

SREB

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# The Power of the “I”

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MMGW

**Teaching and Learning to  
Standards: Eliminating Zeros  
and Getting More Students to  
Complete Work at Higher  
Levels**

# What is the Problem?

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- **Students learn in the early middle grades, they have an option *not to turn in their assignments.***
- **More and more choose this option as it is one that requires little or no work or effort.**

# Why Is there a Problem?

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- Teachers believe that they are setting high expectations by giving zeros to students who do not complete their work on time.
- Teachers believe that allowing completed homework assignments anytime after the assignment was due is wrong because that learning set is over and no longer needed.

# What Are the Results of the Current Practice?

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- **Giving zeros or accepting work below standard isn't working.**
  - It fails to motivate students to make a greater effort.
  - Dropout rates are increasing not decreasing.
  - Teachers report that students not doing/completing work is the number one reason for failure in the middle and ninth grades.
  - More students are entering ninth grade unprepared for challenging high school studies.

# What Are the Results of the Current Practice?

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- This policy is actually *taking away from* teachers efforts to get more students to complete work at high levels.
- Students have learned that if something is hard to do or takes too long, they simply don't have to do it – at home or at school. They have learned to manipulate almost everyone.

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# What Are the Results of the Current Practice?

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No matter if teachers work 3-4 hours per night developing engaging, real-world activities that measure students at the proficient level, if students can OPT NOT TO COMPLETE THE ASSIGNMENT and simply take a zero and go on to the next one, those students *will not be ready for college prep or college level work.*

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# How Do We Fix the Problem?

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## *The Power of I*

- *By defining that in standards-based education,*

## *Zeros Aren't Possible!*

- *By redefining high expectations as meeting grade-level standards or above and having students meet the standards.*

# Is Giving Zeros, Fs and Ds Working?

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- It doesn't work most of the time
  - It works for students who are already A and B students
- If it doesn't change behavior, why do we continue this consequence?
- Why do we let students off the hook for not completing work at expected standards?
- What is the real effect of this policy?

# Is Giving Zeros, Fs and Ds Working?

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***What data do we have that giving zeros is positively impacting students? Where is the data?***

- ***On responsibility***
- ***On grades***
- ***On Work Ethic***
- ***On values***
- ***On Learning***
- ***On Achievement scores***

***If data is lacking, the current policy is not working.***

# Is Giving Zeros, Fs and Ds Working?

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- **It Sends the Wrong Message**
  - On dropout and completion rates
  - On test scores and achievement
  - On attendance and discipline
- **Instead, It Creates a Culture of Low Expectations**
  - Students learn that they do not have to do their work
  - Students do not understand the impact of zeros

# The Power of the “I”

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## What can it do?

### It can

- Hold students to high expectations
- Not let students “Off the Hook”
  - For learning
  - For delivering “quality work”
  - For completing hard work
  - For becoming responsible citizens
- Create Standards of Learning for all students

# The Power of the “I”

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## What can it do?

### It can

- **Create a Culture of High Expectations**
  - **“No excuses!”**
  - **“You don’t get to choose not to work.”**
- **Improve the Quality of All Student Work**

# The POWER of the “I”

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## What can it do?

### It can

- **Allow Teachers to Really Teach to Standards**
  - **Teachers will finally know what students can do**
  - **Takes the guesswork out of retention**

# The POWER of the “I”

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## What can it do?

### It can

- Send the Right message to students
  - The blame game points back to the student
  - When students come home with an F or a zero, they (and their parents) often blame the teacher
  - When students come home with an “I”, only the student is to blame

# The POWER of the “I”

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## What can it do?

**When assignments aren't ready, or they are incomplete or seriously below the standard and quality of expectation, teachers can use the POWER of the “I” = Give a grade of incomplete**

# What does the “Power of I” *look like?*

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- 1. Students no longer receive zeros when work isn't turned in; they don't have an option not to turn in work.**
  - Teachers have made this clear from the beginning of the year
  - Teachers have other “consequences” for work not done, not done completely or not done satisfactorily

# What does the “Power of I” look like?

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2. Late work is just that – late – but it must be *completed* if teachers are to correctly determine if students know and understand the standards being taught and assessed.

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# What does the “Power of I” look like?

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3. Students must be given extra help opportunities (*required*) to complete the work during the school day (not during the class – ever), after school, Saturday School, or whatever fits your school’s possibilities. (This piece is completely up to schools to determine how this help can best be delivered.

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# What does the “Power of I” look like?

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4. **Consequences change for students not having work ready to turn in on time:**
  - **Require students to stay after school** in an extra help setting to complete work (this takes some work, but many schools are having great success with this)
  - **Require students to attend an extra help class** during the school day (these are taking several forms, but consistently, they are similar to a support class)

# What does the “Power of I” look like?

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- **Some policies state that students are not allowed to participate in any extra-curricular activity** (sports, band, chorus, clubs – events and practices), if they are missing any assignments or have attempted to turn in poor quality work.
- **Must contact students’ parents** and solicit their assistance – this must begin early and will have the greatest impact.
- **Requires a parent conference** at a pre-determined number of missed assignments or failed tests, etc.

# What does the “Power of I” look like?

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5. Students will receive an “I” on any assignment not turned in, and One or more “I”s will result in an “I” grade for any report period.
6. Tests may be excluded from the policy.
  - Teachers may choose to give students opportunities to raise test scores by coming in during extra help times.

# What does the “Power of I” look like?

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- 7. Students cannot receive an A (or a B in some schools) on any assignment that is late or turned in incomplete (some schools have instituted specific time periods)**
- 8. Students never receive an F if an assignment is completed within the year or semester (determined by each school as appropriate).**

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# What does the “Power of I” look like?

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- 9. A few students will still fail no matter what you do. So.....**

**Final report cards have asterisk or note reporting to parents that the F is a result of failure to complete work.**

***The goal is to get all groups of students to meet grade-level course standards at an acceptable level.***

# Setting School Goals

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**Knowing that it WILL NOT WORK for all students, each school should set goals by tracking the success of this program using appropriate data. First,**

- **% of students currently making zeroes=**

**Then,**

- **% acceptable after first semester=**
- **% acceptable after first year=**

# Essential Conditions

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Just adding a Power of I policy won't do it all by itself. This policy works best under the following conditions:

- Developing *Engaging, Challenging and Meaningful Student Learning Activities* and ditching poor quality handout sheets
- Establishing homework criteria that recognizes homework should matter and be useful.
- Having teachers who know the subject and make it interesting and useful.

# Essential Conditions

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- **Setting high standards and helping students meet them**
  - **Indicating the amount and quality of work needed to earn an “A” or “B”**
  - **Encouraging students to do well in school and to help and learn from each other**
  - **Sending a consistent message about what all students must do and what level of quality is expected.**

# Essential Conditions

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- **Setting high standards and helping students meet them**
  - Requiring work to be revised until it meets quality standards.
  - Providing guidelines and examples of high quality work to students and families.
  - Using “incompletes” instead of zeroes.
  - Using multiple methods of assessment.

# Essential Conditions

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- Emphasizing the importance of attendance, readiness to learn and effort.
- Establishing eighth, ninth and tenth-grade exit criteria.
- Eliminating low-level courses.
- Informing parents and students of higher expectations and getting their support.

# Strategies for Implementation

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- **Rubrics Are Required for *Power of I* to work**
  - **Level the Playing Field**
  - **Must Be Adapted for Self and Peer Review**
  - **Samples and Sources for Rubric Design**
    - **Rubrics.com**
    - **Rubristar.com**

# Contact Information

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