Schools Cannot Do It Alone by Jamie Vollmer

Schools Cannot Do It Alone tells of an extraordinary journey through the land of public education. Encounters with blueberries, bell cures, and smelly eighth graders lead author Jamie Vollmer to two critical discoveries. First, we have a systems problem, not a people problem. We must change the system to get the graduates we need. Second, we cannot touch the system without touching the culture of the surrounding town; everything that goes on inside a school is tied to local attitudes, values, traditions, and beliefs. Drawing on work from hundreds of school districts, ***Schools Cannot Do It Alone*** offers parents, teachers, board members, administrators, business and community members a practical approach to understanding, trust, permission, and support needed to change the system.

Chapter list and summary statement

- **Part I: From Critic to Ally**
  - Chapter 1 – Run it like a business: An ice cream man with an attitude
    - About the author
  - Chapter 2 – Blueberry story: The big shot learns a lesson
  - Chapter 3 – Aide for a day: Locked in a room with eighth graders
  - Chapter 4 – The ever-increasing burden: Educators are not the problem
    - A list of the additional duties and responsibilities given to educators from 1900 to the present without adding a single minute to the school day
- **Part II: Why Our Schools Need to Change**
  - Chapter 5 – The flaw in the system: Selecting for a world that no longer exists
    - The industrial model
    - Multiple choice tests
  - Chapter 6 – The new competitive equation: The learner-to-laborer ratio is reversed
    - The knowledge age [the "connected economy"]
  - Chapter 7 – The smoking gun: Time constant, learning variable
    - The bell curve
  - Chapter 8 – Challenging the core beliefs: The three-dimensional bell curve
    - Multiple intelligences
- **Part III: The Public Is Not Ready**
  - Chapter 9 – Struggling to be heard: Noise, history, bureaucracy, and T.T.S.P
    - An uphill battle
  - Chapter 10 – On the brink of progress: Attempting change and riling the public
    - A war
  - Chapter 11 – The obstructive power of "real school": Mental models, nostesia, and changing America one community at a time
    - Nostesia
    - Culture and community
  - Chapter 12 – Considering community involvement: Going from A to B through C
    - Community involvement campaign
  - Chapter 13 – The terrible twenty trends: External forces are pushing the public away

        - Trends to understand
    - Chapter 14 – The prerequisites of progress: What we need from the community
        - Understanding
        - Trust
        - Permission
        - Support
- **Part IV: The Great Conversation**
    - Chapter 15 – Escaping the Status Quo: An ongoing discussion with two tracks
        - Community collaboration
    - Chapter 16 – The formal track: Community's turn, community's convenience
        - Get on the community's turf
    - Chapter 17 – Mapping the community: Finding our audience
    - Chapter 18 – Deciding the message: A story of achievement, simply told
        - There is no perfect message
    - Chapter 19 – Developing scripts: Organizing content and sharing responsibility
    - Chapter 20 – Building teams: No one goes there alone
    - Chapter 21 – Conducting a communications audit: Reinforcing the message behind the scenes
    - Chapter 22 – Creating a comprehensive schedule: Putting the map to work in phases
    - Chapter 23 – A second front: Not everyone wants to go public
    - Chapter 24 – The informal track: Leveraging the power of the individual
        - Personal power
    - Chapter 25 – The return on investment: Trust, "Yes" votes, and rising social capital
        - Shared responsibility
        - Engagement
        - Satisfaction
    - Chapter 26 – A most hopeful time: The moral and the practical converge

Schools Cannot Do It Alone Book Study

Introduction

- Our schools must change. They were designed to serve a society that no longer exists. 4
- For the first time in history, our security, prosperity, and the health of our nation depend upon our ability to unfold the full creative potential of every child. Not just the easy ones, not just the top twenty-five percent of the class. America's schools were not designed to do this. They were built to select and sort students into two groups: a small handful of thinkers and a great mass of obedient doers. 4
- [We have] a systems problem, not a people problem. 5
- [Teachers] juggle their disparate tasks before audiences comprised of diverse, distracted, demanding children, many of whom are victims of a pop culture that overstimulates their physiologies, fractures their attention spans, and promotes a bizarre sense of entitlement. 5
- Principals are asked to be both efficient branch managers and brilliant instructional leaders; they have become the shock absorbers of the system—squeezed by directives from above and demands from below. 5
- Superintendents and their administrative teams spend their days (and nights) attempting to stretch insufficient resources to meet rising expectations. They struggle to balance competing

public and private interests while being denounced for earning salaries that no private sector CEO managing a comparable organization would even consider. 5

- And everyone who works in our schools labors to respond to the consequences of "mandate creep": the ever-expanding list of academic, social, medical, psychological, and nutritional responsibilities that has been crammed into an academic calendar that has not grown by a single minute in decades. 6
- Schools are shaped by the mores of their communities. If we are to meet the challenges of the knowledge age [and the "connected economy"], if we are to unfold the full creative potential of every child, we must do more than change our schools, we must change America, one community at a time. 7
- Something [is] missing in the standard approach to reform. It wasn't a lack of effort or conviction, standards or accountability. There was no shortage of research or proven programs. It [is] deeper. There [is] something missing in the community, specifically in the school/ community relationship. Even in the best districts, there [is] a dearth of four intangible but essential resources: understanding, trust, permission and support (the "Prerequisites of Progress"); and it [is] obvious these four [must] be developed before systemic TRANSFORMATION can occur. 8
- The Prerequisites of Progress [can] be obtained through a single course of action. Something practical that [requires] no new money. Something that [can] be easily implemented with existing personnel. Something that [promises] enough tangible benefits to entice everyone on staff and all their allies in the community to participate ("The Great Conversation"); a strategically coherent, tactically sound, community-wide enterprise that any district can initiate and maintain with existing resources and personnel. By adding this piece to [the] ongoing efforts to increase student success, school districts across the country can secure community understanding trust, permission, and support, and at the same time, inoculate the people of their [community] against the ravages of viral negativity. Everyone can and should pay a part in The Great Conversation, and the time to act is now. 8

Part I: From critic to ally

Chapter 1: Run it like a business

- Before [Jamie Vollmer, author] became an advocate for public schools, [he] was a critic. 13
- [Vollmer managed] a manufacturing firm called The Great Midwestern Ice Cream Company, famous when People magazine declared [their] Blueberry ice cream the "Best Ice Cream in America." 13
- [Vollmer joined] an independent group of private and public sector leaders formed to make recommendations for improving Iowa's schools. 14
- [Vollmer's] opinions were largely based upon what [he] heard in the business press and popular media, where it was taken for granted that schools were failing. 14
- [Vollmer] shared the view that we had a people problem. Unionized teachers and overpaid administrators were obstacles to progress. [Vollmer] believed we needed to impose accountability measures that rewarded success and punished failures, needed to raise standards, demand rigor, reject excuses, and introduce competition. 15
- The business side [of the independent group] reached the conclusion: run schools like a business. 15
- [Vollmer] was the perfect double threat: ignorant and arrogant. [He] knew nothing about teaching or managing a school, but was sure [he] had the answers. 16
- The first of [Vollmer's] transformative encounters occurred; and [his] conviction that we [need] to run our schools like a business was gone… 17

Chapter 2: The blueberry story

- http://www.jamievollmer.com/blueberries

Chapter 3: An aide for the day

- Human beings form assumptions to make sense of the world. We construct our assumptions from facts, opinions, memories, and intuition. Not all of our assumptions are correct. Some are based on false information. Others are shaped by our prejudices and beliefs. Over time, erroneous assumptions can coalesce to create cognitive illusions—distorted perceptions of reality. 25
- [Vollmer describes his day of working in schools at bus duty, as a teacher's aide, and a temporary aide, but was "spared any of the after-school chores that are routine for most teachers [and] not asked to grade papers, prepare lessons, or supervise extracurricular activities." 26
- "No one is qualified to criticize public schools unless he or she has been locked in a room" with a group of eighth graders ("Most of the kids were thirteen. Some looked like babies. Some, looked twenty-three.") 27
- [Vollmer notes] thirty years of reform initiatives aimed at changing behavior via performance incentives, teacher-proof materials, site-based councils, raised standards, wall-to-wall testing, and school take-overs were missing the core problem. 29
- [Vollmer noted] restructuring a massive, heavily regulated, culturally entrenched system was a task that was harder by a factor of a thousand.

Chapter 4: The ever-increasing burden

- The Massachusetts Puritans who started it all assumed that families and churches bore the major responsibilities for raising a child. 32
- http://www.jamievollmer.com/pdf/the-list.pdf
- We have added these responsibilities without adding a single minute to the school calendar in decades. 36
- An honest analysis of standardized test results showed that disaggregated scores on the NAEP, SAT, and ACT were improving, albeit slowly. It was true that the average scores—what the media reported—were down, but this was because more kids from the middle and the bottom of the class were taking the tests, a statistical phenomenon known as Simpson' Paradox. Even in the international arena, where public schools are much maligned, America's children were performing at high levels. The achievement was not seen in the average. To reach this conclusion it was necessary to parse the numbers and consider differences in the courses that were taken and the relative ages and socioeconomic stat of test-takers. (From country to country, for example, there can be as much as a three-year difference in the average age of high school seniors, from 17 to 20.) But when apples were honestly compared to apples, we had, in fact, more students performing at the highest level on the TIMMS and PISA assessments than any of our international competitors. 36
- We [are] never going to close the knowledge gap by continue to assume that the system [is] sound and forcing an already overburdened workforce to work harder, not just over the short run, but forever. 37
- The top-down imposition of accountability measures that emphasized extrinsic rewards, sanctions, ridicule, and threats was not the path to excellence. 38

    - Dan Pink or Good to Great
- We [have] to prepare almost every child for advanced learning in some post-secondary program, a feat that no society in the history of the world [has] even contemplated, let alone accomplished. 38

Part II: Why our schools need to change

Chapter 5: The flaw in the system

- America's schools were not designed to teach all children to high levels. They were designed to select and sort young people into two groups: a small handful of thinkers and a great mass of doers according to the workplace needs of an agro-industrial society. As long as this design remains intact, millions of teachers and administrators will struggle to deliver outcomes that the system was never designed to produce. 41
- It started with [Thomas] Jefferson. As Governor of Virginia, Jefferson considered it imperative that all children (white boys) be educated at the public's expense, regardless of wealth or birth. He argued that each child should be educated "well enough" to a) transact his business, and b) effectively participate in the civic life of his community. At no point, however, did Jefferson contend that every child should receive the *same* education. He believed in a "natural aristocracy." Borrowing from the writings of John Locke, he saw Americans divided into two distinct classes, the "laboring" and the "learned," and he designed an education process to prepare young people to assume their respective roles. 41.
- In *Notes on the state of Virginia, 1781-2*, [Jefferson] proposed a network of districts with a school within three miles of every home. Families could send their children to these schools for three years at no cost. Children of varying ages worked together, usually in one room, progressing at their own pace through a curriculum dominated by memorizing words and poems. There was little writing or computation. Discipline was harsh. Attendance was minimal. 42
- Every eligible boy [would] receive at least some basic education for free. The young geniuses who managed to advance had access to the education they needed to compete with children of position and wealth. The boys who were identified as "rubbish" ended their formal education and went to work. Girls had only one option: learn home-making from their mother. It made no accommodation for differing learning styles, and it offered nothing to minorities or those white children whose parents either could not or would not send them to school. But from society's perspective, the system worked. Jefferson's selecting model was perfectly suited to supply the requisite number of learners and laborers in proper proportions. 42
- The *chusing* and *raking* continued largely unchanged until the end of the nineteenth century, when the first national wave of reform began. The second industrial revolution was in high gear. Every aspect of society was being remade. Factories replaced farms as the principal place of work. Millions of rural Americans flocked to the cities where they joined millions of new European immigrants in hoping for greater comfort and security. They entered the regimented world of the assembly line where their actions were closely monitored and tightly controlled. They were paid to do what they were told—no more, no less—by foremen who used intimidation, profanity, and abuse to keep the line moving. Machines were designed to reduce employee discretion to a minimum. Thinking was reserved for the growing class of managers. Military style bureaucracy became the American way of work. The hours were long, conditions were brutal, but productivity soared and the economy grew at an extraordinary rate. 43
    - Gary Hamel and Seth Godin

- But in the first decades of the twentieth century, changes in social policy, particularly child labor laws, brought millions of new students into the schools and kept them there for longer periods of time. The average public elementary school quickly doubled and tripled in size. High school enrollment, long considered a luxury, also exploded as it became clear to business leaders and policymakers that some secondary education for the laboring class would increase economic output. Reformers on the left and right began to call for a major overhaul of America's schools. Social progressives wanted to abolish the selecting process altogether. They condemned rote learning and mindless, one-size-fits-all teaching. They endorsed "student-centered" methods of instruction with "experience-based" curricula; they saw public school as a place not only to teach the basics, but to mold the individual and promote social justice. But they were opposed and eventually overwhelmed by a coalition of "administrative reformers" who advanced a very different agenda. These men didn't want to replace the selecting process; they wanted to improve it. They wanted to expedite the selecting process. They sought to systematize and consolidate America's loose network of "common schools" so that they could be more centrally controlled and professionally managed. Unfolding the full potential of every child was neither necessary nor practical, and it was definitely not on their agenda. This movement was epitomized by a panel of university presidents called the Committee of Ten. The group came together in 1891 to focus on "the general subject of uniformity in school programmes, and on requirements for admission to college." It established not only which subjects should be taught, but when they should be taught, in what order, and for how long. Like Jefferson, the Committee divided America's students into two groups: the "academic" (those going on to college) and the "terminal" (everyone else). 45
- A decade later, the Carnegie Foundation for Advancement of Teaching standardized the school day—down to the minute—including the exact time of each class and the number of "Carnegie Units" awarded for each subject. Public schools adopted the architecture, language, and methods of the factory. Fredrick Taylor's theories of "scientific management" swept the system. Corporate-style boards of education were created to manage "rationalized accounting systems" and "standardized operating procedures." Administrators, especially superintendents, were charged with the dual responsibilities of raising educational standards while increasing organizational efficiency. Financial considerations became entwined with educational considerations. As in the factory, worker discretion and control were discouraged as "teaching machines" and "teacher proof" instructional materials flooded the schools. 46
- Curriculum was broken into discrete, decontextualized units of knowledge taught by teachers who were given no time or incentive to collaborate. America's students were treated as raw material sliding along an assembly line at the sound of a bell. They were sequestered from the real world and isolated in classrooms where a tolerance for boredom was cultivated. They were "tracked" and prepared to "adjust to life" according to their anticipated status as thinkers or doers in the two-tiered world of work. This expectation of "graduating with your class" introduced the concept of failure into the education process along with its debilitating social stigma. 46
- Of all the reforms that streamlined the system, nothing advanced the cause of sorting efficiency as much as they introduction of the standardized test. Alfred Binet, a French psychologist specializing in child development created the first intelligence test in 1905. He intended that his diagnostic test be sued narrowly to identify a student's strengths and weaknesses specifically related to schoolwork. And he stressed the test could only be used on children with comparable backgrounds. Administrative reformers, however, saw the test in broader terms. They perceived its potential not as a diagnostic tool, but as a way to establish an individual's overall level of intelligence. 47
- Their cause was greatly advanced in 1917, when Harvard psychologist Robert Yerkes devised a multiple-choice form of Binet's test that could be administered on a mass scale. It was originally

designed to assist military recruitment in World War I, but American educators, and the American public, embraced his creation as a way to quickly identify who was smart and who was not on the basis of a normalized box score. An orgy of standardized, norm-referenced, machine-scored testing soon engulfed the nation's schools. In an historical blink, the results that Binet used to forecast a child's likely performance in school, now announced to the world what the child's potential was in life. 48

- By the end of World War II, the industrialization of education was complete. Racial inequality was rampant. There was tremendous inequality of access, programs, materials, and facilities. Student tracking was strongly influenced by a child's socioeconomic status. The rigid adherence to schedules, the narrow, decontextualized curriculum, and the one-size-fits-all approach to teaching and testing resulted in a tremendous waste of human potential. Our workforce, combined with our capital, production techniques, technology, and equipment was the envy of the world. America's political leaders created social safety nets to minimize the economic instabilities inherent in capitalism, and unions fought to ensure that workers benefited from the unprecedented rise in productivity. Businesses grew. People got jobs. Millions caught the American Dream. The selecting worked. And as long as productivity and standards of lining continued to soar, there was no practical reason to change. And there would be none now, except for one momentous and inescapable fact: we are no longer getting what we need. The symbiotic relationship between our schools and the workplace is broken. Every year, our educators teach more children in more subjects to higher levels than ever before, and, every year, millions leave school with nowhere to go. In an ironic twist, human capital needs of the competitive equation that justified the existence of the selecting system for centuries, now provide irrefutable reasons to end it. 48
    - Gary Hamel Change Has Changed and Seth Godin

Chapter 6: The new competitive equation

- American society is being completely transformed, this time at the speed of light. The industrial age is being replaced by a post-industrial "knowledge age" [and is now being replaced with the "connection economy"]. 50
    - How often knowledge doubles
    - Seth Godin on the connection economy
- Americans find themselves in a brutally competitive global market where our traditional competitive advances are being marginalized, stolen, or sold.
    - Change has changed face of technology
- Less than 10% work in agriculture. 50
- Our workers, once the envy of the world, are now challenged by an increasingly literate global labor force comprised of people who are hungry, eager, and willing to work for a fraction of the American wage.
    - Change has changed Factory worker
- The "learned-to-laboring" ration has been reversed. Frontline workers increasingly function in self-directed, multi-ethnic teams where they work to set goals, develop budgets, control quality, and solve problems. Cumbersome top-down hierarchies have been replaced by flatter, flexible organizations that give all employees greater discretion and control. Low and mid-level workers routinely direct physical, monetary, and intellectual resources that were once the exclusive domain of upper management. Employees who were previously relegated to menial tasks now are daily called upon to add value, variety, and convenience to existing products and services. They must have

the skills to acquire and interpret information culled from diverse sources presented in multiple formats. 51
    - The future of work
- A strong back, a willingness to work, and a tolerance for tedium will no longer afford access to the American Dream. 52
    - The new American dream
- Jefferson had it right. Our public schools must educate America's children well enough to thrive in the workplace and participate as responsible members of their communities. The system he proposed worked. It produced what we needed for a long time. But America has changed, and what it means to be educated "well enough" has changed with it.53
    - Mission statement
- The system is the primary problem. It has been operating in America for over two hundred years and its roots stretch back deeper in the past. Its traditions run deep in our veins. It's all we know. But unless this system is changed, our schools, our communities, our nation will never successfully meet the challenges of our time. 53

Chapter 7: The smoking gun

- All children go to school the same number of hours and the same number of days. This fact alone confirms that we are sorting children as opposed to educating them to their highest levels of achievement. And every parent and every teacher knows why: because some children take longer to learn than others, for reasons that can have little to do with intelligence. In fact, there is no research that equates the speed at which someone learns with his or her ability or capacity to learn. Some children just need more time. For myriad reasons, human beings learn at different rates of speed. And as long as we choose to hold time constant for teaching, learning, and testing, we are sorting children not on the basis of their intelligence, but on the basis of that speed. It's a race. Each year millions of students, grouped according to age, line up and step into the starting blocks. The opening bell rings. And they're off! 56
- Teachers feel it. They have dozens of units to teach, and they know that their evaluations are influenced by their ability to "cover the content." Pacing guides drive their action forward whether or not all of their students have mastered the material. The relentless ticking forces them to teach to the middle. 57
    - Marzano K-22
- Principals feel it. Each year they watch their workloads expand as legislators and bureaucrats raise academic standards, expand the number of mandates, and demand greater accountability for results while never adding a minute to the school calendar. 57
- Students feel it. Each spring they get swept up in the mad dash for the finish line. The testing hysteria that has swept the nation in the last eight years has intensified the pressure. Preparation for these high stake tests steals time and squeezes the schedule, making it nearly impossible for all students to learn what they really need to know to prosper as adults. 57
    - Barr's calendar
- Day in and day out for nine months, the battle of the clock continues. The students who make it to graduation day wind up distributed across a classic bell curve—some excellence, some failure, and shades of average in between. As long as we hold time constant, the selecting system will product this distribution of student achievement. Every time. 57

- Until we accept the fact that the core system is the primary problem, we will never create schools that teach all children to high levels. 60
- [Vollmer] was sure that [his] analysis was conclusive on the need for change. Not everyone agreed. [He] was met with a barrage of tortured defenses of the status quo. But the one heard the most was summed up in two words: So what?
    - So there's a curve. What's the problem? We give all kids the same material, we give them the same amount of time to learn, we teach them in the same conditions, and then we test them the same way. The earlier we can sort them the easier it is to allocate resources accordingly. The system works. It's a meritocracy. 60
- [Vollmer] even heard it from some of the same people who had initially denied that they were sorting kids. Initially, [he] was taken back. Not because it seemed callous—the truth is not always pleasant—but because the conclusion was at odds with a mountain of established facts about teaching and learning, and it ignored common experience. Given our needs, it also seemed fatalistic. 60
- After asking a lot of questions, [Vollmer] realized that the acceptance of the sick status quo was based on three core beliefs:
    - Belief #1—Intelligence is genetic and immutable.
    - Belief #2—Intelligence is distributed across a bell curve.
    - Belief #3 –The bell curve of human intelligence and the bell curve of student achievement are, for all practical purposes, the same curve.

  These three beliefs are key to understanding our predicament. If they are grounded in fact, then the defenders of the status quo are right: the system is sound. There is no need for major reform. If, on the other hand, any of these core beliefs are groundless, then the selecting premise is indefensible, and we face a system problem of enormous proportions. 61
- [Vollmer] realized that of the three core believes listed above, #1 and #3 were flat-out wrong, and #2 was correct, but only if [thinking] of the bell curve in three dimensions, not two. 62

Chapter 8: Challenging the core beliefs

- Contrary to the conventional wisdom expressed in Belief #1, intelligence is not fixed or immutable. The brain is changing and organic. With the right stimuli, the brain's neural connections can grow both in number and complexity. The brain can perfect its own circuits to it is better able to learn. This phenomenon is known as "neural plasticity." 63
    - Teaching with poverty in mind
- The hard evidence of the changing brain remains a huge challenge to the "so what" defenders of the status quo. 64
- A different group of scientists were challenging Belief #2: the nature, even the existence, of the bell curve. The principal line of attack came from the theory of multiple intelligences (MI). MI theory holds that there are eight separate and distinct types of intelligence distributed across eight separate curves. The eight are:
    - Linguistic intelligence
    - Logical/mathematical intelligence
    - Musical intelligence
    - Spatial intelligence
    - Bodily/kinesthetic intelligence
    - Interpersonal intelligence

- Intrapersonal intelligence
- Naturalistic intelligence

Human beings possess a unique combination of some or all of these distinct abilities. Each profile contains creativity and energy that can propel an individual to solve problems and/or create products that are valued by society. Each profile has something we need. 64

- [In regards to the bell curve, Vollmer was told,] "You're thinking about it the wrong way. You don't have to abandon the sacred bell. Just think of it in broader terms. Think of it as a real bell." 65
- Human intelligence is distributed across a curve, but the curve is not a two-dimensional line. It is a three-dimensional bell comprised of as many two-dimensional curves as there are individual profiles of intelligence. 66
  - Figure 7 66

  Slice the bell along any axis, and each cross section will reveal a different "traditional" two-dimensional bell cure with human beings distributed from front to back. Where an individual sits on the curve may, and most likely, will change depending upon the line that is exposed.
  - Figure 8 and 9 66
- If there are multiple curves of intelligence, then a momentous question arises: exactly which slide of the bell does the GPA chart represent? Which geniuses have we been identifying and rewarding? Who have we been labeling and discarding as rubbish? 67
- Which curve is it? This question has revolutionary implications. The answer has the potential to set the entire country on a course that will completely TRANSFORM our schools. 67
- Anyone who has been to school—any school—knows what the answer is. It is the curve that tells us how young people adapt to sitting in rows for long hours under close supervision. It is the curve that shows us how students cope with a daily schedule shattered by constant interruption; a schedule that forces them to move at the sound of a bell from workstation to workstation, boss to boss, carrying their books and supplies. It is the curve that tells us how our kids respond to a curriculum that breaks the whole of human knowledge into pieces presented in an arbitrary sequence by teachers who have little chance to collaborate; a curriculum that asks our kids to create meaning out of a steady stream of unrelated, seemingly irrelevant facts that may or may not help them make sense of their world. 67
- When it comes to educating America's children, we are experiencing a unique and auspicious convergence of what's right and what's necessary. We must end the selecting process and redesign the system to unfold the full creative potential of every child in all its forms. 70

Part III: The public is not ready

Chapter 9: Struggling to be heard

- Anyone attempting to change public education faces an uphill battle. The institution is big and culturally entrenched. Most educators are overburdened. The controlling bureaucracy is highly proscriptive. 75
- Over the course of [educators'] careers, the veterans [have] been swept up in dozens of "must do" programs [i.e. whole language, direct instruction, Reading First, outcomes based education, computer assisted instruction, No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top (and now the Common Core, which does not apply to Texas, however)]. 78
- Every educator knows that Americans invest in the things they value. When it comes to demanding world-class schools, talk is cheap. 79

- The vast majority

Chapter 10: On the brink of progress

- The firestorm of condemnation followed the release of A Nation at Risk in 1983 set the stage for President George H.W. Bush's "America 2000" agenda, which then morphed into President Clinton's "Goals 2000" agenda. Headlines warned of the threats posed by the educational achievements of our international competitors. 82
- In times of national stress, schools [become] the scapegoat. 82
- Districts responded to the pressures by focusing on four areas of concern:
  - Curriculum: The curriculum [became] a mile wide and an inch deep. It [is] not possible or necessary to teach students everything that their parents and grandparents were taught, plus everything that happened since. The answer [is not] as simple as, "Just give 'em the basics." 82
  - Student motivation: Creating an appropriate curriculum [is] less than half the battle. Young people plugged into a culture that [fosters] attention spans measured in minutes, if not seconds, [have] to be motivated to engage in a process with feedback loops measured in weeks, months, and years. It [is] unreasonable to expect all teachers to be spellbinding orators. Constantly threatening and cajoling students [is] never going to work. The key to increasing motivation [lays] in changing the nature of the work that students were asked to do. If teachers and administrators [are] ever to inspire student fascination, or, at the very least sustained interest, they [have] to develop lessons and assignments that [link] the things students [care] about to the things they [need] to learn. 83
  - Assessment: Everyone [accepts] the need to accurately measure and clearly report student achievement. Everyone [is] willing to be held accountable for his or her results. And almost everyone [expresses] frustration with the growing hysteria of standardized testing. Teachers, administrators, and board members alike [declare], often in heated langague, that these tests [are] perverting teaching and learning, and, worse, they [are] directly at odds with attempts to increase student motivation. No one [is] suggesting a compromise on the issue of rigor—all students [should] be required to learn challenging material—but classroom teachers [can] augment standardized tests with a balanced program of portfolio assessment, and in doing so, produce reliable results that could be clearly reported to the public. The most aggressive districts [are] [using] alternative reports cards that explain a student's strengths and weaknesses in clear, unambiguous terms, and, most importantly, chart a child's progress from year to year. Parents [are] able to gauge their child's development, and taxpayers [can] see for themselves if they [are] getting the most bang for their buck. 84
    - Standards-based report cards
    - Secondary grading
  - School calendar: What schedule would best serve the goal of increasing student success? [There is] mounting evidence that a child's earliest experiences—birth to age four—profoundly [shape] the architecture of the brain. Expanding early childhood programs that [cultivate] both cognitive and behavior skills could exceed costs by as much as seventeen to one. In upper grades, alternative schedules based on neuro-biological data [suggest] the parameters of the traditional school day—when it [starts] and [ends]—[is] severely out of sync with adolescent metabolisms. Really aggressive districts [are] rethinking the entire school calendar, specifically the wisdom of adhering to a schedule created to serve an agro-industrial society that [has] ceased to exist. 85
    - Teaching with Poverty in Mind

        - How Children Succeed
        - Barr calendar
    - [We must] [overcome] institution inertia. 86
    - Schools [cannot] do it alone. There [are] too many out-of-school factors to surmount. 86
    - Districts [have] worked to create infrastructure that lead to student success. [However,] after months of intense effort calculated to change their schools for the better forever, [wars] broke out. The leaders found themselves besieged by resistant staffs and angry forces in the community who were dead-set against change. District plans were misunderstood by some and deliberately misrepresented by others. Bitter talk of hidden agendas and personal vendettas combined to antagonize the staff and polarize the community. [Vollmer has] watched this scene unfold again and again. A pattern [emerged], an obstacle of immense proportions: an archaic notion of "real school." 87

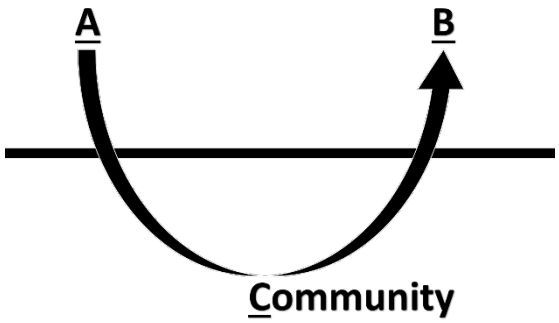
Chapter 11: The obstruction power of "real school"

- [There are] "few mental models in this country that are more deeply entrenched and rigid than the public's model of school." Like most mental models, the ones associated with K-12 education are generally subconscious and unexamined, and yet they govern our thinking and behavior. The dominant model is detailed, emotionally charged, and unfortunately, a precise replica of a system that is highly flawed. 89
- The sights, sounds, and smells lie deep within our consciousness. Our memories—clear and fuzzy, good and bad—have merged over the decades to form pictures and stories of "the way school ought to be." Ask most people what they think their schools should look like and the answer is simple: the schools they went to. 89
- Archaic mental models are holding us back when we can least afford delay. The problems presented by these subconscious notions are exponentially exacerbated by the presence of a debilitating mental disease that [Vollmer] [calls] "nostesia": fifty percent nostalgia, fifty percent amnesia. 90
- [Vollmer] created an equation to quantify the severity of the affliction: A x O = NQ. A represents a person's age. O is number of years he or she has been out of school. Multiply these together and you get NQ—the Nostesia Quotient. The higher a person's NQ, the more advanced the disease. Anyone with an NQ over 1000 will struggle with the idea of changes. 90
    - http://www.jamievollmer.com/nostesia.html
    - Examples on 92-94
- For more than two hundred years, adults have claimed that the schools of their youth were superior in every way and that "these kids today" are academically deficient. Some are convinced that schools were better "back in the day" because almost everybody got a ob. They forget that most of those jobs—now gone—required little more than a strong back and a willingness to work. 94
- The greatest obstacle is [to change]: people resist changes that threaten to change their culture. And unfortunately, everything associated with our schools is connected to the culture of the surrounding town. 94
- We [can't] adequately prepare our children to succeed in today's world by following a calendar used by our grandparents. [97]
- We [accept] time as a variable in other learning endeavors:
    - In scouting, boys and girls [move] through their manuals at their own rate of speed, and no one [is] labeled "loser" if he or she [takes] longer to earn a particular merit badge. 97
    - Flight school [is] open-ended. 97

    - Driver's license
    - Etc.
- You cannot touch a school without touching the culture of the surrounding town. 98
- Any attempt to significantly transform our schools alters the American way of life. 98
- No matter where you touch a school, you touch a school, you touch the community in a very tender spot. We can base our plans on data and research, but from the community's perspective we are messing with their lives. The community's innate cultural defense mechanism will perceive [schools] as a threat that must be opposed. 98
- When it comes to major change, there are usually not enough of these people to overcome the resistance. 99
    - The War of Art
- To unfold the full potential of every child, we must do more than change our schools. We must change America one community at a time. 99
- Meaningful change [will] not, [cannot], occur in the face of community resistance. Getting the people who [work] in our schools excited about the vision of possibilities [is] essential, but not enough. We [have] to make sure that a significant cross-section of the community [accepts] the need for change before we [can] proceed. 99

Chapter 12: Considering community involvement

- When it comes to public education, everyone is a shareholder. 101
- To get from A to B, we [need] to go through C. 102



- Very few districts [have] the time, the resources, or even the inclination to conduct a comprehensive community involvement campaign. Most teachers and administrators [are] already up to their eyeballs in work. In [the] few places where district leaders [are] eager, or, at least, willing to make the effort, the community's response [is] depressing. 103
- We must understand the Terrible Twenty Trends if we are ever to get from A to B. 105

Chapter 13: The Terrible Twenty Trends

1. Changing demographics: Less than 27% of adults have children in school. 106
2. Negative media: If it bleeds, it leads. Negative, sensational stories are easier to frame and report. 106

3. Fear of school violence: In truth, public schools are one of the safest places a child can be, but the perception—reinforced by the media—frightens parents, increases public anxiety, and pushes the public away. 107
4. Culture war: Polarized worldviews collide in the classroom. 107
5. The clanning of America: The melting pot is dead. People go to great lengths to associate exclusively with others who share their ideas and beliefs. Parents declare, "We don't want our children to be with *them*. We want our kids to be with *us*." 107
6. The rights revolution: Students and parents act from a dangerously overdeveloped sense of entitlement. 107
7. The rise of special interests: The number of organized advocacy groups has tripled in thirty years. They work to advance their members' private ends and class with educators who must consider the public good. 108
8. The plague of regulations: Nationally, the number of rules and regulations has exploded in a foolish and destructive search for legal perfection, and public education has been maimed in the process. Educators must comply even if the rules make no sense. 108
9. Fear and loathing of the government: Public schools are often a community's largest and most accessible government agencies. 108
10. The frenzy of privatization: We are in the midst of an ideological war waged against everything managed by government, including schools. 108
11. Antitax movement: No one likes paying taxes. Frustrated community members who feel as though they have no voice in national debates seize upon public school bond elections as rare opportunities to be heard. They can vote, "NO," and strike a blow against the government. 109
12. School as scapegoats: No social or economic problem is too remote or too absurd to be attributed to inferior schools and lazy, self-serving educations. The constant blame game saps the energy and morale of the people who work within our schools, and undermines the commitment of the people who support them. Spurious accusations will continue as long as the public is lead to believe that schools are failing, and as long as finger-pointing grabs headlines and garners votes. 109
13. Union bashing: The NEA and AFT are lightning rods for criticism, and local schools suffer guilt by association. (Note: There are no unions in Texas.) 109
14. Public perception of alternatives: A growing number of Americans believe there are many alternatives to public education, all superior. Promoters of various options reinforce this impression with sweeping, often unsubstantiated claims of success. 109
15. Demand for customization: People are more demanding, knowledgeable, and empowered than ever before; they want everything "their way." Public school can evolve from mass-education to mass-customization, but only if Americans are willing to pay the substantial costs. 110
16. International comparisons: As a group, American students score no better than average on most international tests. Each new wave of false comparisons gives the public another reason to turn away. 110
    - Ravitch
17. Standardized testing: Never before have America's children taken so many standardized test, and never before have they meant so much. Testing proponents, including many powerful political and corporate leaders, contend that standardized test objectively quantify student performance as measured against rigorous standards. Critics argue that such testing is a meaningless pseudo-quantification of the learning process, telling us more about household income than student achievement. 110
18. Changing job market: Americans of all educational levels face an economy with tougher entry requirements and greater insecurity. 111

19. Ever-expanding expectations: Americans now expect their schools to teach the basics, create responsible citizens, prepare effective workers, and respond to all the physical, emotional, and psychological needs of children living in a post-industrial society. 111
20. The Biloski Dilemma: People [are] dancing as fast as they [can] dance just to make their lives work. 111

- We [need] a broad cross-section of community members to be with us before we [can] proceed to restructure our schools. 112

Chapter 14: The prerequisites of progress

- Community understanding: The community must understand what we are doing now, why we do it that way, and how we plan to change it. 114
- Community trust: Restructuring a system that took decades to build cannot occur without high levels of trust. Schools are complex organisms with lots of moving parts. Mistakes will be made. Money will be needed. Emotions will run hot. The community must trust its educators to do the job.115
- Community permission: You cannot touch a school without touching the culture of the town. Permission is a byproduct of understanding and trust. Once we have increased understanding of the issues, and after we have established a heightened level of trust, it is more likely that a critical mass of community members will permit the process to evolve. 116
- Community support: Schools cannot do it alone. Those who work in public education cannot fulfill society's enormous collection of academic and social demands by themselves. 117

Part IV: The Great Conversation

Chapter 15: Escaping the status quo

- The Great Conversation is a positive, ongoing discussion between educators and the people of the communities they serve. 121
- The Great Conversation is built to run on two tracks. One formal. One informal. The formal track is deliberate, organized, group action that targets the entire community. The centerpiece of the formal track is a scripted message that evolves over time in a series of distinct phases. The informal track is comprised of hundreds of casual discussions conducted by individuals talking to family, friends, and acquaintances within the course of their daily routine. The informal track has no formal script. 123
- Who leads? Anyone. 124
- Teachers will refuse to participate if they are suspicious of the leaders' motivations. Worse, they'll strangle The Great Conversation if they conclude that it's just one more top-down, central office mandate that has been developed without giving the slightest thought to their opinion, their workload, or professional expertise. 127

Chapter 16: The formal track

- The most important feature of the formal track is that it takes place on the community's turn at the community's convenience. Choosing the school as the venues may be logistically sound, but the site acts as a filter that suppresses turnout. It all but guarantees that only certain kinds of people will attend. People listen and respond differently when they are sitting among their peers in a safe,

familiar environment. Comfort levels are up. Defensive shields are down .Audiences are better behaved on their turf. 128

- By moving the Conversation to the community's turf we change the perceptions of "us" and "them." 131

Chapter 17: Mapping the community

- Our goal in the mapping is threefold:
  1. Identify all the groups that regularly or periodically gather in the community
  2. Determine when and where they meet
  3. Organize them into the categories described below:
     a. Civic clubs and organizations
     b. Fraternal societies
     c. Professional associations
     d. Labor and farm organizations
     e. Ethnic societies
     f. Businesses over a certain size (how big depends on the community)
     g. All local religious institutions
     h. Internal groups (all groups formed and operating inside our schools):
        - Certified and classified staffs
        - PTAs
        - Site councils [CLTs]
        - Advisory committees
     i. Existing partners
        - Social service agencies
        - Government departments
        - City councils
        - County commissions
        - Citizen advisory groups
        - Foundations
        - Business boards
        - Boosters
     j. Vendors
     k. Miscellaneous groups
        - Book clubs
        - Seniors' groups
        - Retired employee groups
        - Historical societies
        - Board of realtors
        - Homeowners associations
        - Academic societies
        - Women's groups
        - Men's groups
        - Athletic associations
        - Travel clubs
        - Home/school councils

- Various fraternities and sororities
- Student groups
- Garden clubs
- Toastmaster clubs

l. Ad Hoc assemblies
- Crowds at sporting events
- Shoppers in malls
- People in libraries
- Patrons of eating and drinking establishments
- People in barber shops
- Hair salons
- Gymnasiums
- Theaters
- Galleries
- Grocery stores
- Lumberyards
- Laundromats
- Swimming pools
- Visitors to community centers

m. Virtual communities 133

Chapter 18: Deciding the message

- It's what we say that defines us. The message must make sense. 146
- No third party recommendations should be adopted wholesale. 146
- There is no perfect message, and searching for one will retard progress.147
- Our objective is to move the people of our community along a continuum: from ignorance and suspicion to understanding and trust; from rejection and indifference to permission and support. 147
- The message should not be confrontational. 147
- Frustrated teachers have tales of idiot neighbors who blather on about the failure of public schools. "I'm tired of being put on the defensive by these clowns who spew mindless dogma and statistics out of context. You want me to participate in this conversation of yours? Fine. But only if you give me the facts and figures I need to shut them up." [This] reasoning is flawed. Many of the offending gasbags could care less about the facts, no matter how artfully presented. Victory over the nasty is not our goal. Administering a good beat-down is not going to convert critics into allies, nor will it win their support in raising student achievement. We win by gaining public support. We triumphs by building cooperative relationships based upon shared interests and mutual respect. 147
- We must give the people concrete, practical reasons to feel good about their schools. 147
- We must continually explain the urgent need for change. 148
- We must help every member of the community understand what he or she can personally gain from the creation of great schools. 148
- We must make it clear from the outset that we seek an open, honest exchange of information and ideas. 148
- With these provisions in mind, [Vollmer] [offers] an introductory message in seven parts:
  - Welcome

        - Welcome the entire audience to the beginning of The Great Conversation, “a new communitywide discussion, designed to increase student success, and ultimately, improve the quality of life of everyone in the community, whether or not they have kids in school.” 148
        - The Great Conversation is intended to be a dialogue, not a monologue. 149
    - Explain the timing
        - The future of everyone in this community is tied to the quality of our schools as never before. The industrial age we grew up in is fading. The knowledge age [and the “connection economy”] is taking its place. No one can accurately predict what jobs will be created in the next twenty years—too much is happening much too fast—but it’s clear the success of the American economy depends less on making and moving things., and more on generating and sharing knowledge. This shift has triggered a dramatic increase in what our student need to know when they graduate. What was considered an adequate education just thirty years ao is no longer sufficient. *This is especially true for the majority of young people in the community who will not go to college.* “To make it in the workplace today, entry level workers must have the skills to constantly learn new things, and they must be able to apply what they have learned to a continuously changing stream of occupational problems and personal challenges. For the first time in American history, every student needs a high-quality education, not just the kids at the top of the class.” 150
        - Most people are primarily interested in ensuring the success of their own kids. Acknowledge that this is natural, but emphasize that changes in American society, especially in the economy, demand that we consider the interests of every child in our community. “Our quality of life I affected by these kids, whether we know them or not.” Crime rates, health services, tax revenues, civic participation, the strength of the local economy, and the quality of our local government will all improve with higher levels of student success. 151
    - Share the good news
        - Americans hunger for signs that schools promote the traditional values of persistence, discipline, and hard work. 152
        - Public education is the principal mechanism though which American makes good of the fundamental promises of liberty, justice, and opportunity for all. 154
        - America’s public schools are the cultural heart of their communities. 155
    - Introduce the topic of school restructuring
        - If we are serious about preparing all children to succeed in the twenty-first century, then our schools must change. We can’t keep doing the same thing we’ve always done and expect to get a different result. We cannot accomplish this goals without making significant changes in the way we group kids, we teach and test them, the school schedule, and the school calendar. 155
    - Schools cannot do it alone.
        - No generation of educators in the history of the world has been asked to do wht Americans now demand of their schools. Few members of the community understand this. Most have almost no idea of the burden that has been placed upon their schools. They left the classroom when they were teenagers. Few have ever been back. For most Americans, the challenge of teaching is out-of-sight, out-of-mind. 156
    - Finish with one “amazing fact”
    - Q&A
        - The formal track will only work if its presenters both talk and listen. 159

Chapter 19: Developing the scripts

- The development of scripts is what makes the formal track formal. Winging it is not an option. 161
- There are six principal advantages to developing and using scripts.
  - They help presenters stay on message.
  - They provide support and confidence to presenters.
  - They help presenters define their responsibilities.
  - They expose everyone in the community and on staff to the same message at approximately the same time.
  - They provide all staff members with an understanding of the message, which helps them to answer questions that arise from family, friends, and neighbors.
  - They provide a written record of what's been said as The Great Conversation evolves. 161
- There are three rules that must be obeyed.
  - The script must allow the presenters to deliver the entire message within the allotted period of time.
  - The scripts should never assume that the audience has prior knowledge of the topic.
  - They must be scrupulously stripped of jargon. 162
- Once the scripts have been finalized, everyone on staff must be given a copy. Sharing the scripts internally is the right thing to do because it ensures that every employee knows in advance what is being formally presented to the community. 163

Chapter 20: Building teams

- Teams of two to four presenters should carry the message to the community. [Vollmer] recommends teams composed primarily of teachers and members of the classified staff. Administrators must refrain from being presenters. The can, and should, actively participate, but polls consistently show that Americans trust teachers more than they trust administrators and board members. 165

Chapter 21: Conducting a communications audit

- List all the ways the district communicates with the public, directly and indirectly. 169
- Samples of student work strategically displayed throughout the community send positive messages to the public regarding curriculum, rigor, and achievement. The more of it we place before the public—the more we show what students and teachers actually do—the more opportunities the public has to think favorably about their schools. 171

Chapter 22: Creating a comprehensive schedule

- Create a schedule that takes team to all the individuals and groups listed on [the] map when and where it's convenient for them to meet. 173
- Call the designated contacts, explain The Great Conversation and its goals, and request an opportunity to make a presentation. With each call, explain [the] presentation is the first in an ongoing series focused on the topic of increasing student success and strengthening the community. 173

Chapter 23: A second front

- Launch Phase One. Have teams show up for their first presentation, share their message, and solicit a response. 176
- The formal track of The Great Conversation must play a central role in any effort to increase student success and every plan to prepare America's communities to prosper in the knowledge age.176
- [Vollmer] [envisions] a day when everyone on staff and all their allies in the community eagerly volunteer to participate in this great endeavor. That day, however, is not now. 177
    - There is a [group] who embrace the call to be formally involved. Everyone else falls into two groups.
        1. Members of the first group have no interest in participating in any aspect of The Great Conversation.
            - Some assert that it's "not in my contract."
            - Others, including the ["this too shall pass"] crowd, make no pretense, they just walk away.
                - [They] fail to understand the growing threats to public education, and, consequently, to his or her job security.
                - [They] fail to see how inaction puts those interests at risk.
                    - [Vollmer's] cardinal rule: Participation in The Great Conversation is voluntary 177
        2. The second group to abstain from involvement is by far the largest—well over fifty percent of the staff. These folks get it. They accept the logic of The Great Conversation, and they understand the potential benefits. They have, however, no interested in being a part of the formal track.
            - They are frazzled, overextended, and dancing as fast as they can.
            - It's partly a question of workload, but mostly a question of preference; they are not joiners. If they were to participate, it would have to be done in private, on their schedule, and on their terms. 177
                - There is another track, a very effective way to contribute on your turf, at your convenience. Participation adds next to nothing to existing burden, and requires minimal change of lifestyle. Operate within personal social networks in the course of normal routines. It's called the informal track. 177

Chapter 24: The informal track

- The informal track of The Great Conversation takes place privately within our individual social networks during the course of our daily routines. It adds nothing to the existing workload. The amount of time invested is entirely a matter of personal choice. 179
- The four action steps work beautifully because they are based on the power each individual has to influence his or her immediate environment.
    - John Naisbitt, author of Megatrends, [talks] about the human craving for emotional authenticity in a frenetic, increasingly impersonal, techno-driven society. "Awash in high tech, we see a rising demand for high touch."
        - Daring Greatly

- Dr. Lester Thurow, former dean at MIT, said that we [are] going to have to "change our culture" to retain our status as the world's preeminent power. "We have to talk to one another if we are going to change old attitudes. We must listen to one another in order to change the system."
- Dan Tapscott, a world-renowned authority on organization transformation, discussed the need for "mass collaboration," a process in which individuals come together to share what they know and work together to improve a system.
- Don Peppers, a marketing scholar said, "You are going to have to engage your customers in a one-to-one conversation to build the relationships you need."
- Daring Greatly
- What Matters Now
- [Suggestions)

- Everywhere [Vollmer] looked [he] saw articles that spoke of the rising power of the individual to influence [Influencer, Switch] attitudes and behavior. The consensus was that this phenomenon was linked to media overload. Average Americans are exposed to over one million paid advertisements a year. These commercials target our fantasies, our finances, and our bodies, and they are leaving no part untouched. This incessant selling merges with the 24/7 drone of "breaking news" and a blather of talking heads to create a cacophonous torrent of information, opinion, and hype. Marketing research indicates that we are responding by erecting mental filers to protect our brains from the clamor. We don't just doubt it all, we don't even hear it all. For years we've been turning inward, relying more on our own judgment, or looking to people we know and trust for guidance and advice. 183
- Three things about [the] ultimate design [of the] second track.
  1. Is [has] to add nothing, or almost nothing, to the existing burden placed upon the people working in our schools.
  2. It [has] to help secure the Prerequisites of Progress and neutralize the negative effects of the Terrible Twenty Trends.
  3. It [has] to be personally satisfying—rewarding enough to encourage maximum participation by everyone on the staff. 183
- The informal track of The Great Conversation has four steps.
  1. Shift your attention to the positive.
  2. Stop bad-mouthing one another in public.
  3. Share something positive within your ego networks.
     - Everyone has an ego network. It's a personal social network comprised of family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers. Each of us sits in the center of our network as the "focal node," and we connect to the others in our networks through a web of "links" or "ties" in relationships ranging from close familial bonds to casual acquaintances. In a world drowning in hype, we look to people in our networks for honest information to help us discern the truth and make sense of the world.
       - Even a casual reference to something positive—an allusion to some small breakthrough at school—added to our routine is enough to make an impression.
       - In the same vein, every now and then we might provide the people in our networks with examples of student work.
  4. Monitor your progress
     - [Take] five minutes a week [to] ask yourself, "How many times this week did I share something positive about my job, my class, or my school?" 184
- Be advised that there may be those within our networks who resist our efforts. Certain family members will rush to argue. Some of our friends may spout maddening, mindless, mean-spirited

rhetoric. That's okay. The informal track, like The Great Conversation as a whole, is not a test of wills. We're not trying to convince everyone that we are right and they are wrong. Our ultimate goal is to increase our community's support for student success. 190

- Educators, especially teachers, have a tendency to try to do too much. Resist that inclination! If, at any point, taking any of the four steps becomes a strain, it's time to ease up. 191
- We are trying to change America. To a considerable degree the future of public education depends on our success. It's a huge task, but no one should feel as though he or she must do it all. The people who work in America's public schools comprise one of the most powerful forces in the country, and in most places, they are the largest employee group in the community. We will achieve our goals and everyone will benefit when we all comfortably do our part. 191

Chapter 25: The return on our investment

- To get the schools we need, educators and their allies must initiate and maintain a positive conversation with the communities they serve: a conversation that runs on two tracks built to ensure maximum participation and maximum progress. 192
- [Vollmer] is convinced the best approach is a low-tech, high-touch [A Whole New Mind] proposal that costs nothing. 192
- Unfolding the full potential of every child is a shared responsibility. 193
- As community understanding grows, so do trust and respect. 193
- It is widely reported that Americans are wavering in their support for public education because they are dissatisfied with student performance. If this is true, the prescribed antidote is obvious: improve student achievement and the public will re-embrace their schools and increase their support. The problem is that the common wisdom is wrong, and the proof is that the antidote does not work. An honest analysis of disaggregated test results compiled over the last five decades shows a steady, albeit slow rise in student achievement in almost every ethnic, racial, and gender category. If the common wisdom were correct, then public satisfaction should have risen accordingly, but the opposite is true. And the reason is that the public is not moving away from their schools because they are dissatisfied, they are dissatisfied because they have moved away. 196
    - This conclusion is explained by David Matthews in his book, Is There a Public for Public Schools? Dr. Matthews, president and CEO of the Kettering Foundation, races the rise of dissatisfaction to the breakdown of the traditional school/community relationship. He concludes that the quality of the relationship that citizens have with their local schools directly affects their level of satisfaction with school performance. The stronger the relationship, the more satisfied they become. 197
    - Annual surveys by the Gallup Organization reveal that the closer (more connected) people are to their schools the more satisfied they become with their performance. 197
    - Conversely, the people who are the least connected consistently give their schools the lowest marks. The message is crystal clear: we have to get them closer. 197
- The most important thing we can do it take the first step. In this case, that means choosing to participate. And we must do it now. 198

Chapter 26: A most hopeful time

- For four decades, public schools have raised student achievement. Our teachers teach more children to higher levels in more subjects in more creative and dynamic ways than ever before. Only a

handful of elite students in preceding generations knew as much as kids know today. But, in spite of this remarkable success, every year the gap grown between what American students know and what they need to know to succeed as adults, and the reality is that America's educators cannot close this gap no matter how hard they work. And it's not because they are lazy, stupid, arrogant, or unionized. No. America's teachers and administrators cannot meet society's expectations because the system we employ in almost every school—public and private—was not designed to create a nation of learners. It was designed to rake the genius from the rubbish. Its practices are deeply mired in concepts of an industrial society that no longer exists. It is neither efficient nor fair, and until we change the system, we guarantee that millions of young people will never enter the American mainstream, and every one of us will suffer as a result. 202

- The problem is that the First Rule of School Restructuring [Transformation] applies: we cannot touch a school without touching the culture of the surrounding town. We cannot change the basic conditions in which teaching and learning occur without also changing America. Unfortunately, Americans have demonstrated, sometimes with a vengeance, they will not permit a sweeping transformation of their schools—and their lives—just because their educators say the must. Before they will support the process, Americans must understand the issues, internalize the risks and rewards, and accept the need for change. 203
- We must initiate and maintain The Great Conversation to secure the understanding, trust, permission, and support we need to achieve our goals. We must engage the people of our communities in a positive dialogue, on their turf, at their convenience, to mitigate the pernicious effects of the Terrible Twenty Trends. The Great Conversation must become a central feature of efforts to increase student success, and now is an excellent time to start. 203
- To raise up each child, to refuse to allow his or her achievement to be limited by factors that are remediable, this has always been the moral course. But we've never done it. Not for every child. Why? Because it was never practical. For over two hundred years, to succeed as a people we needed to teach only a small fraction of America's children to high levels, and so that's what we did. And we could continue were it not for the demise of the industrial age. 204
- The words of Jefferson's original mandate still apply: we must educate each child "well enough" to be able to transact his business and participate in the civic life of his community. Centuries later, the basic charge remains the same, but the expanded meaning of those two little words has changed everything. Everyone must now be raised up to be a learner. [World Class Learners] 206
- This is a moment set apart. We must grab hold of it and lay our cases before the public. We must help the people of our communities understand that their schools must change. We must help them see that everyone will directly benefit from these changes, whether or not they have children in school. It's in the community's interest to remove all the obstacles to student achievement; that everyone, privileged or poor, young or old, will benefit by work to ensure that no child is denied the physical, social, psychological, or emotional support he or she needs to progress. Schools cannot do it alone: they cannot prepare all students in mind, body, and spirit well enough to thrive in the knowledge society without everyone's support. 206
- We must remind the people that public schools were created to make our democracy a reality. For centuries they have been indispensable in the creation of the most free, creative, and powerful country on the planet, and they remain the principal mechanism through which this nation makes good on its fundamental promise of liberty, justice, and opportunity for all. This is the truth. It is the quintessential American message, and Americans want to hear it. 206