

RESEARCH SUMMARY: Leadership and Academic Achievement
*Research investigating the key variables associated with academic achievement:
Linking The Flippen Group programs with key variables*

This summary highlights the major ideas of researchers in the fields of Leadership, System Thinking, Education, and School Effectiveness. The Education/School Effectiveness information is primarily derived from an exhaustive review by Robert J. Marzano (2000) in his monograph entitled “A New Era of School Reform: Going Where the Research Takes Us”.

In his monograph, Marzano distills from the writings of many other authors the “Key Variables” at the school-, teacher-, and student-level that affect academic achievement. These variables are described on the following page in Table 1. The variables are divided into *school-level variables* (opportunity to learn, time, monitoring, pressure to achieve, parental involvement, climate, leadership, and cooperation), *teacher-level variables* (instruction, curriculum design, classroom management), and *student-level variables* (home atmosphere, aptitude/prior knowledge, and interest).

It is important to note that while “leadership” is listed as a key variable, it in fact affects all other variables given. This view that “leadership” ...or lack thereof...determines the success of any organization is a guiding principle of The Flippen Group. Such a view is supported by many other researchers including Professors Megan Tschannen-Moran (*Trust Matters: Leadership for Successful Schools*), Anthony Bryk & Barbara Schneider (*Trust in Schools: A Core Resource for Improvement*), Gordon Donaldson, Jr. (*Cultivating Leadership in Schools: Connecting People, Purpose and Practice*) and Michael Fullan (*Leadership & Sustainability: System Thinkers in Action*).

The information in Table 1 can be viewed quite differently when leadership is shown to affect every other variable in the table. In Table 2, the expanded role of leadership is shown in red, and more accurately demonstrates the far-reaching effects of leadership on academic achievement:

Administrator-leaders will support the key variables at the school level and will develop relational trust within the school such that teachers can cooperate and work together to create a positive school climate, ensure that curriculum is aligned with assessments, and provide the means to monitor the school’s progress toward academic goals.

Teacher-leaders will be intentional in deciding which instructional strategies will be used and will engage students’ minds and hearts in the learning process. They will have the skills to manage classroom discipline, and will teach in a manner such that instructional goals and activities are well-planned.

Student-leaders will understand that they are responsible for their own actions and will be equipped to resist peer pressure, develop healthy relationships, resolve conflicts, and set goals. These leadership skills will help them achieve their full academic potential.

Table 2 lists the Key Variables associated with academic achievement and demonstrates how The Flippen Group programs...Flippen Leadership Series (FLS for administrators), Capturing Kids’ Hearts (CKH for administrators, faculty, and staff), Process Champions (faculty and staff) and Teen Leadership (TL curriculum for students)...address specific key variables. Table 2 contains Marzano’s original table, but also demonstrates that leadership is the “KEY” to all of the other Key Variables.

Table 1. Strategies for Addressing Key Variables that Affect Student Achievement

Category	Variable	Strategies
School	Opportunity to learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for aligning the curriculum and achievement tests • Strategies for designing assessments aligned with the curriculum • Strategies for ensuring that the curriculum is covered
	Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for increasing the amount of allocated time • Strategies for decreasing absenteeism and tardiness
	Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for setting school-wide achievement goals for students • Strategies for collecting and reporting data on student achievement
	Pressure to achieve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for communicating the importance of students' academic achievement • Strategies for celebrating and displaying student achievement
	Parental involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for involving parents in policy decisions • Strategies for gaining parental support for policy decisions
	Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for identifying and communicating school rules and procedures • Strategies for implementing and enforcing school rules and procedures
	Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for articulating leadership roles • Strategies for transferring and communicating key information • Strategies for group decision making
	Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for developing consensus around key issues • Strategies for increasing the frequency and quality of informal contacts among staff members • Strategies for establishing and implementing behavioral norms among staff
Teacher	Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching strategies that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *enhance students' abilities to identify similarities and differences *enhance students' abilities to summarize and take notes *reinforce effort and provide recognition *enhance students' abilities to generate nonlinguistic representations *provide students with opportunities to engage in cooperative learning *enhance the effectiveness of academic goals and provide students with feedback *enhance students' abilities to generate and test hypotheses *activate students' prior knowledge
	Curriculum design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning strategies that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *enhance the manner in which instruction goals are ordered and paced within and between units *enhance the manner in which instructional activities are ordered and paced within and between units
	Classroom management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies that enhance the identification and implementation of rules and procedures for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *room use *seatwork *group work *discipline
Student	Home atmosphere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for enhancing the extent to which parents provide their children with an environment that supports academic achievement
	Aptitude and prior knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for enhancing students' general background knowledge
	Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for identifying and tapping into students' interests

Note: *From A New Era of School Reform: Going where the Research Takes Us* (pp. 86-87), by R.J. Marzano, 2000, Aurora, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL). Reprinted with permission.

Table 2. The Flipped Group Programs that Impact Strategies for Addressing Key Variables that Affect Student Achievement

Category	Variable	Strategies
School	Opportunity to learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies for aligning the curriculum and achievement tests (<i>FLS2</i>) Strategies for designing assessments aligned with the curriculum Strategies for ensuring that the curriculum is covered
	Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies for increasing the amount of allocated time (<i>CKH/Proc. Champ./FLS2</i>) Strategies for decreasing absenteeism and tardiness (<i>CKH/TL/FLS2/Proc. Champ.</i>)
	Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies for setting school-wide achievement goals for students (<i>FLS2</i>) Strategies for collecting and reporting data on student achievement
	Pressure to achieve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies for communicating the importance of students' academic achievement (<i>CKH/FLS2</i>) Strategies for celebrating and displaying student achievement (<i>CKH/Pr. Ch./TL</i>)
	Parental involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies for involving parents in policy decisions (<i>FLS2</i>) Strategies for gaining parental support for policy decisions (<i>FLS2</i>)
	Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies for identifying and communicating school rules and procedures (<i>CKH/Proc. Champ./FLS1/FLS2</i>) Strategies for implementing and enforcing school rules and procedures (<i>CKH/FLS1/FLS2/Proc. Champ.</i>)
	Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies for articulating leadership roles (<i>CKH/Proc. Champ./FLS1/FLS2/TL</i>) Strategies for transferring and communicating key information (<i>CKH/FLS2</i>) Strategies for group decision making (<i>CKH/Proc. Champ./FLS2/TL</i>)
Teacher	Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies for developing consensus around key issues (<i>CKH/Pr. Ch./FLS1&2/TL</i>) Strategies for increasing the frequency and quality of informal contacts among staff members (<i>CKH/Proc. Champ./FLS1/FLS2</i>) Strategies for establishing and implementing behavioral norms among staff (<i>CKH/FLS1/FLS2/Proc. Champ.</i>)
	Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching strategies that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *enhance students' abilities to identify similarities and differences *enhance students' abilities to summarize and take notes *reinforce effort and provide recognition (<i>CKH/Proc. Champ.</i>) *enhance students' abilities to generate nonlinguistic representations *provide students with opportunities to engage in cooperative learning (<i>CKH/Proc. Champ./TL</i>) *enhance the effectiveness of academic goals and provide students with feedback (<i>CKH/FLS2/Proc. Champ.</i>) *enhance students' abilities to generate and test hypotheses *activate students' prior knowledge (<i>CKH</i>)
	Curriculum design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning strategies that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *enhance the manner in which instruction goals are ordered and paced within and between units (<i>TL/FLS2</i>) *enhance the manner in which instructional activities are ordered and paced within and between units (<i>TL</i>)
Student	Classroom management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies that enhance the identification and implementation of rules and procedures for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *room use (<i>CKH/Proc. Champ.</i>) *seatwork (<i>CKH/Proc. Champ.</i>) *group work (<i>CKH/Proc. Champ.</i>) *discipline (<i>CKH/Proc. Champ.</i>)
	Home atmosphere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies for enhancing the extent to which parents provide their children with an environment that supports academic achievement (<i>TL</i>)
	Aptitude & prior knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies for enhancing students' general background knowledge (<i>FLS2</i>)
	Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies for identifying and tapping into students' interests (<i>CKH</i>)

Leadership affects all key variables that affect academic achievement, but what exactly is leadership and what do great leaders do? A number of answers could be given to these questions and many authors have written books on the subject.

Listed below are some of the ideas from various authors who describe the characteristics associated with effective educational leaders (adapted from Marzano, 2003, pg. 174):

**Table 3. Characteristics Associated with Effective Leaders:
What the Research Tells Us**

Broad categories of characteristics	Blum, Butler & Olson (1987)	Hallinger & Murphy (1987)	Levine & Lezotte (1990)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MANAGEMENT STYLE 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintains high visibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has “maverick” orientation • Has high energy
<p>RELATIONAL</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENGAGES TEACHERS 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides incentives for teachers • Selects and participates in professional development activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vigorously selects and replaces teachers • Supports teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COMMUNICATES 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates to staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates goals 	
<p>INTENTIONAL</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESTABLISHES VISION/GOALS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has clear vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes explicit academic goals • Frames goals 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SUPERVISES curriculum and instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knows quality instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluates instruction • Coordinates curriculum • Protects instructional time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervises instructional practices • Acquires necessary resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EVALUATES PROGRESS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitors school performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitors progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitors school activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESTABLISHES SAFE ENVIRONMENT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes safe environment 		
<p>TRANSFORMATIONAL</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PROMOTES GROUP PROCESSES 			

**Table 3 (cont.). Characteristics Associated with Effective Leaders:
What the Research Tells Us**

Broad categories of characteristics	Neufeld & Freeman (1992)	Sammons, Hillman & Mortimore (1995)	Donaldson (2001)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MANAGEMENT STYLE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates nonrestrictive work environment • Is neither dogmatic nor autocratic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Viewed as the leading professional • Is firm • Uses a participatory management approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to encourage open, trusting, affirmative relationships
<p>RELATIONAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENGAGES TEACHERS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invites divergent points of view • Gives teachers a clear voice in decisions • Trusts and treats teachers as professionals 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COMMUNICATES 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to mutual purposes with moral benefit
<p>INTENTIONAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESTABLISHES VISION/GOALS • SUPERVISES curriculum and instruction • EVALUATES PROGRESS 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is purposeful 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESTABLISHES SAFE ENVIRONMENT 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to develop a shared belief that the collective effects of individual actions are greater than their sum
<p>TRANSFORMATIONAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PROMOTES GROUP PROCESSES 			

As can be seen in the preceding table, most of the ideas concerning the essential characteristics of great leadership can be condensed into 3 major areas:

1. Relational leadership

The Flippen Group process teaches school staff to put time and effort into building relationships. According to Professors Anthony Bryk (Stanford University Executive Program in Educational Leadership) and Barbara Schneider (Alfred P. Sloan Center on Parents, Children, and Work at the

University of Chicago), relational trust is a core resource for school improvement. They propose that a dynamic interplay among four considerations shape individuals' analyses of the behavior of others.

- **Respect**
- **Personal regard for others**
- **Competence in core role responsibilities**
- **Integrity**

They suggest that any serious deficiency can undermine a relationship.

Professor Megan Tschannen-Moran (School of Education at The College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, VA) asserts in *Trust Matters: Leadership for Successful Schools* that there are five essential facets of relational trust:

- **Benevolence:** *a sense of caring; the confidence that one's well-being or something one cares about will be protected and not harmed by the trusted party; assurance that one can count on the good will of another to act in one's best interest*
- **Honesty:** *involves a person's character, integrity, and authenticity*
- **Openness:** *a process by which people make themselves vulnerable to others by sharing information, influence, and control*
- **Reliability:** *the sense that one is able to depend on another consistently*
- **Competence:** *the ability to perform a task as expected, according to appropriate standards*

There are many other references to relational trust/relational capacity, but any additional ideas concerning trust fall into either Bryk's & Schneider's or Tschannen-Moran's broad definitions of the facets of trust that are essential in order to develop trusting and affirming relationships.

The topics in The Flippen Group program, *Capturing Kids' Hearts*, that address these facets of relational trust include:

- First Impressions (benevolence, respect, personal regard for others, openness)
- EXCEL Model™ (benevolence, respect, personal regard for others, competence in core responsibilities,
- SOLER Listening Skills (openness, personal regard for others, benevolence, respect)
- Whose Hand is This? (personal regard for others, respect, reliability, honesty)
- Personal Responsibility (honesty, reliability, competence)
- Values (honesty, reliability, personal regard for others, benevolence)

Therefore, the relational component of leadership involves the concept of trust: Members of an organization must trust the intentions, integrity, and competence of other members. Relationships within healthy organizations are marked by openness, honesty, respect, affirmation, reliability, and personal regard for others.

The October 16, 2002, edition of *Education Week* supported the value of strong relationships when it cited professional research documenting a specific "missing ingredient," without which schools stand little chance of significant improvement. The missing ingredient the researchers identified was this: a strong bond of trust among the various members of the school community. The authors went a step further, providing a wealth of data to support the concept that there is a strong correlation between a schools' trust level and its students' academic achievement.

Effective leaders promote the development of strong bonds of trust within the school.

2. Intentional leadership

Although strong relationships may be developed, it is possible for members of an organization to have warm fuzzy feelings toward each other as they all progress ...exactly nowhere. Once the relational foundation has been laid, an organization must be brought together through a common purpose.

At the purposeful or “Intentional” level, The Flippen Group programs deal with discipline and school management paradigms. The components of effective school-wide preventive discipline practices have been studied by many researchers and are summarized in *Effective Schooling Practices: A Research Synthesis 1995 Update* (1995) and in the School Improvement Research Series (SIRS) Close-Up #9 entitled “*Schoolwide and Classroom Discipline*”(2002) by Kathleen Cotton (NWREL):

- ***Commitment.*** *There is a school-wide emphasis on maintaining discipline.*
- ***High behavioral expectations.*** *Students understand that appropriate behavior is expected.*
- ***Clear and broad-based rules.*** *Students and staff understand what is and is not acceptable.*
- ***Warm school climate.*** *There is concern for students as individuals.*
- ***A visible, supportive principal.*** *Principals are visible in the hallways, engage in conversations with staff and students, and express interest in student activities.*
- ***Delegation of discipline authority to teachers.*** *Principals hold teachers responsible for handling routine classroom discipline problems.*
- ***Close ties with communities.*** *There is high parental involvement with school activities.*

The Flippen Group programs address all of these preventive discipline components through an emphasis on developing school-wide discipline policies, implementing “social contracts” that clearly define acceptable behavior, and developing strong relationships within the school community.

Cotton also summarized the findings of numerous researchers who investigate behaviors that comprise effective discipline management at the classroom level:

- ***Holding and communicating high expectations for student learning and behavior.***
- ***Establishing and clearly teaching classroom rules and procedures.*** *Classroom rules are posted.*
- ***Specifying consequences and their relation to student behavior.***
- ***Enforcing classroom rules promptly, consistently, and equitably.***
- ***Sharing with students the responsibility for classroom management.***
- ***Maintaining a brisk pace for instruction and making smooth transitions between activities.***
- ***Monitoring classroom activities and providing feedback and reinforcement.***

Again, The Flippen Group programs support these findings and encourage teachers to become more effective classroom managers through development of these behaviors. For example, the Capturing Kids’ Hearts program topics that address discipline management include:

- Social Contract
- 4 Questions Misbehavior
- 4 Questions Disrespect

Therefore, in addition to being relational, effective leaders must be intentional in purpose. Such leaders have a strong personal sense of purpose and are able to focus the attentions and energies of school members on the basic mission of the school to develop academic and social skills in students that will allow them to succeed.

Effective leaders promote a strong sense of purpose within the school.

3. Transformational leadership

The development of strong relationships (*relational*) and a commitment to a common purpose (*intentional*) are essential, but not sufficient, for authentic school reform to occur. Group processes must be implemented that *transform* a school from being a loose collection of isolated individuals doing their own work into a focused group of connected individuals who act in a concerted manner to fulfill the school's purpose.

Transformation occurs when members of the school community become convinced that the collective effects of individual actions are greater than their sum. Professor Donaldson (Department of Education at the University of Maine) calls this the "belief in action-in-common" and is the result of two group phenomena:

- *A conviction that organizational purposes will be met better by action-in-common than by unlinked individual effort and*
- *Sufficient evidence from action-in-common to reinforce this conviction*

When members of the school community feel appreciated and connected (*relational*), and when they can see that the school as a whole is working toward a common purpose (*intentional*), then they are willing to participate beyond the requirements of their job assignments and to commit personally to the collective effort to transform the school community into an effective team that moves toward its desired goals (*transformational*).

In order to "grow the group", Donaldson states that school leaders shape the group's belief in their action-in-common by:

- *Identifying the value of interdependent work.*
- *Ensuring a steady diet of feedback on work and its effects.*
- *Demonstrating values that reinforce the importance of collective responsibility and collaborative work.*
- *Enabling people to act on feedback to solve not just their own problems, but to meet organizational challenges.*

The topics in *Capturing Kids' Hearts* that address this aspect of leadership as it pertains to school reform are:

- Group Stages
- Group Growth (growing the group)
- Building/Growing Healthy Relationships

Healthy relationships and a strong sense of purpose are the foundation upon which school members choose to act together to meet common goals. Effective leaders encourage group processes that

reward team effort. *Transformation within an organization occurs when a critical mass of individuals are more inspired to accomplish that which matters most in the organization, than they are consumed with the desire to seek attention for themselves.* Their cooperative and synergistic actions produce more than would be expected from the sum of their individual, but isolated efforts.

Effective leaders encourage team effort.

Therefore, academic achievement is enhanced when processes are implemented that promote healthy relationships between people who are committed to a common, moral purpose and who are focused on accomplishing...together...the most important goals of education.

What are these processes or strategies that enhance academic achievement?

Rigorous & Relevant Curriculum Combined with Improved Contexts in Which to Learn

In his March 5, 2002 presentation “Research on Teacher Preparation and Professional Development” Grover J. Whitehurst (then Assistant Secretary for Educational Research and Improvement and now Director of the Institute of Education Sciences) cites two strategies that school leadership can implement that research indicates will substantially enhance student academic achievement:

Provide pre-service and in-service training that is more focused on the content that teachers will be delivering and the curriculum they will be using.

Provide much better contexts for teachers to do their work.

According to Whitehurst, school improvement strategies should include professional development programs that are targeted toward improving 1) the academic knowledge and skills of teachers and 2) the contextual issues of schools.

The effects of establishing a healthy learning environment and implementing a rigorous curriculum that is aligned with state standards can be described graphically using The Flippen Group’s EXCEL Leadership Model™ Pyramid. As can be seen in the pyramid on the following page, The Flippen Group’s EXCEL Leadership Model™ improves school culture and academic achievement by developing relational, intentional, and transformational leadership skills in the school’s administrators, faculty, staff, and students. When an effective, aligned curriculum is used that is both rigorous and relevant, students are able to learn and perform best in the context of the safe relationships and healthy environments that are developed using the EXCEL Leadership Model™.

The programs offered through The Flippen Group address the contextual issues of schools through the development of effective leadership. The goal of The Flippen Group is to bring about significant positive changes in individuals through training programs and curricula that teach relational, intentional, and transformational leadership skills.

Ultimately, effective leadership exerts a positive impact on each key variable that impacts academic achievement.

<p>The Flippen Group EXCEL Leadership Model™ Pyramid</p>	<p>CKH Principles</p>	<p>CKH Manual Topics</p>
<p>To develop high performing learners, there must be high performing leaders in front of them.</p>	<p>Improved performance occurs when there is an appropriate leader in a connected relationship with a learner, and the leader is equipped with relational skills and group processes that foster an effective learning environment.</p>	<p>Unless we have our students ENGAGED in a relationship with each other and us, unless we have X-PLORED their needs, and unless we have then COMMUNICATED to the needs we discovered, only then can we effectively EMPOWER our students with the skills and knowledge they need to do what we taught.</p>
<p>Improved Performance</p>	<p>Rigorous & Relevant Curriculum</p>	<p>Improved Performance</p>
<p>Aligned</p>	<p>Successes need to be celebrated by the group and group processes must be developed that recognize and reward the difficulties of performance.</p>	<p>Building Healthy Relationships Group Stages</p>
<p>Group processes ... grow the group.</p>	<p>Leaders must have a strong personal sense of purpose and must be able to focus the energies of others on a common, moral purpose.</p> <p>You have to tend to people before you can tend to business.</p> <p>People learn and perform best in the context of safe relationships and environments.</p> <p>Performance is increased when the learner is free to ask questions or try new things without fear of judgment in the learning phase.</p>	<p>Social Contract 4 Questions Misbehavior 4 Questions Disrespect</p>
<p>Relationships (Relational)</p>	<p>Values Personal Responsibility Whose Hand is This? SOLER Listening Skills First Impressions</p>	<p>Group Growth</p>

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