

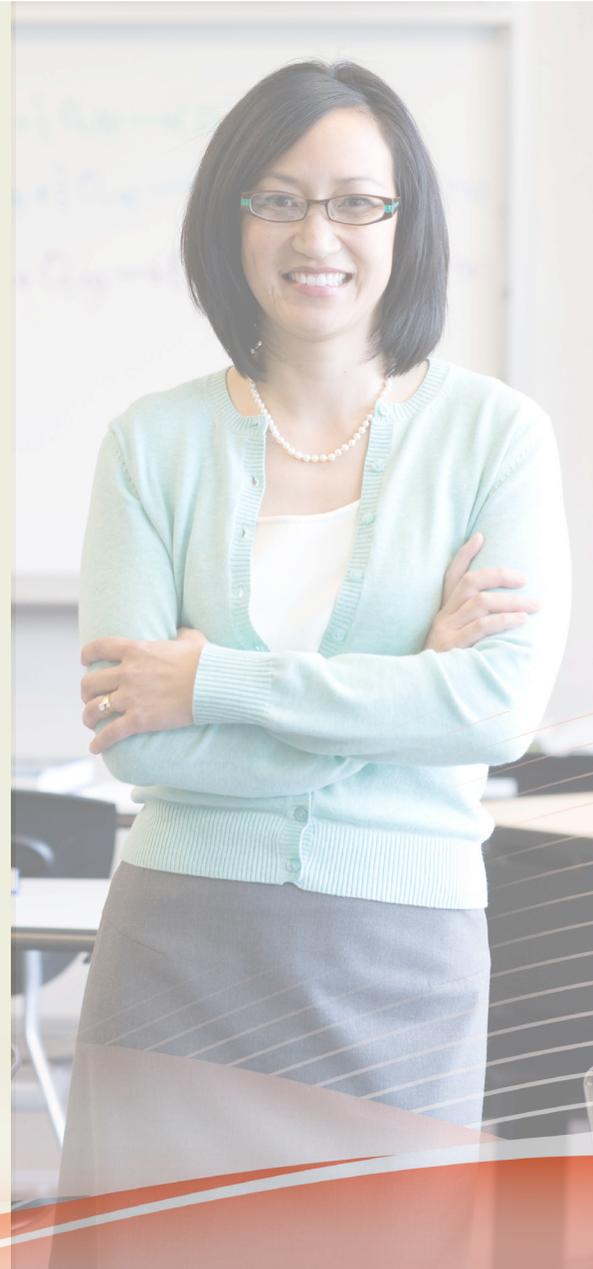
Teaching for Rigor: Three Challenges for Title 1 Directors

The Marzano Center Essentials for Achieving Rigor instructional model tackles the achievement gap head-on.

A new model of instruction provides the “how” to teach for rigor.

The Marzano Center Essentials for Achieving Rigor model has been developed to meet the three most potent challenges facing Title 1 schools. The model:

- **Supports a focused shift in pedagogy**
Gives teachers a road map for planning units of instruction, grounds instruction in 13 essential strategies and a clear learning progression, facilitates feedback and collaboration, and provides real-time formative data that allows teachers to assess and adjust their practice.
- **Unifies school culture**
Aligns various programs and approaches around a common instructional model and a common language of instruction. Teachers across grades and departments, parents, community, and staff share a common language and common expectations for student learning aligned to rigorous standards.
- **Provides formative feedback**
Allows teachers to monitor student progress and make adjustments in their instruction before the end of a unit or year. Because the model helps teachers adjust their instruction in real time, it supplements the work of RTI interventions and may decrease the need for such interventions over time.



Introduction

Schools implementing new college and career readiness standards are facing a number of challenges. While most districts are fairly far along in the process of aligning curriculum and textbooks to the standards, teachers still report that they need specific training designed to help them teach lessons and units aimed at achieving rigor. Such support and training is especially crucial for Title 1 schools, as experts worry that the achievement gap may widen with new, more rigorous state standards.

These reports are more than anecdotal. Indeed, multiple states have already shown troubling drops in student scores with college and career readiness-aligned assessments. Our analysis of more than 2 million data points at Learning Sciences International has revealed a significant finding: Less than 6% of observed classroom lessons are devoted to higher-order thinking skills and cognitively complex learning—analysis, hypothesis generation and testing, reasoning, decision-making—those skills that are the foundation of rigorous standards.

While teachers and students may be *visiting* the land of cognitive complexity, they are not yet *living* there. Title 1 coordinators hoping to

help teachers move toward complex thinking skills with all students will be well-served to identify and implement a model of instruction that specifically addresses the critical need for rigorous instruction and provides teachers a path to get there.

Additionally, Title 1 schools will benefit from an instructional model that not only meets the need for rigor but also aligns the many programs currently in place so that every instructor in the school and district has a shared vision of instruction and an understanding of shared goals to help all students meet the challenges of more rigorous standards. If coordinators can support teachers to make these necessary pedagogical shifts, and give them the tools and resources to monitor student progress during lessons and units, teachers will become more proficient at reaching those students most in need.

In our conversations in many districts, Title 1 coordinators and principals have articulated their major challenges in implementation of CCRS. This brief paper outlines solutions to help you and your schools overcome these major challenges and reach high levels of rigor for all students.



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Challenge #1: RTI interventions are not sufficient to prepare struggling students for college and careers.

At a 2012 forum hosted by the American Institutes for Research in Washington, D.C., Title 1 school leaders described a disconnect between the goal of preparing all students

for college and careers, and the preparation that is actually in place in Title 1 schools. The report produced from that symposium noted that:

One of the most important challenges to address is the disproportionate numbers of poor and minority students who are

not ready for college and careers when compared to wealthier peers. Symposium participants struggled to understand why disproportionate numbers of the poorest students are being retained in college and are taking remedial courses for so long.

See: <http://www.ccsrcenter.org/products-resources/blog/challenges-achieving-college-and-career-readiness-equity-education-systems>

Title 1 schools implement a host of RTI academic interventions for struggling and at-risk students to help them meet proficiency. While many of these programs are beneficial, the number of at-risk students needing remedial courses in college has held steady. The problem may be that while academic interventions help *students* improve specific skills, they do not offer focused development for *teachers* working with at-risk students.

Title 1 schools hoping to succeed at graduating college- and career-ready students

will consider adopting a two-pronged approach that: 1) provides academic interventions for students as needed and 2) implements a model of instruction that arms teachers with core classroom strategies, skills, and feedback to help all students succeed with rigorous standards. Such a model may, over time, reduce the need for as many costly individual student interventions as teachers master necessary skills to ensure rigorous instruction for students at *all* levels of learning and achievement.

The Marzano Center Essentials for Achieving Rigor model provides a clear, well-articulated pathway for teachers to achieve rigor for all students, including:

- Specific, research-based classroom strategies to move students at all achievement levels to mastery of cognitively complex tasks
- Strategies that address the requirement for student autonomy

- Standards-based planning on measurement topics to show progression of knowledge across units and grade levels, so that students are fully prepared to move forward
- Reflection on lesson outcomes and integrated monitoring and feedback tools with action plans for intervention and enrichment for struggling students
- Professional development “embedded in daily work” (Cogsall, 2012) and collaborative learning in a supportive, non-evaluative, growth-focused environment
- Parallel training for teacher coaches, who will continue to provide support and feedback long after formal training is complete

With such a focused model of rigorous instruction, teacher pedagogy may be steadily improved so that interventions for individual students work in synergy with the classroom practice of all teachers in the school.



Challenge #2: New standards require whole-school alignment.

Title 1 coordinators have been working diligently to prepare teachers to make the shifts required with new standards. As they do so, a transition in teacher pedagogy is a vital component in creating an aligned system, one that pulls many diverse programs and interventions into a shared commitment to rigorous instruction. The Essentials for Achieving Rigor model was specifically designed as a model of instruction to help align multiple programs through the lens of a focused learning progression to move students to cognitive complexity. The model provides a clear pathway for all instructors to meet goals of college and career readiness, and fosters a

collective sense that the school as a whole is moving together toward increased instructional rigor.

We can define such a model of instruction as the *agreed-upon description and definition of effective teaching aligned to rigorous standards.*

The Essentials for Achieving Rigor model aligns pedagogy and programs around a model of instruction by:

- Providing an agreed-upon common language of instruction across units, grade levels, departments, and disciplines

- Unifying pedagogy across a wide range of instructional approaches for diverse learning populations
- Providing parents and community an understanding of the purpose and methods of the school's instructional

- goals through a clearly articulated model of instruction and learning progression
- Alleviating anxiety about the diversity and fragmentation of specialized programs by providing a lens to focus program goals and outcomes

Challenge #3: Lagging indicators of student achievement are too little, too late.

An unpublished Annenberg analysis of 2013 New York state test scores pointed to achievement gaps widening for special education, ELL, Black, and Latino students under new college and career readiness standards. Title 1 schools must equip themselves to meet the challenge of a widening achievement gap head-on.

The Essentials for Achieving Rigor model provides teachers the formative data and tools to identify struggling students and struggling student subgroups early on during academic units. With these leading indicators, teachers can adjust instructional strategies to

meet specific challenges before it's too late to intervene. The model provides:

- Multiple measures of student growth to inform teachers of instructional gaps
- Formative feedback during units and the necessary monitoring data to facilitate instructional decision-making in lesson and unit planning
- A variety of specific research-based instructional strategies to help move struggling students toward attainment of cognitively complex skills

A New Standard of Professional Development

Teachers need an instructional model and training to help them step into their new roles as skilled facilitators, and to guide students to take ownership of their own learning. Title 1 coordinators are charged with choosing the resources to help teachers make this crucial transition. Integrating

13 essential strategies into a comprehensive program of professional development, the Marzano Center Essentials for Achieving Rigor model has received high praise from educators in schools and districts who are already beginning to meet these challenges.

Download a [FREE MONOGRAPH](#) by Robert J. Marzano and Michael D. Toth for the research and data foundations of the Essentials for Achieving Rigor model.

Contact us for more information at 1.877.411.7114, or visit our website at MarzanoCenter.com.



What teachers are saying about Essentials professional development:

“[After this training] I will make adaptations when the desired result is not evident. I will go back and re-teach or allow the students to teach each other as a way to deepen their own knowledge. I will continue to be more aware of where every student is and what needs to be done to teach them all effectively.”

“The training provided good examples and deepened my understanding of creating complex tasks.”

“I am now ensuring that I am making changes to my lesson plans based on the monitored results I am seeing.”

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