

Don Fuhr, Ph.D.
Mason Gary, Ph.D.

No Margin For Error:
Saving our schools from
borderline teachers

Presented by:
Mason Gary, Ph.D.

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Anderson three

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Key Question

Do teachers matter? They have a direct impact on students, test scores and culture and climate. Improving teacher quality is the most powerful way to create better schools.

- Weisberg et al "In fact, a student assigned to a very good teacher for a single school year may gain up to a full year's worth of additional academic growth compared to a student assigned to a very poor teacher."

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More Points to Ponder

How many of you know who the best teachers in your child's schools are?

What happens on the day of registration or the day schedules are announced between the best and the worst teachers from a parental standpoint?

- Their concerns are exactly on spot. How do we get to the point where we know who the best teachers are?
- When it comes to performance, please don't institutionalize indifference.

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Keys to Success

Teachers – “hire and retain the best, purge the rest.” Who are the key players in school success?

A major problem in our schools is we reward borderline teachers by renewing their _____.

How does this make your _____?

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- School districts must begin to distinguish between good from _____, borderline and fair from _____.

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Keys to Success

When you examine the best performing schools, especially those who perform well when a high poverty school, it is great teachers that get the job done!

- Todd Whitaker reminds us as administrators, “it is our job to hire the best and keep the ones we have.”

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Dilemma

Many administrators claim that it is too difficult to dismiss a teacher due to continued contract status or due process. Nationally, over _____% of administrators have never non-renewed a probationary teacher.

- Others make a crucial mistake of not applying a plan of improvement can be made.

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- Effective teaching must be recognized and ineffective teaching must be addressed.

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Scary Stats

91% of administrators and 68% of teachers agree that dismissing poor performers is important

43% of teachers believe marginal teachers exist in their building but are never dismissed

- In the past ___ years most administrators have not dismissed a single teacher

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82% of administrators and 86% of teachers believe that administrators don't pursue dismissal even when warranted

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Widget Effect

The tendency of school districts to assume classroom effectiveness is the same from teacher to teacher.

- Given the profound impact of the Widget Effect, it is not surprising that only ___% of teachers and ___% of administrators agree that their district enforces a high standard of instructional performance for all teachers. Weisberg et al

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Steal Excuses

Your job as an administrator is to steal, remove and take away any excuse a teacher has for poor performance. If they complain about class size, remove students; copier issues, give them a printer; discipline issues, frequent their

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excuses will reveal if they can teach or not
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Marginalia: Ph.D.

Have Mercy on Moxie

Moxie is having the courage and determination to act as well as the know-how and energy to follow through.

- Let me encourage you today to have moxie when you identify a marginal teacher deal with them appropriately and immediately.
- If you don't have the experience you need, seek out administrators and legal counsel who can assist you — our students are worth the effort!

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Marginalia: Ph.D.

Key Question

Do you want a great school or just a good one? Rate where your school is today on teacher effectiveness. Are you great, good, or poor?

- Your goal is "movement and improvement." Just like the same applies for our teachers.

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Marginalia: Ph.D.

Key Question

Jim Collins opens his book "Good to Great" with this quote: "Good is the enemy to great." Ponder that as it applies to your school, your district, and even state and nation. We are too quick to settle for good. We must push to

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- It is up to you, as a leader, to

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 Megan Gory, Ph.D.
 ...

The leader

The leader... creates expectations,
 creates and maintains culture,
 sets the tone, protects and
 schedules instructional time,
 inspects what they expect...and
 the list goes on.

- Another key question for the leader is how often do you visit classrooms in the classes I teach

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 I ask this of my students (who are teachers) and overwhelmingly I hear _____ times or less per year!

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 ...

The leader

Perform a self check and see what is occurring with observations in your school. You will not capture the marginal teacher with two visits or less per year.

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Great vs Marginal

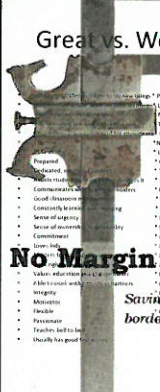
Before turning the page, list at least five identifiers/characteristics of a great teacher and five of a marginal teacher.

Turn the page and compare your answers with some I have provided.

- This is a great activity to use individually or as a group to make identify what great teaching looks like. This gives you a place to begin with staff development discussions, book studies, etc.

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 Great vs. Weak Teacher

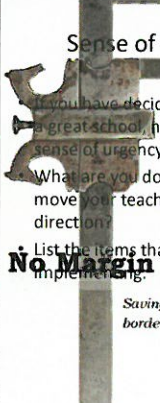


- Lack of vision or no long-term planning
- Lack of procedures which produce poor pace
- Misleading of students/teachers not excited
- Teacher does not follow through/straggle
- Lack of follow-up
- Not willing to help struggling students
- Lazy
- Critical of students and parents
- Teacher - teach from text
- Misuse of time
- Lack of urgency
- Cannot see weaknesses or their impact
- Does not require homework/holding for assessment
- Does not like kids
- Simply there to receive not think/feel centered
- Makes excuses for poor performance
- Lack of energy
- Lack of vision
- Lack of follow-up
- Lack of urgency
- Cannot see weaknesses or their impact
- Does not require homework/holding for assessment
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 Sense of Urgency



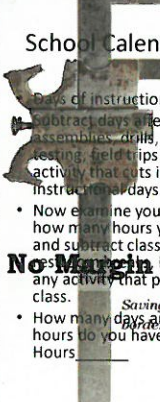
If you have decided that you want a great school, next comes a sense of urgency.

- What are you doing specifically to move your teachers in this direction?
- List the items that you are implementing.

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 School Calendar Exercise



Days of instruction = 180

- Subtract days affected by assemblies, drills, state and district testing, field trips and any other activity that cuts into the 180 instructional days.
- Now examine your day. Determine how many hours you are in session and subtract class changes, any activity that pulls students from class.
- How many days and how many hours do you have? Days _____ Hours _____

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New York, NY

School Calendar Exercise

The point of this exercise is to drill down into how many minutes/hours each day are devoted to instruction.

- Now consider how many minutes of instruction is captured by your great versus marginal teacher.

No Margin For Error: Now you see the problem, because they both have the same number of days and minutes to instruct, but do they?

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New York, NY

School Calendar Exercise

Have you ever noticed one of the instruments the marginal teacher utilizes is procrastination or avoidance? Worksheets, tests every Friday, activities that fill the day but that don't instruct, activities that limit interaction and teaching. They are busy but let me remind you that teaching did not happen if learning did not occur!

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- You, as the leader, must catch this "busyness," call it what it is, and address it with the marginal teacher.

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New York, NY

Sense of Urgency revisited

We are still operating from an agrarian calendar with 180 instructional days allotted to teach.

- The most successful schools, the great ones, minimize any and all disruptions to the school day.

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- When this culture is created, it will quickly become evident who can teach and who is marginal.

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Marginal, Borderline, or Status-Quo Teachers
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Three types: The Helpless, The Hurt and The Hardheaded (you may have other names).

The Helpless may be poorly trained, lack confidence in their abilities. They need training, support and a great mentor.

No Margin For Error: Watch these folks because they are hesitant to ask for help. They feel they will burden you or others if they ask for help, and asking for help is viewed as a sign of weakness.

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The Hurt
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These are often competent teachers but at least they were at one point in their careers but are now marginal because of personal problems.

These folks need encouragement and patience as they work through their issues. Life happens to all of us and this is where the culture you build as a leader will have a great impact or not on this teacher.

No Margin For Error: Saving our schools from
 hurt teachers Build a family friendly, caring or self-centered etc.

The Hardheaded
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My favorite marginal teacher! These are often your "negative Nellie's," they are not amenable to receiving assistance or advice from anyone, they dislike change and anyone who brings it. Problems such as high failure rates, discipline referrals, etc. are not their problems, rather the students, parents or the administrators.

No Margin For Error: Do you have any of these in your buildings?
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- Dial 911 because these need the most urgent attention, assistance and intervention!

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Strategies

Selection strategies that we use with beginning teachers are a great tool.

- Assign a great mentor. Select teachers to serve as mentors that you want emulated. Mentors should serve as advocates, facilitators, coach, collaborator, assessor, listener, teacher and resource.
- Observe, observe, observe. One of the biggest mistakes that a beginning teacher is little to no observations of their performance and practice. Each visit does not have to be formal but they must be frequent.

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Strategies

Ninja Slots – these are small openings or slots in each classroom window so you can observe students and teachers without walking into class.

- Document – when D-day comes your opinion doesn't matter! You need documentation of a pattern of incompetence. *Protect yourself. borderline teachers*

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Conclusion

Create an environment where you can be honest with your staff. Conversations about dismissal or contract changes are often not pleasant, but when you have done your due diligence and given due process, it is time to act.

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Always remember your students are the focus! Don't let emotions get in the way of doing what is right for your students.

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Contact Information

If I can ever assist you feel free to contact me at:

- Cell 864-849-2329
- Work 864-348-6196
- Dr. Gary has co-authored a book *No Margin For Error: Saving our schools from borderline teachers* and if you would like a copy for \$15 per copy please use the order form on the next page.

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Order Form

Send your name/school district contact address to be mailed, and number of books to be ordered to Mason Gary, 101 Gary Farm Road, Belton, SC 29627.

- Name: _____
- School District: _____
- Address: _____
- Number of books: _____

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