

DENISE POPE, MAUREEN BROWN, AND SARAH MILES



OVERLOADED

AND

UNDERPREPARED

STRATEGIES FOR STRONGER SCHOOLS AND HEALTHY, SUCCESSFUL KIDS

CHALLENGE
SUCCESS

JOSSEY-BASS™
A Wiley Brand

OVERLOADED and **UNDERPREPARED**

Strategies for Stronger Schools
and Healthy, Successful Kids

By Denise Pope,
Maureen Brown,
and Sarah Miles

CHALLENGE
SUCCESS

J JOSSEY-BASS™
A Wiley Brand

Copyright © 2015 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. All rights reserved.

Published by Jossey-Bass

A Wiley Brand

One Montgomery Street, Suite 1000, San Francisco, CA 94104-4594—www.josseybass.com

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without either the prior written permission of the publisher, or authorization through payment of the appropriate per-copy fee to the Copyright Clearance Center, Inc., 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, 978-750-8400, fax 978-646-8600, or on the Web at www.copyright.com. Requests to the publisher for permission should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, 201-748-6011, fax 201-748-6008, or online at www.wiley.com/go/permissions.

Limit of Liability/Disclaimer of Warranty: While the publisher and author have used their best efforts in preparing this book, they make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this book and specifically disclaim any implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. No warranty may be created or extended by sales representatives or written sales materials. The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for your situation. You should consult with a professional where appropriate. Neither the publisher nor author shall be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages. Readers should be aware that Internet Web sites offered as citations and/or sources for further information may have changed or disappeared between the time this was written and when it is read.

Jossey-Bass books and products are available through most bookstores. To contact Jossey-Bass directly call our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 800-956-7739, outside the U.S. at 317-572-3986, or fax 317-572-4002.

Wiley publishes in a variety of print and electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some material included with standard print versions of this book may not be included in e-books or in print-on-demand. If this book refers to media such as a CD or DVD that is not included in the version you purchased, you may download this material at <http://booksupport.wiley.com>. For more information about Wiley products, visit www.wiley.com.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Pope, Denise Clark, 1966- author.

Overloaded and underprepared : strategies for stronger schools and healthy, successful kids / by Denise Pope, Maureen Brown, and Sarah Miles.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-119-02244-2 (pbk.), ISBN 978-1-119-02256-5 (ePDF), 978-1-119-02246-6 (epub)

1. School improvement programs—United States. 2. Educational change—United States. 3. Students—United States—Psychology. I. Brown, Maureen, 1959- author. II. Miles, Sarah B., author. III. Title.

LB2822.82.P66 2015

371.2'07—dc23

2015005827

Cover Design: Challenge Success

Cover image: ©narvik/iStockphoto.com

Printed in the United States of America

FIRST EDITION

HB Printing 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents

List of Tables, Figures, and Exhibits	v
About the Authors	vii
About Challenge Success	ix
Acknowledgments	xi
Introduction	1
1 From Vision to Action: An Overview of the School Change Process	7
2 A Saner Schedule	19
3 The Homework Dilemma	39
4 Engagement Matters: Backward Planning and Project-Based Learning	61
5 Authentic and Alternative Assessments	89
6 The Advanced Placement Program — Benefits and Challenges	121
7 Creating a Climate of Care	135
8 Educating the Whole School	163
9 Keeping Momentum for Positive School Change	185
Appendix: Shadow Day, Fishbowls, and Dialogue Nights	193
References	219
Index	235

List of Tables, Figures, and Exhibits

Tables

Table I.1.	Initiatives in Schools as a Result of Work with Challenge Success	4
------------	---	---

Figures

Figure 1.1.	Typical Stages in the Challenge Success Change Process	11
Figure 1.2.	A Sample “Stress Tree”	13
Figure 1.3.	SPACE Framework	17
Figure 3.1.	Scheduling Tool	59
Figure 4.1.	Science Fair Display	61
Figure 4.2.	Understanding by Design	64
Figure 5.1.	Curriculum Priorities and Assessments	93
Figure 5.2.	Framework of Assessment Approaches and Methods	95
Figure 8.1.	Timewheel	168
Figure 8.2.	Conference Scenario Results	179

Exhibits

Exhibit 2.1.	Examples of a Traditional and a Block Schedule	23
Exhibit 3.1.	Excerpt from JLS Middle School Homework Guidelines	51
Exhibit 3.2.	Making Homework Work: Sample Cover Sheet	57
Exhibit 4.1.	Sample Materials from Laura Docter’s Rome Project	76
Exhibit 5.1.	Del Mar Prompt and Rubric	107
Exhibit 5.2.	Castilleja VC Pitch Rubric	111
Exhibit 5.3.	Sample Waldorf Report Card	116
Exhibit 6.1.	Advanced Placement FAQ	127
Exhibit 7.1.	Excerpt from Latin School of Chicago Strategic Plan 2013–2018	157
Exhibit 7.2.	Excerpt from California Standards for the Teaching Profession	159
Exhibit A.1.	Sample of Invite Letter to Parents/Students	211
Exhibit A.2.	Recommended Talking Points— Student Meeting	212
Exhibit A.3.	Skits # 1 through 3	213
Exhibit A.4.	Dialogue Night— Recommended Program/Agenda	216
Exhibit A.5.	Recommended Materials	218

*To schools that are making real and lasting changes
to improve their students' lives*

About the Authors

Denise Clark Pope, Ph.D. is a senior lecturer at the Stanford University Graduate School of Education and cofounder of Challenge Success. For the past sixteen years, she has specialized in student engagement, curriculum studies, qualitative research methods, and service learning. Challenge Success is an expanded version of the SOS: Stressed-Out Students project that Dr. Pope founded and directed from 2003–2008. She lectures nationally on parenting techniques and pedagogical strategies to increase student health, engagement with learning, and integrity. Her book, *“Doing School”: How We Are Creating a Generation of Stressed-Out, Materialistic, and Miseducated Students* (Yale University Press, 2001) was awarded Notable Book in Education by the American School Board Journal, 2001. Dr. Pope is a three-time recipient of the Stanford University Graduate School of Education Outstanding Teacher and Mentor Award, and was honored with the 2012 Education Professor of the Year “Educators’ Voice Award” from the Academy of Education Arts and Sciences. She has served as a trustee at several independent schools in the Bay Area. Prior to teaching at Stanford, Dr. Pope taught high school English in Fremont, California, and college composition and rhetoric courses at Santa Clara University.

Maureen Rutter Brown, MBA is executive director for Challenge Success, where she oversees daily operations as well as marketing, fundraising, and strategic planning. Ms. Brown comes to Challenge Success with over 20 years of consulting experience in health care, financial services, and technology. Prior to joining Challenge Success, Ms. Brown worked as an independent consultant and as a partner at APM, Incorporated, where she structured, sold, and managed strategic and operations improvement engagements for health care institutions, primarily university medical centers.

Ms. Brown has also worked in cash management for Philadelphia National Bank and Citibank. She has been on various boards at Georgetown University, and cofounded the Bay Area Georgetown Technology Alliance. She has also served as cochair of the Parents Committee and as an advisor to Duke University's Entrepreneurship Program, and she has been a board member at Woodside School.

Sarah Becket Miles, M.S.W., Ph.D. is a researcher with Challenge Success. She researches how schools and classrooms can best support student learning and engagement. She works with Challenge Success member schools to translate research into practice as well as presents at conferences and writes articles for education-related journals. She has also been a coach with two Challenge Success member schools and worked as a teaching and research assistant at Stanford University. Prior to receiving her doctoral degree, Dr. Miles taught fifth grade in Oakland, California, and worked as a clinical social worker in the Boston area.

About Challenge Success

Founded at the Stanford University Graduate School of Education, Challenge Success partners with schools and families to develop research-based strategies that provide kids with the academic, social, and emotional skills needed to succeed now and in the future. Through practical workshops, conferences, and presentations, Challenge Success offers parents the tools they need to raise healthy, motivated kids, and collaborates with educators to develop school and classroom policies that encourage students to engage with learning to reach their individual potential and find a more effective path to success. Success, after all, is measured not at the end of the semester, but over the course of a lifetime. For more information about this organization, visit challengesuccess.org.

Acknowledgments

We wrote this book because we believe that with a clear vision, sufficient resources, and ample support, schools and families can make real changes that will benefit our children. The same can be said for the writing of this book, and we are extremely grateful for the help we received from our many friends and colleagues.

Our Challenge Success Cofounders Madeline Levine and Jim Lobdell helped to launch Challenge Success and continue to spread our message in what has become a national movement. We are indebted to them for their vision, persistence, and commitment to helping every child thrive. Our core team, Margaret Dunlap, Samantha Spielman, Emeri Handler, and Genie Hyatt, picked up the slack and kept the organization working smoothly when we disappeared for days to write. Our work on this book would not have been possible without their flexibility and sense of humor. Thank you, too, to Shannon Davidson for stepping in to help us meet our deadline; your careful eye and attention to detail was invaluable.

To our incredible interns, Christopher Geary, Emily Breyer, and Julia Maggioncalda: We can't thank you enough for your dogged research efforts, skillful interviewing, and the detailed work you completed to help us get the book ready for publication. Your persistence in tracking down everything we asked for was impressive.

We are also thankful to Challenge Success coaches Alexandra Ballard and Paul Franz, and to Jerusha Conner and Karen Strobel for providing us with the extra help we needed in writing our chapters on project-based learning, alternative assessment, and a climate of care. Your clear thinking and valuable advice helped us frame those sections of the book.

Our Challenge Success Board of Directors, Advisory Board, and Research and Policy Advisors play a critical role in everything we do, and we are grateful for their guidance

and insight. In particular, we would like to thank our board chair Charlene Margot for her tremendous leadership, along with our past chairs, Gabrielle Layton and Lisa Stone Pritzker; without their support and vision, we would not be where we are today.

We also want to thank the many Challenge Success volunteers, students, faculty members, and administrators who contributed directly to the book by allowing us to interview them and tell their stories in our case studies. Thank you to Lisa Babinet, Megan Boesiger, Patrick Burrows, Drew Ciancia, Shivani Dayal, Laura Docter, Mary Dowden, Elizabeth Fee, Ryan Fletcher, Kirk Greer, Karen Klapper, Thomas Lengel, Alex Lockett, Charlene Margot, Jessica Nella, Sharon Ofek, Dave Otten, Kristin Plant, Amy Richards, Anne Schaefer-Salinas, Pam Scott, Casey Sheehan, Richard Simon, Lisa Spengler, Karen Strobel, Patricia Tennant, Janice Toben, Alan Vann Gardner, Carola Wittmann, Susie Wolbe, and Matthew Zito.

Thank you to our publishers and editors at Jossey Bass/Wiley, especially Kate Bradford who was tremendously patient as she waited for us to find the right time to write this book. Thank you for giving us the nudge to move forward with this project and the support to complete it.

Finally we would like to thank our families. Thank you to our children for letting us “Challenge Success you to death,” for being patient with us throughout this process, and for helping us realize that practicing what you preach isn’t always easy or comfortable. Thank you to our parents for raising us to love learning and for giving us the encouragement to find jobs and careers that we love. And thank you to our fabulous husbands, Mike, Dave, and Kevin, who support all that we do at Challenge Success, and who remind us to prioritize PDF (playtime, downtime, family time), even amidst a busy project like this one. We love you guys, and are incredibly grateful to have you in our lives.

Introduction

- 6:15 A.M.: Wake up, get ready for school, and grab a quick breakfast
- 7:00 A.M.: Walk to bus stop to catch the 7:10 school bus
- 7:50 A.M. to 3:00 P.M.: School day that includes AP Calculus, AP U.S. History, AP English, Honors Spanish, Biology, Art History, and Physical Education. Also includes student council meeting during lunch.
- 3:00 P.M. to 3:45 P.M.: Service club meeting after school
- 4:00 P.M. to 6:15 P.M.: Swim team practice
- 6:45 P.M.: Arrive home, shower, dinner, and three to four hours of homework
- 11:30 P.M.: Bedtime, depending on homework load
- And then start this routine all over again the next day.

This is a fairly typical schedule for a high-achieving high school student. On top of seven hours of classes, some of which are honors or advanced levels, most students have sports practices after school, at least one other extracurricular activity—sometimes more—and several hours of homework. Other students may have fewer honors courses but have responsibilities at home or at after-school jobs that keep them just as busy. It is no wonder that these students are exhausted and stressed out. Our research at high-achieving schools has found that high school students get, on average, about six and a half hours of sleep each night (Galloway, Conner, & Pope, 2013), in spite of the fact that sleep experts recommend approximately nine hours of sleep for healthy development (Eaton et al., 2010). National research also shows that academics are the leading cause of stress for nine- to thirteen-year-olds and a top concern for high school students as well (National Association of Health Education Centers, 2005). In response to

this stress, students are increasingly engaging in harmful behaviors, including overuse of stimulants such as Adderall and Ritalin, known as “study drugs,” binge-drinking, and “cutting” or other self-harm practices (Feliz, 2013; Goldberg, 2012). In fact, 73 percent of high school students say that stress is the main reason they use drugs (Partnership for Drug-Free Kids, 2008). The effects of this unhealthy stress and overload reach beyond high school; nationwide, 50 percent of college students have felt overwhelming anxiety, and 30 percent reported that they felt so depressed it was difficult to function (American College Health Association, 2012). Many students and parents feel they have no choice but to continue day after day at this frantic pace. They believe the prospect of a good education and future employment and security are at risk if they don’t.

Admittedly, many students in the United States have schedules that look nothing like the one at the start of this chapter. For a wide variety of reasons, these students may be struggling in remedial or basic level classes or on the verge of dropping out of school; they may spend very little time on homework or extracurricular activities and may have too much free time on their hands. For many of these kids, the current education system isn’t working. But is it working well for the typical student who stays in school, strives to learn the material, earns good grades, and plans to go to college? In light of the mental and physical health concerns just outlined, along with reports of rampant cheating in high school and college (for a review, see Challenge Success, 2012a), and research showing that many students—even those at the top—lack sufficient critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity, and problem-solving skills (American Management Association, 2010; Casner-Lott & Barrington, 2006; Darling-Hammond & Conley, 2015; Lythcott-Haims, 2015), we question whether the current education system is preparing students well for college and future careers. At Challenge Success, we offer students, parents, and schools strategies for healthier and more productive pathways to success.

Challenge Success, a research-based project founded at Stanford University’s Graduate School of Education, partners with schools and families to provide the information and tools needed to create a more balanced and academically fulfilling life for kids. Cofounders Denise Pope, Madeline Levine, and Jim Lodbell started Challenge Success because, as mental health and education-reform experts, they knew they had to speak out against an increasingly fast-paced world that was interfering with sound educational practices and harming kids physically and mentally. The program, which grew from Denise Pope’s original work on Stressed-Out Students and celebrated a 10-year anniversary in 2013, has reached almost 800,000 students, faculty, administrators, and parents throughout the United States and across the globe. During our first decade we

have learned what works and what doesn't when trying to make changes in schools and in homes. At the urging of those who have worked closely with us, we decided to write a book of best practices that we hope will be shared widely so that more schools and families can benefit from what we have learned.

While everything we do is based on research, our goal is to provide practical information and tools to effect change. We know that teachers, administrators, and parents can get overwhelmed by the research and jargon associated with school reform, and we are here to help. We review and synthesize the literature from the field, match those findings with knowledge from our own research and practice, and then help translate research into reality. We work with teams of educators, parents, and students at schools to identify problems and implement changes to school policies concerning curriculum, assessment, scheduling, and a healthy school climate. We provide support to parents by giving them the tools they need to help their children regain their balance, strengthen their sense of self, and learn how to deal effectively with the inevitable challenges of life. And we share our research findings widely via white papers, conferences, and webinars, so that the public can make informed decisions about educating children and advocating for changes in local communities.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

At Challenge Success, we know that every child has his or her own story and path to success. We believe that kids come with a wide variety of interests, skills, capacities, and talents. They need love, support, limits, and a safe environment to develop their full potential. This process of growing up is slow, deliberate, and often unpredictable, and therefore requires that kids have the time and energy needed to mature into resilient, caring, and engaged adults. Challenge Success recognizes that our current fast-paced, high-pressure culture works against much of what we know about healthy child development. The overemphasis on grades, test scores, and rote answers has stressed out some kids and marginalized many more. We all want our kids to do well in school and to master certain skills and concepts, but our largely singular focus on academic achievement has resulted in a lack of attention to other components of a successful life—the ability to be independent, adaptable, ethical, and engaged critical thinkers. These traits, frequently described as 21st century skills, have and will continue to serve students well into the next century. Our work helps to foster learners who are healthy, motivated, and skilled with these traits that will prepare them for the wide variety of tasks they will face as adults.

What have we learned over the last 10 years? Some policymakers and those in the media want us to believe that schools are broken, but our experience doesn't bear that out. The teachers we meet care about their students and work hard. Our team-based approach and in-depth professional development have shown that it is possible to make changes to further improve schools. By focusing on what works, like hands-on learning and alternative assessments, as well as educating students and parents about healthier ways to handle stress, we have positively impacted tens of thousands of kids. For instance, as seen in the table below, schools make changes even in their first few years working with Challenge Success.

How do we know if our work is making a difference? From our own evaluation following a small sample of schools over time, we found that when schools make substantive changes to practices and policies such as those in the table below, student engagement in school increases and student stress decreases. In addition, many students report they feel more supported in school, are less likely to cheat, and are getting more sleep (Challenge Success, 2014). Finally, schools report that these changes happen without negatively affecting students' academic achievement, college acceptance rates, or standardized test scores. We hope that compiling our lessons from the field and sharing best practices will allow more schools and families to make positive changes like these, so that all kids can succeed on their own terms and live healthier and more fulfilled lives.

Table I.1 Initiatives in Schools as a Result of Work with Challenge Success

	Percentage of schools accomplished or in progress by Year 2	Percentage of schools accomplished or in progress by Year 3	Examples of initiatives accomplished or in progress
Students' schedule and use of time	100%	100%	Revised exam or project calendars Changed homework policies Provided students with organizers Changed to a later start time Implemented new bell schedules Moved to modified block scheduling Revised athletics schedules Instituted homework-free vacations with finals before winter holiday

Table I.1 (continued)

	Percentage of schools accomplished or in progress by Year 2	Percentage of schools accomplished or in progress by Year 3	Examples of initiatives accomplished or in progress
			Used scheduling tools to prevent over- and underscheduling of AP/ honors courses
Project-based learning	40%	50%	Added community-building school-wide projects Modified units to incorporate project-based learning Incorporated project-based learning into final assessments
Alternative assessment	80%	90%	Modified grading policy/weights Gave ungraded assignments in first quarter (comments only/no letter grade) Lowered significance of or eliminated mid-term and final exams and included more formative assessment practices Implemented "Revision & Redemption" policies
Climate of care	80%	100%	Added new advisory periods Initiated student mentorship programs Offered extra help periods/tutorials Established a Student Union Implemented wellness programs Conducted senior exit interviews Modified awards assemblies

(continued)

Table I.1 (continued)

	Percentage of schools accomplished or in progress by Year 2	Percentage of schools accomplished or in progress by Year 3	Examples of initiatives accomplished or in progress
Educating faculty, parents, and students about well-being	100%	100%	Organized parent book club discussion groups Held school-wide health fairs Offered faculty professional development on effective homework practices and teaching for engagement Created parent education programming Started student-run Challenge Success clubs

From Vision to Action: An Overview of the School Change Process

A CHEATING STORY

Megan was a high-performing student at an academically challenging parochial school—and she was frustrated. Everywhere she looked it seemed like her classmates were cheating. They copied each other’s papers, wrote answers on their shoes, and forged notes to get extra time on tests; one student even created a custom water bottle label with test material embedded in it. Megan had never cheated. She wanted to do the right thing, but it felt like she was getting the short end of the stick. Why should everyone else get ahead by cheating, but not her? She couldn’t help but think she was in a situation where you had to “cheat or be cheated.” She considered approaching her faculty advisor about what she was observing, but that was complicated. She didn’t want to get her friends in trouble, and besides, it seemed like some of the teachers knew what was going on and just looked the other way. So she decided not to do anything, and her frustration continued to build.

Megan wasn’t the only one who noticed the cheating problem. A local newspaper ran a story on extensive cheating at her school when some high-profile incidents were leaked to the press. To their credit, the school leaders acknowledged that the school had a problem, and they came to Challenge Success for help. They formed a team of

administrators, parents, teachers, and students that began to gather data to learn more about why students were cheating. By interviewing and surveying students and faculty, they learned that kids cheated for a number of reasons, such as having too much work to complete in the time available, feeling pressured to take too many high-level courses or to make a certain grade in a course, perceiving that the teachers didn't care about breaking the rules, and sometimes because they felt the whole system was unfair so cheating didn't really matter. The team collected and reported information on 38 incidents of general cheating, along with 50 incidences of plagiarism during the course of one school year, out of a total student body of approximately 1,600 students.

With data in hand, the team began a school-wide discussion on the importance of integrity. A panel of students spoke candidly to the faculty, sharing what was happening on campus and how concerned they were about the culture emerging at their school. As a result of these conversations, students and teachers together created an honor code to be used with every paper, quiz, test, project, and assessment. They also engaged in a massive educational effort to make sure that all parties — students, parents, faculty, and administrators — understood what this new honor code meant. All stakeholders signed the agreement, showing a commitment to solving the integrity problem together. The school made it clear that the honor code was in place to help students and faculty take responsibility for poor choices, not just to punish cheaters. The academic integrity task force clearly defined cheating practices and created a transparent process for reviewing infractions, including a student-run judicial board. The administration educated teachers on how and when to report violations, and because there was a consistent policy in place, the faculty felt supported in their efforts. In professional development sessions, teachers also learned to develop more “plagiarism-proof” assignments and alternative forms of assessment and to rotate exam materials to reduce the chances of cheating.

Integrity became as important as every other part of the curriculum, and teachers integrated the study of integrity into their subject areas when possible. For example, students were regularly asked to write journal entries on current events reflecting integrity or cheating behavior, and the principal wrote about positive integrity practices each month in her community newsletter. The faculty understood that adolescents make mistakes and that valuable lessons could be learned from a poor choice in order to prevent it from happening again. In parent education sessions, administrators addressed parents' fears of a blemish on their children's permanent record, and parents were coached on a case-by-case basis on how to respond appropriately at home when a student received a judicial infraction.

As a result of a community effort to fairly, transparently, and meaningfully address cheating, the school saw general infractions drop from 38 to 7, and plagiarism incidences drop from 50 to 11 during the next school year. Students and faculty reported feeling proud of their collective efforts to change the culture to one of community trust and integrity (Challenge Success, 2012b). As a result of their work with Challenge Success, the students on the team developed a catchphrase, “Find it, own it, live it.” As one student explained, “Finding what integrity means to you and really owning that definition and living it out in academics, sports, extracurriculars, and even outside of school. This is something that you could apply to any aspect of your life.”

This is just one example of how Challenge Success works with schools to make positive changes. Throughout this book, we will look at a number of examples of different kinds of changes in policy and practice that we think are relevant to schools nationwide. By sharing success stories and lessons learned, we hope to help educators consider the challenges their own schools are facing and how best to address the problems by creating an action plan for change. The next section describes the typical stages of this change process.

HOW DOES THIS WORK? PRINCIPLES FOR CHANGE

Our concept is straightforward: we believe that effective school change happens when all stakeholders—administrators, faculty, parents, counselors, and students—come together to identify problems and work on solutions. This is not a revolutionary concept, but how often have we seen reform efforts superimposed on schools with little student or teacher voice or input, and how often have we watched them fail? School reform experts agree: When schools work with a team of stakeholders in a focused way, they can make real progress toward improving policies and practice (Barth, ??; for review, see Desimone, ??).

At Challenge Success, we partner with suburban and urban public, charter, parochial, and independent schools. Schools involved in our program send full teams to attend an intensive conference in the fall, where they identify problems to be addressed at their school sites. In some cases, teams have a pretty good sense of what needs to be worked on when they arrive; in others, predetermined ideas are turned on their heads based on discussions and workshops at the conference. Our process allows schools to take the time to determine the root causes of student stress and disengagement at their particular site, and then we help the school design an individualized school plan for changes during the year to increase student engagement and well-being. We provide each school

with a coach, who guides the team through this process every step of the way. This team-based, site-specific approach is key, and the coach helps to make sure schools stay on track and don't lose focus throughout the year. The coach serves as a primary facilitator and liaison who shares research-based approaches and best practices and helps schools to select and implement these at their sites. Finally, teams reconvene each spring to problem-solve challenges with other schools and to celebrate success stories. Many schools admit that without the helpful prodding from an experienced coach and without the built-in accountability that comes with attending the spring conference, they might not have made as much progress throughout the year.

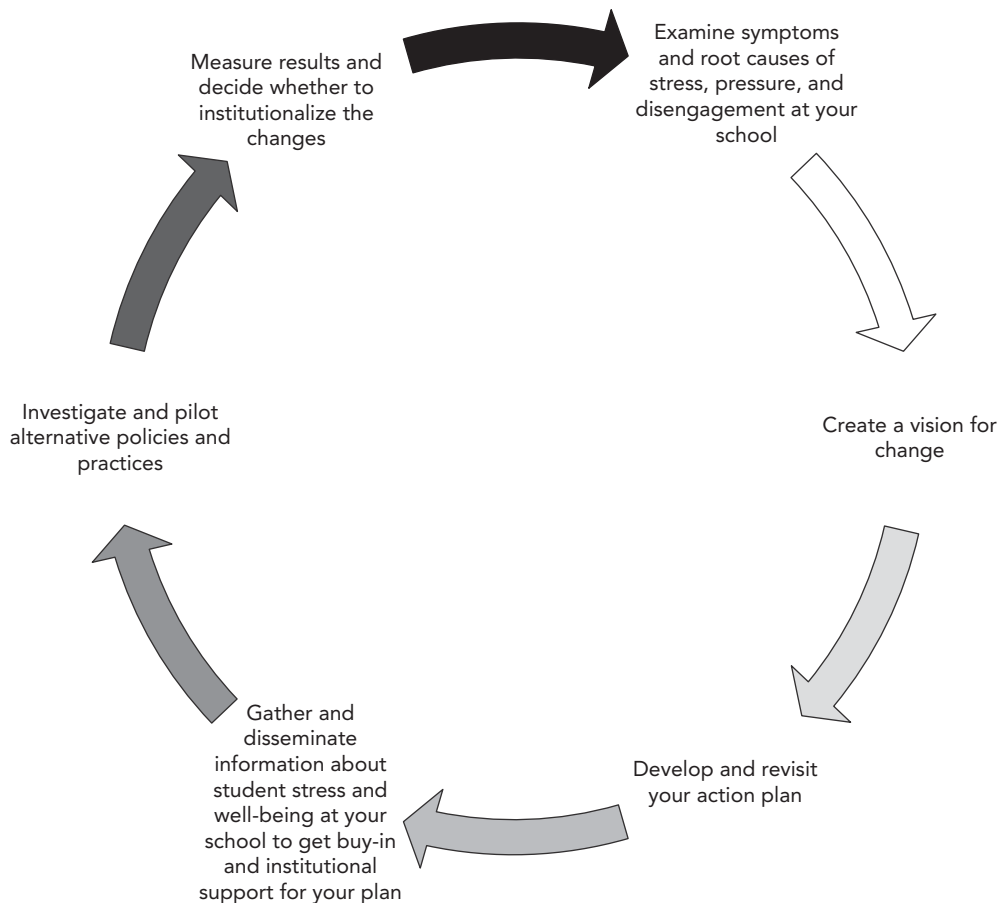
We don't want "flash in the pan" results at Challenge Success schools; we want changes to stick. Too often schools enact the newest policies or practices du jour without thinking through how these changes fit with long-term goals and other initiatives going on at the school or district level. We know that in order to effect lasting change, several things need to happen: Everyone on the team needs to feel like he or she is a part of the process, and all voices need to be heard. You'd be surprised by how wise a sixth grader can be if you give her a chance to speak her mind. Our successful teams have a common vision for the long term, and they work with us to develop a roadmap to get to where they want to go. Team leaders take what they learn at our conferences back to their broader community to educate more students, teachers, and parents in order to earn their buy-in. When all of this work has been done thoughtfully, we see a culture of collaboration and trust form alongside a willingness to change that frequently doesn't develop with a top-down approach.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE CHALLENGE SUCCESS TEAMS

Since the inception of our project in 2004, we have learned a lot about what makes an effective school team and the general progression that teams go through as they create changes to reduce student stress and increase health and engagement at their school sites. Figure 1.1 presents a visual depiction of typical stages in the process. While the change process varies from school to school based on the unique circumstances and needs of each, we have found some common characteristics of effective teams and the stages most teams go through as they create change.

An effective Challenge Success team has a clear leader or champion and a stable core team that may include the principal or other administrator, one or more teachers, one or more parents, two or more students, and one counselor or psychologist.

Figure 1.1 Typical Stages in the Challenge Success Change Process



This team:

- Attends the Challenge Success fall conference and spring follow-up conference, and meets multiple times with the Challenge Success team coach at the school site.
- Regularly gathers and disseminates information to the school community about student health, engagement, and integrity, and encourages cross-stakeholder dialogue about this information.
- Has an action plan that reflects a vision for change and contains a clear but flexible schedule for moving forward.
- Holds meetings at least quarterly to review and push forward the action plan.

- Involves all stakeholders at each stage of the change process.
- Pilots discreet, incremental changes rather than trying to do too much all at once. Changes are based on the school community’s needs and are known from research to improve engagement with learning and student well-being.
- Evaluates results of incremental changes before deciding to institutionalize reforms.
- Attends fall and spring Challenge Success conferences in future years as needed.

Identifying the Problem: Causes of Unhealthy Stress, Pressure, and Disengagement

Frequently school teams confuse symptoms of stress and/or student disinterest in learning with the root causes and sources of pressure at their school. For example, in the case study mentioned earlier, the school reported a widespread cheating problem among students. In theory, there could be several causes for the cheating: the student body could hypothetically be morally bankrupt; the pressure to get a higher score could outweigh the risk of getting caught cheating; students could be so bored that they lack interest in completing assignments on their own; and so on. You can imagine that solutions to curbing the cheating issue would vary significantly depending upon which of these root causes seemed most pervasive. One of the first things we do with our schools is walk them through an exercise that focuses on identifying what kinds of negative behaviors are happening on their campuses. Team members call out symptoms and identify the root causes as well as all of the stakeholder groups affected by these causes. In the cheating case, students were responding to certain cues at the school to act the way they did. The school discovered that students felt they had too much homework, unrealistic expectations from parents and teachers, and an overall sense that the climate at the school was based on a “survival of the fittest” mentality instead of a cohesive and supportive community. The teachers were also clearly affected and upset by the climate. Given the symptoms and causes the Challenge Success team identified, it seemed that the faculty would benefit from professional development on how to teach in a more engaging way, and that administrators needed help to implement policy changes to address cheating and provide more support to teachers. Parents also needed more education on why kids were cheating and what their role in the change process might look like. Since everyone seemed to be a part of the cheating problem at the school, everyone needed to be a part of the solution as well.

Figure 1.2 presents a sample of one school’s “stress tree” exercise identifying symptoms and root causes. Note that we ask schools to consider symptoms and causes of