer can't do is differentiate and ask that just-right question, prompt, or cue. This is the group of teachers, the only group I will say, who need career counseling. They have a different view of teaching than I have. I believe learning is social. This is not social. I believe humans learn by mimicking other humans. I think the survival of our species is because we're really good at mimicking other people. We're really good at it. It's really hard to mimic when it's "Do it yourselves."

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This is what I call the good enough classroom. Right now, if you teach this way, it's good enough and your principal will leave you alone. By and large, if a principal sees you establish a purpose and model some thinking, and then you go and work with these four kids, or even if [you] wanted to pull a guy to a reading group or whatever, [gesture 'good enough']. I pull those four kids or I do guided instruction in writing with those four kids, everyone else is doing independent work—hour after hour of independent work and 20 minutes of time with the teacher. There's an absence of talk; there's an absence of meaning making; there's an absence of consolidating thinking with peers—the things you all do all the time. I watched you at every break; right? You go out and you talk. You make meaning with your peers about the information that was presented. That's how we learn. In this classroom [point to slide], it's not there. But it's good enough to not get the principal to pay attention to you, because the principal is usually focused on the previous two: the "do it yourself" and the "I do and then you do" [classrooms].

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Back to the good model. Here's an example that might help you think through the instruction. The day that this really made sense to me was January 16th, 2006. I was standing in Las Vegas. There was a conference there and we were staying at the Venetian Hotel. Have you heard of this hotel, the Venetian? Well, when other people pay, that's where you get to stay, so the conference was there. So I'm at the Venetian and it was beautiful. Do you remember, once upon a time, we used to have those cell phones that were on our hips, the little ones, and you opened them up and you said, "Hello." Do you remember those phones a long time ago? They didn't do anything else other than make a phone call, no pictures, nothing. Right—nothing, just a cell phone. So I'm walking through the hall with Nancy Frey, and we're talking, and my phone rang and I go to grab it off my hip, and the clip breaks, and it falls into the lagoon and down the drain it goes.

Well, you all know: You can't be away from your friends and family for a weekend anymore. You know, 10 years ago, it never occurred to us that you had to have a cell phone with you, but now, I have to go to the Sprint Store and get a new phone, because you can't be a weekend without a phone, right? You all know that if you sign a new contract, you get a two-year extension. You all know this, right? So I'm 10 years into Sprint, because I just keep going and buying a new phone, and they give me a new contract. So there I am at the Sprint Store, Las Vegas, and I say to the guy, "You know, I'm in a hurry. I've got to go to this conference. I need to sign the contract and get a new phone."

And he says, "Oh, but what about this phone? It has a calendar program in it."

"No, thank you."

"This phone has an address book. This phone takes pictures. This phone searches the web."

Have you ever tried to search the web on a screen this big? "No, thank you. I just want the free phone. That's all I want."

He said, "This phone sends text messages."

I've never sent a text message in my whole life. Have you all sent text messages? I have never sent a text message in my whole life. And this young man says to me, "Young people send text messages."

You know, I want to be a young person so I bought the Trio 650 for $400. I'm there for a free phone and this is what I end up taking.

He opens the box of this very telephone and he starts working the phone. I'm so proud, "Oh, look. I have new technology." I'm very proud of myself. I go back to the conference. I say to Nancy Frey, "Look what I got. I have a new phone." I'm very proud of myself. I put it in my pocket. About an hour later, the phone rings… well, it kind of just vibrates. You know, they just shake; they don't really ring, so it's shaking away and I have no idea how to answer the telephone—none—because every phone I'd ever had in the past, you open it and you say, "Hello." There's nothing to open. Well, then, I'm irritated because the phone says "Missed call." Now, I'm irritated. As a grownup, I don't like to identify myself as incompetent in things. You all know that: You don't like to be incompetent in technology. I say to Nancy Frey, "You've got to go to the Sprint Store with me; I'm turning this phone in. I'm getting the phone I wanted. Be my backup; don't let this guy talk me into having another phone." I go to the Sprint Store and I say to the young man at the Sprint Store, "This phone is broken" (because I can't possibly say, "I don't know how to work it.") "This phone is broken." He takes it out of my hands, and he starts working it. He says to me, "Sir, you have to unlock the key pad." And I got a little flip right there and said to him, "You didn't teach me that." Right—isn't that what a kid says? 'You didn't teach me that.' Then I said to Nancy Frey, "I feel so guilty. How many times have I modeled my comprehension or my fluency or my decoding, or whatever it was, to have a student struggle, and me take it away from them and do it for them." I clearly don't understand guided instruction like I need to. When the learner has difficulty, we don't take it away from them. That would violate guided instruction, right? So I said to the young man at the Sprint Store, "I don't need another *focus lesson*; I need some *guided instruction*!" "Let me hold the telephone, and you talk to me about the phone." He says, "Push this button. Push this button," so I'm feeling better about it. Well, then, all of a sudden, Nancy Frey buys one too. She's got this phone too. That night at dinner, we sat at the Capitol Grill across the street and text messaged each other right across the table. That's where I really learned to use this telephone; right? Now, it's not just collaborative learning or productive group work. It took a model. It took some practice in my hand. It took me touching this very phone, but it also took some time with a peer to put this into practice.

The thing that I think is missing. We all lament our students not using academic language: When do they have chances to do this? When do they have the opportunities to do this? If there's not a collaborative phase or productive group phase, they don't have a chance to use academic language. They're passive recipients—hour after hour often—in schools where they're asked to do something completely different every 50 minutes with different instructional routines and procedures and content. I don't know how they are as successful as they are in that environment.

As a follow-up to this conference, I'm told you're going to get a comparison study that I just wrote comparing a middle school and another middle school trying really hard, one with really good outcomes and one with terrible outcomes. The big difference is them in instructional consistency, routines that have been established hour after hour after hour. [slide]

The final area, examine student work with colleagues on a regular basis. We've worked very hard at teacher-created, common formative assessment. That's our goal. When teachers sit together—the 6th grade English teachers or the 7th grade social studies teachers—when they sit together and they design common formative assessments, they learn tremendous amounts about the content standards: the expectations. They also learn about the ways tests are constructed. They learn about their students' performance on those tests and what's next in terms of instructional steps.

I've now given up, and I have to say now, "Tests are just a genre we have to deal with." "English teachers, just deal with this. It's a genre like memoir and biography and everything else." It doesn't have to be your favorite. Science fiction isn't my favorite but it's a genre, and if we treat it as a genre, we'll address it daily in our instruction—or weekly. It's a genre. Then you're less angry about it. Some common formative assessment items: [slide] what does this tell you about the learner? [slide] Here's another one. [slide] Here's one of those academic words. Does you see the word "expand"? Do you see what Peter did?

But I love the teacher's comment on there, "Very funny, Peter." [slide] What about this one—one that one of our teachers wrote and proposed to the team: "For what purpose did Parliament vote during the Restoration?" And there are four choices. Only 7.5 percent of over 300 students got this answer correct. It's a teacher-written item. It's of a key standard—something the students are supposed to know—a pre-requisite skill to future social studies. Only 7.5 percent of our students got it right. Imagine the conversation you could have with your colleagues, problem-solving. 'Is it vocabulary? Is it knowledge? Is it the film we showed that misled them? What about the test-taking strategies?' How could anyone choose Charles I? He was beheaded, and they had a whole conversation about that! How could you do that one; right? Think of the conversations teachers can have when they look at assessment items that all of their students have taken. And we don't compare this teacher to this teacher to this teacher. We dump them all in one pool and then we do an item analysis for a conversation, an instructional conversation.

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Our model looks something like this, and I can give you references on e-mail if you want. You have to pick the standards, pacing guide; you have to identify your instructional materials; create and administer common assessment, score them; meet in groups to talk about it. You should have this on there: I can give you a whole article about it. The key thing I want to talk about is the teachers make decisions on when to re-teach, when to revise a pacing guide, when to revise the assessment, and when to form an intervention group, because sometimes, we look at some of these items and say, "Wow, we've got to go back and re-teach the whole group." and sometimes we say, "This 10 percent, that is now our intervention group. The class still has to continue."

In terms of literacy-rich middle schools, it is possible to do this. It is possible to raise achievement of our students from grades four to eight. To do this, I think we need to increase precision in our teaching, not prescriptive teaching. That's a little political message right there that I'll probably get in trouble for. I think we need to think about precision in our teaching and to get to precision teaching. We have to have assessment information—good assessment information. I think we have to have consistent instructional routines, and I think we have to have an understanding across the school of the role that language plays in learning.

And that's my time. It's nice to meet you all.