

## So, why did we fail?

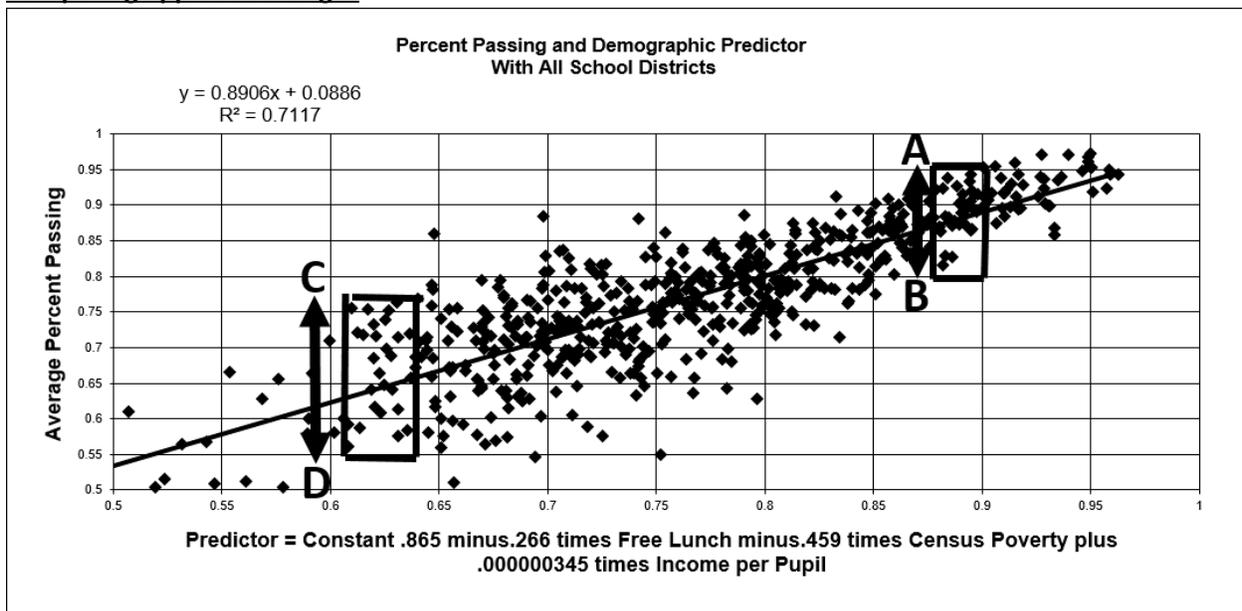
### 1. Weak Leadership

- Lack of honesty about test data
- Failure to analyze test data for the purpose of improving student achievement
- Failure to stick to improvement plans and cope with setbacks
- Handing over control of the test making process to companies like Pearson
- Administrators ignore consistently weak professional performance.

### 2. Adults win, kids lose

- Inflexible Tenure laws resulting in statistically absolute tenure
- Rigid seniority layoff rules
- Pay for senior employees too high
- Pay for starting employees too low
- Attract weak employees and keep them for a full career without improving them

### 3. Comparing apples to oranges



### 4. Helter Skelter improvement efforts

- Start an improvement plan and change leadership/direction before it has time to work
- Changes based on 2 or 4 year election cycles not educational priorities and realities
- Good educational ideas abandoned only to be rediscovered decades later
- Every employee and parent group fights harder tests and curriculum every time
- SED bureaucrats with no school leadership experience, creating and enforcing educationally counterproductive rules
- School board members working outside their lanes to abort or ram through change

### 5. Bad Investments

- Huge increases in professional staffing with no test results improvements
- Outsized salaries and exorbitant benefit costs for support staff
- Expensive attorneys and health insurance specialists to negotiate with state level unions with little impact on student achievement.
- Enormous waste of leadership time and skill negotiating local labor contracts.

- Expensive special education programs with little educational results payoff
- Over-priced employee health insurance and pension costs
- Non-existent effective academic intervention for needy students in many school districts

#### **6. Bad politics drive too many decisions**

- Superintendents, principals and teacher leaders chosen for the wrong reasons.
- School funding formulas give too much money to schools and kids that need it least.
- SED rules and BOCES programs written around the needs of wealthy suburban schools
- Blockers in the system are empowered by school boards, SED and superintendents.

#### **7. Increased racial and socioeconomic segregation as student poverty increases**

- Best educational opportunities for students who need them least
- High poverty teachers and principals deal with too many students who need extra help
- Zoning laws and real estate marketing practices increase segregation
- Communities fight low income housing
- Charter school and school choice options exacerbate segregation of successful students
- Politicians cater to the needs of the wealthy suburbs ignoring poor urban and rural areas

### **So, what can we do?**

1. Improve educational leadership by using the book **Why We Failed: 40 Years of Education Reform** to create productive discussions and writing tasks for training teachers, principals, superintendents and school board members.
2. Implement one hour long end of year assessments in Math and Reading at grades 3-8 that are publicly available and scored immediately.
3. Lobby for law changes like the 2%, 5% change suggested in the book which would eliminate statistically absolute tenure and raise the profile of the teaching profession.
4. Teach principals and superintendents how to craft and implement effective SED and PERB approved professional performance improvement plans.
5. Lobby SED to change school test performance comparisons to properly take poverty into account. And don't wait for them. Do it yourself.
6. Incorporate SED approved authentic assessments as 20% of final score into all grade 3-8 Math and Reading end of year tests and all Regents exit exams
7. Change special education rules so that any teacher with an appropriate certificate (math, social studies, elementary not just special education) can tutor students outside the school day and meet learning disabled students' special education program requirements.
8. In persistently failing school districts replace the school board with three retired school superintendents (paid as consultants) and replace the superintendent and any other poor performing administrators with interims who have the power to change operations.
9. In lieu of charter schools (school choice in general) provide parents of poverty students cash rental vouchers so they can move to nearby successful suburban school districts.

***Lonnie Palmer is the author of the solutions based book***

***Why We Failed: 40 Years of Education Reform***

***lonniepalmer4@msn.com, 518-795-8117***

***<http://www.lonniepalmer.com>***