

Beating the Odds, building opportunities

Beating the Odds... What Odds?

We know that kids in poverty have the odds stacked against them. Talk at tables

At home, they may have little space, few resources, food instability, and overall, more stressors.

We've studies about word gaps, about stress chemicals flooding the brains of kids in poverty even in utero. We've read that a mother's education level is the best predictor of academic success.

Sometimes it might feel a bit hopeless - like, really? we can't win, what do we do??

And of course, that is why we are all here... We are all trying to figure out - What do we do?

How many kids face these odds? Talk at tables...

Statewide, K-12 public school enrollment is 2,630,000

Economically Disadvantaged students make up 1,440,000 of those kids, or 55% of population, and that number has been stable within 1 percentage point over the last five years. That's a lot of kids!

Now that is the entire enrolled population.

Of the students who took the ELA exam, over 550,000 kids, almost 59% of the total tested, qualified for FRPL.

Of this enormous number of human beings, over 550,000, only 29% achieved proficiency on the ELA, and a whopping 34% earned a score of 1. That is roughly 180,000 kids in poverty earning a 1.

How does this compare to kids who are not in poverty? Slide

Now lets look at **eligible** schools, schools with over 40% poverty, and no selection criteria.

So now, we have a difference - a significant difference - and a difference that has some predicable consequences...

Here we are with graduation rates - note the disparity, which only gets more shocking if we look at the % of kids graduating with a regents diploma with advanced designation.  
slides

And this is why my next study will be on high schools, using graduation rates as indicators!

We have to ask ourselves: *Is poverty fate?*

The second question is, are these achievement differences perpetuating not only a cycle of poverty, but perhaps also a cycle of prejudice? Talk at tables

These are the questions that got me interested in conducting this study. I thought, if we could move the needle on the achievement of students in poverty, we could possibly help break some of the shackles of poverty and prejudice, and create a more equitable, diverse society in our state!

So then I asked myself, Is the needle moveable, and if it is, where can we best learn how to move it?

You may be asking: have read aloud from slide

Yes! I decided that we need to look at places that are already beating the odds. Let's take a look!

Here is our old friend, comparing statewide percentages to the high-poverty, eligible schools.

Now lets add the averages for our **study** schools!

Let's look at this in a school-by-school pattern using scatterplots.

After I identified the eligible schools that met both achievement criteria, I reached out to superintendents of the schools' districts to ask for permission to contact the principal. Of the 300 schools that met the criteria over the two years of the study, I was able to interview 90, and received written responses from an additional 13, for a total of 103 responses, or 34% of study schools. The interview was open-ended: I asked principals to let me know why they thought they were successful with students in poverty.

These leaders' responses is what this conference is about. It is about getting together all of you, each of whom has found success at some level, whether you were identified in my study or not, to create a professional learning community and share your passion, your struggles, your discoveries, your bruises, and your celebrations.

Our breakout sessions reflect these most-frequently mentioned factors:

**Our first Breakout session, the Beach, is HOT – Orange, yellow, and Sunset!**

If you want to learn about how one school rose from the lowest, to the highest performing in Orleans County, attend the Orange session, where you will hear from King Arthur – oops,

I mean principal Sharon Smith - about leading as a strategic round-table exercise, and having teachers empowered and unafraid to own their **data**, and act on it.

If on the other hand you want to hear about creative use of a comprehensive RtI approach to wrap around students, our Yellow session is for you! Principal Ellen Saxby and Instructional Specialist Christie Graves will walk you through what it means to turn a school that had challenges, to one where staff and students **care** about one another, are happy to come to school, and where success is self-rewarding for staff and students alike.

Or you may wish to delight in the Sunset session, and hear about the ways that Kerhonkson Elementary school's principal Jackie VanNosdall worked to implement what she had to write as her first job as new principal: a NYSED Improvement Plan that was required because of the poor performance of students in poverty! How this woman and her team made this designation work *for* their kids by flipping the reliance on intervention services to consistently excellent first instruction, and learning about poverty in order to mitigate its effects, is a wonderful story.

### **Our second session, Ocean, is COOL – Blue and Green!**

In that session, you will have the challenging task of choosing whether to attend the Blue session and enjoy learning how it is possible for a school with the highest percent of English/Multi-language learners in the Hempstead District in Nassau County could also become the highest performing! In that case, the Blue session is the one you should select. Principal Brown and Saritha Perez will gladly walk you through the work they did to make that happen, including their “we want to win for ALL our students” approach. Their use of data, and their creation of a loving community.

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Or you might select the Green session, to hear from Principal Kristin Beriman, and her team in Broome County, where their district has adopted a unique way to display data, focus on what they call “equitable support,” and where they have created an Intervention/Enrichment period that serves all students.

Important to remember is that whichever session you select, one thing you will all hear about, I believe, is courageous leadership. This work is often scary, usually daunting, and not always greeted with joy. Thank goodness these leaders persisted nonetheless. Thank goodness they beat the odds for many of their students, and built opportunities for students who would otherwise have not succeeded.

Nothing they did included a magic wand, Bill Gates gave none of them millions of dollars or computers.

The seemingly impossible is possible!

If anyone can do it, ANYone can do it.

njoy, have fun, learn, but also teach and share!

Each of you has experiences and knowledge to share, and ways in which you have both sought, and found success. This sharing may happen right in the Breakout sessions, and it will certainly happen in our small-group Mash-up Hash-out session after lunch, where everyone at the table will participate in a Mash-up of the group's ideas, and in hashing out possible implementation plans, and then sharing with the whole group.

Thank you so so much for being here. Enjoy your two breakouts, and we will see you back here at noon for lunch and for more on the Mash-up!