

Standing and Delivering

- ♦ What the *Movie* Didn't Tell
- ♦ by Henry Gradillas and Jerry Jesness
- ♦ Forward by Jaime Escalante
- ♦ 2010 by Rowman & Littlefield Education:
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Who are they?

- ♦ Henry Gradillas was the principal at Garfield High School in Los Angeles from 1980 to 1987. It was during this time that the school gained fame for its math program that featured Jaime Escalante. The school's success was documented in the 1988 movie *Stand and Deliver*. This book is Gradillas' story of how he took a failing school and made amazing progress. Although Escalante was a key player, he claims that he couldn't have done it without Henry's leadership.

Key Statistics under Gradillas

- ♦ Average reading level - 5.2 to 10
- ♦ The number of chemistry sections - 1 to 16
- ♦ The number of AP tests - 56 to 357
- ♦ Students going to college increased eightfold.
- ♦ Summer school enrollment - 260 to 2,150
- ♦ ESL enrollment cut in half
- ♦ Within five years of Gradillas's departure, Garfield's gains had largely evaporated.

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The Gradillas Formula

- ♦ Establish a positive school climate, promote quality instruction, establish a rigorous curriculum, support teachers, provide support programs for students, hold students responsible for their behavior and their academic progress, and enforce the rules. He believes that the principal has both the authority and the responsibility to promote learning.

The Blame Game

- ♦ Gradillas interviewed many constituents and found two chains of blame.
- ♦ 1) The colleges blame the high schools who blame the middle schools who blame the elementary schools who blame the preschools who blame the parents. Moms blame absent dads who blame the culture.
- ♦ 2) Teachers blame principals who blame superintendents who blame the board who blame the legislature who blame the electorate.

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High Expectations

- ♦ The biggest weakness was that students were not being challenged. Too many believed that serious academic study and acceptable behavior were beyond students' abilities. It makes a difference when caring educators push kids to do things that they might not do on their own. They dumped non academic classes and added remedial classes, including Saturday classes, taken alongside academic classes. Ask the kids "why are you preparing to take the lowest paid jobs or to rot in jail?" Teachers were not teaching required content.

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School Climate Issues

- ♦ Principals need to know the laws and be willing to use them to stop activities that interfere with the educational process. If the police don't know the law, fill them in. All staff must understand that they are expected to be involved in discipline and reporting incidents. After a few students are transferred out, the others get this idea.

Attendance Issues

- ♦ Students who missed school for two weeks or more without keeping up were placed in a tutorial room when they returned. Computer assisted make-up work was also available. Once they caught up they could return to class. Students who went through this process were less likely to repeat. Administrators refused to sign off on welfare benefits for parents whose students were excessively absent. To control tardiness, students were initially not allowed to enter classes late and spent the time in the auditorium. Tardy sweeps were also used.

Adult Cooperation

- ✦ Counsellors became the next line of defense when teachers couldn't handle behavior issues. The role of counsellors was changed from that of programmers to real counselors. A clerk can program and schedule. Counselors and administrators supported teachers so that students couldn't play the adults against each other. Rules were enforced consistently with after school and Saturday detention used for repeat offenders.

Teaching & Curriculum

- ★ Once you get the climate under control, you can attend to instruction. Watch out for teachers killing time. If lessons appear poorly planned ask to see the plan. Material must be challenging, attainable, interesting, and relate to students' lives. Get rid of "Mickey Mouse" classes. Tell *all* teachers to work on language and reading skills. All students should have the opportunity to take college-level classes if they so choose. All AP students must take the AP test. Kids will soon realize that challenging courses will lead them to the light at the end of the tunnel.

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Special Programs

- ♦ If vocational education is not state of the art, it is not worth having. The most important qualities that businesses want are attitudes, ethics, punctuality, respect, loyalty, trustworthiness, and strong reading, writing, communication, and math skills. Use wages of graduates as a measure of success. Demands on special ed students should be as high as possible. ESL classes must be as demanding as any other class. Students should be encouraged to take AP tests in their native languages.

Physical Education, Sports, & Other Nonacademic Activities

- ♦ When he started at Garfield, these activities were much more important than academics. He instituted a policy that students who didn't have a passing average couldn't participate. If students had to add remedial ELA and math, there was no room in their schedule for activities. Pep rallies for AP tests also helped turn the focus towards academics.

Understanding & Controlling Gang Activity

- ♦ It is important gang kids know that people running the school respect them, but that rules are for everyone. You control gangs by enforcing the rules. Adults run the school, not gangs. “My weapon is my pen. I can use it to sign your diploma or your transfer.” Gradillas filled out transfer forms for students who broke the rules, left the date blank, and gave them a copy. Gangs don’t want to lose members and when leaders are transferred out, the gang can fall apart. Control access to the school. Ban clothing that is not safe and is identified with specific gangs. Good kids join gangs because they are afraid not to. Visit gang neighborhoods and perform acts of kindness when you can.

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Selecting, Supervising, & Supporting the Teaching Staff

- ♦ Involve staff and even parent groups in hiring. Look for knowledge of subject, passion for sharing knowledge, experience of any kind, and willingness to go beyond the minimum. It is important to keep their trust. Promises are not enough. Do not tolerate poor teachers. Give marginal teachers help to improve. Get out of the way of strong teachers. You can't micromanage. Back teachers when parents complain and in disciplinary matters. Don't expect them to physically break up a fight. Do everything you can to get them the material they need to do their job. Go out of your way to do things for them that they might not expect.

Winning Over the Kids

- ♦ School climate falls heavily on the students as they outnumber the staff. Gradillas had periodic “daddy talks” with the student body to persuade them to do their part. Accepting anonymous tips helped. Kids involved in food fights were either denied free lunch or forced to eat in a separate room. Student leaders were invited to some administrative and faculty meetings and their input was seriously considered. They were also allowed to visit other schools for ideas. You have to extend yourself to the students if you are going to make great demands on them.

Involving the Parents

- ♦ Parents can be your best ally or your biggest problem. If teachers contact parents and explain a discipline problem before they get the student's point of view, relations will likely be better. Suspensions were used as a lever to get parents to come to school. Gradillas would suspend a child at 3:00 p.m. and let them back at 8:00 a.m. the next morning after a parent meeting. He also worked around parent schedules even if it meant meeting at night or on Saturday. When parents did come he made sure they meet with others such the counsellor or the nurse. He meet with parent groups where they gathered to explain what he was trying to accomplish and expectations. Supportive minutes from meetings of parent groups proved he had their support.

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Other Support Groups

- ♦ The more that the community feels that their school is an open book, the more likely they are to cooperate with educators. Gradillas approached local small business and Fortune 500 companies with an area presence and asked for financial help along with speakers and advisors. He refused to sign work permits for students who had poor attendance and grades. He reported businesses who hired students without work permits. He used free game tickets and restaurant dinners as prizes so students could see what professionals could afford. Companies printed free programs with their coupons inside. Private contributors recognized accomplishments and expected results. College reps and successful alumni were invited often as were police and firemen. School board members and politicians were brought in to talk to classes and get their input, and students were encouraged to report incidents where authorities treated them in an inappropriate manner. Social workers were used to make home visits.

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The Powers That Be

- ♦ Making demands on higher administration can upset them. Demand at least everything that other schools in your district get. You need to be a squeaky wheel for your school. You also have to understand your union contracts as well as the union leaders do. They want happy employees just like you do. If something is in black and white, don't fight it. Involve staff in the budget decisions so they will better understand how funding works. Never lie, but be creative and look for opportunities to do horse trading with other schools and raise funds from the private sector.

Some Final Thoughts

- ♦ Don't let important content go untaught because it isn't on standardized tests. Technology is a mixed blessing. Creating multimedia presentations is no substitute for writing research papers. If you think your hands are tied by a mandate, you haven't explored all the possibilities. It's easy to find excuses, but there is always a way to get the job done. Give your students a secure environment, quality instruction, and a solid curriculum. If you are in charge, take charge without thinking of consequences for yourself. Now buy the book!

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