

INSTRUCTIONAL  
**LEADERSHIP**  
ASSOCIATION

The  
Instructional  
Leadership  
Show

Episode #78

---

## Improvement by Subtraction: Pruning Back to the Essentials



# Our Essential Question

How can we give teachers more autonomy and flexibility to make decisions in the best interests of their students, while creating alignment and coherence system-wide?

The  
Instructional  
Leadership  
Show

THE PRINCIPAL CENTER



# From the Roadmap



## PRODUCTIVITY Get Current!

I have well-optimized systems to keep me organized so I can confidently get into classrooms every day, without worrying about my other work



## WALKTHROUGHS Get Into Classrooms!

I visit every classroom every two weeks, and rotate my visits so I see each teacher at different times of day



## CONVERSATIONS Get Into Feedback Conversations!

I differentiate my feedback conversations using the boss (directive), coach (reflective), or leader (reflexive) roles depending on each teacher's needs, always sharing my written evidence immediately



## FRAMEWORK Get Aligned & Specific!

I gather evidence of teacher practice using the language of our instructional framework, and have discipline-specific conversations with each teacher



## 500 CLASSROOMS Get Consistent & Impactful!

Teachers and students expect to see me in classrooms, and I can see the impact it's having on students and on teacher practice in specific areas of our instructional framework



## HIGH-PERFORMANCE INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP™ Get Strategic!

I have a clear sense of each teacher's level of performance in specific areas of our instructional framework and how it relates to our school's goals and strategic plan, so I can identify our biggest opportunities for school improvement



## FRAMEWORK Get Aligned & Specific!

I gather evidence of teacher practice using the language of our instructional framework, and have discipline-specific conversations with each teacher

The  
**Instructional  
Leadership  
Show**

THE PRINCIPAL CENTER

# See Episode 75:



The  
**Instructional  
Leadership  
Show**

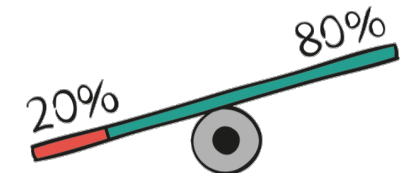
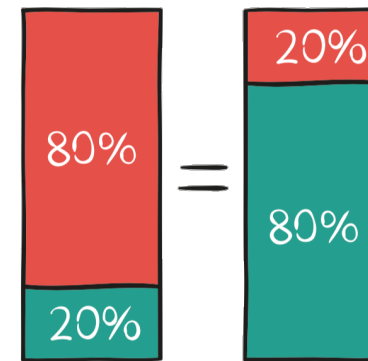
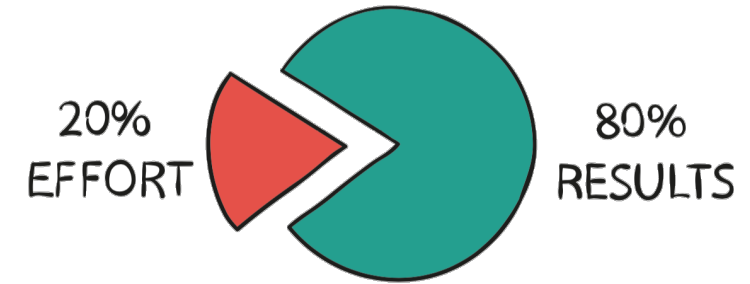
THE PRINCIPAL CENTER



# Pareto Satisficing

Key ideas:

- **The Pareto Principle:**  
80% of results come from 20% of efforts
- **Satisficing:**  
“Good enough” is good enough



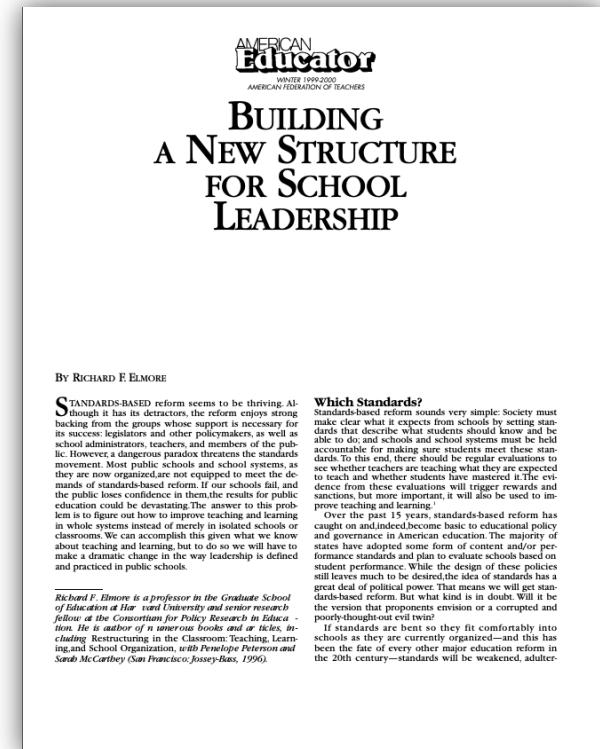
# Elmore: Tight vs. Loose

“In school terms, administrators have little to do with the ‘technical core’ of education—the decisions about what should be taught at any given time, how it should be taught, what students should be expected to learn, how they should be grouped within classrooms for purposes of instruction, how they should be required to demonstrate their knowledge, and, perhaps most important, how their learning should be evaluated. All this is left to teachers, with little guidance or support from the organizations that surround them. ... Teachers, working in isolated classrooms, manage the technical core. This division of labor has continued unchanged over the past century.”

—Richard Elmore, 2000

The  
Instructional  
Leadership  
Show

THE PRINCIPAL CENTER



PrincipalCenter.com/loose-coupling



# Repertoire vs. Expectations

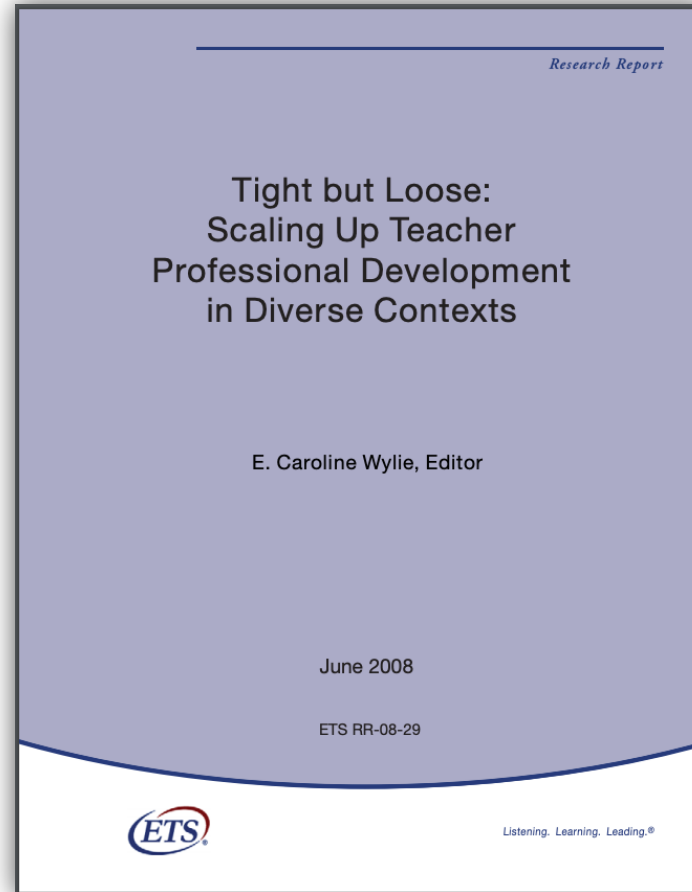
- Every teacher should have a large and growing repertoire of instructional strategies to use with students
- Hattie: “Everything works”
- Turning too many of these strategies into *expectations* creates a sense of overwhelm for teachers

# Tight but Loose

PrincipalCenter.com/tight-but-loose

The  
Instructional  
Leadership  
Show

THE PRINCIPAL CENTER



<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1111327.pdf>



# Tight but Loose

## PrincipalCenter.com/tight-but-loose



“For KLT, or any intervention, for that matter, to be both effective and scalable, three inter-related factors must be satisfied:

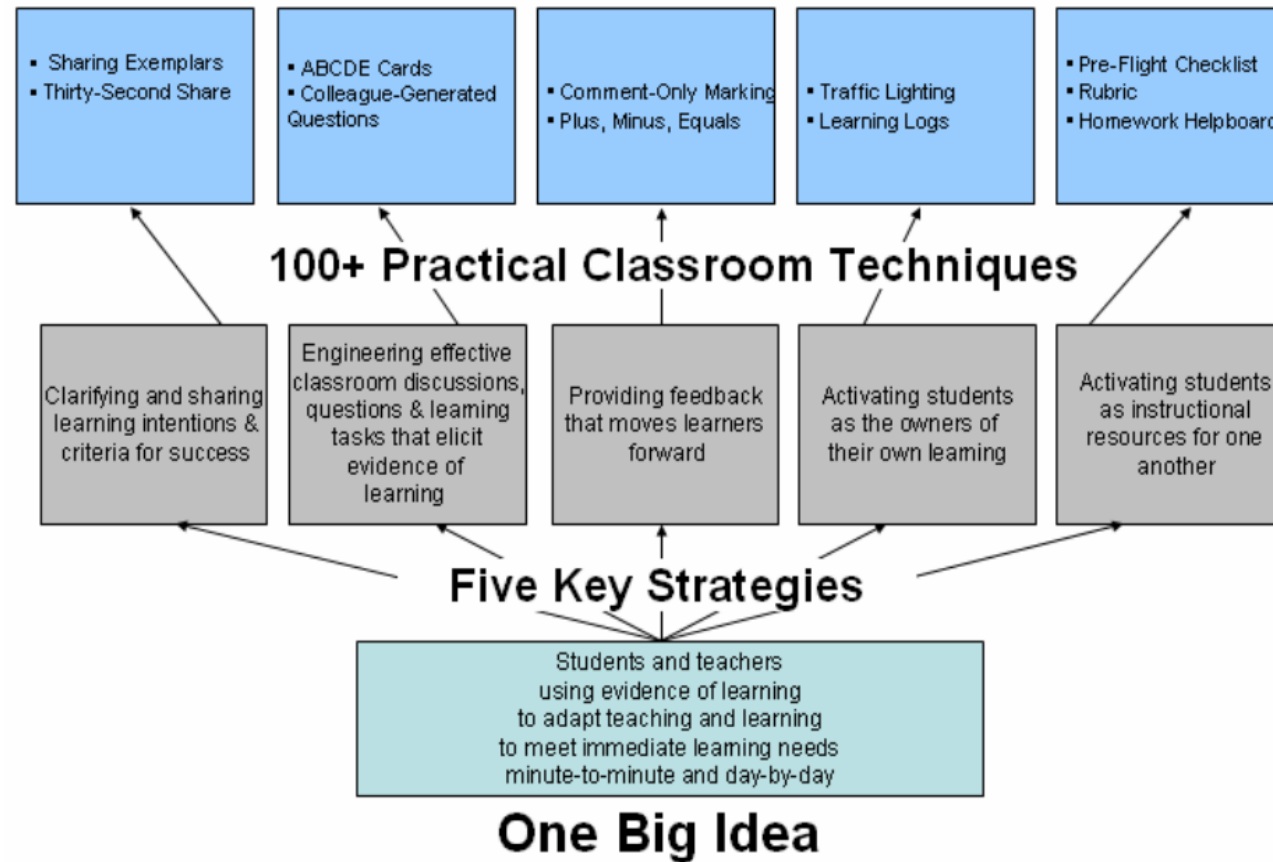
- Factor 1: A Clear Idea of What It Is You’re Trying to Enact and Why You Think This Is a Worthwhile Thing To Do
- Factor 2: A Comprehensive Notion of What It Means to Scale Up an Intervention Across Diverse Contexts
- Factor 3: Consideration for the Particularities of the Actual Contexts Into Which the Intervention Is To Be Scaled”

# Tight but Loose

PrincipalCenter.com/tight-but-loose

The  
**Instructional  
Leadership  
Show**

THE PRINCIPAL CENTER



<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1111327.pdf>



# Tight but Loose

PrincipalCenter.com/tight-but-loose



“...in all these examples the reforms cannot be handled prescriptively—they require a high degree of skill and judgment on the part of the implementing teacher. But it is doubtful that any of these reforms will become scalable unless and until specifications and tools that match the theory of action are created to support teachers’ development of expertise in these areas.”

Marnie Thompson & Dylan Wiliam, *Tight but Loose: A Conceptual Framework for Scaling Up School Reforms*, p. 31 (2008)

# Tight but Loose

PrincipalCenter.com/tight-but-loose



“The end users—the teachers—have to understand the why just as much as they have to understand the what or the how. Otherwise, they will be susceptible to the same kinds of distortions identified by Lewis et al., mistaking seductive surface features for the underlying mechanisms of change, and in the process undermining their own hard work.”

Marnie Thompson & Dylan Wiliam, *Tight but Loose: A Conceptual Framework for Scaling Up School Reforms*, p. 32 (2008)

# What Can Leaders Provide To Create Coherence?

Leaders must provide “explicit guidance on what is essential to hang onto and what can be jettisoned as the intervention is transmitted across boundaries. This approach not only saves us from becoming overly prescriptive (too tight, not to mention offensive to people’s intelligence); it also allows us to take advantage of the times when there are already really smart people in place.”

Marnie Thompson & Dylan Wiliam, *Tight but Loose: A Conceptual Framework for Scaling Up School Reforms*, p. 39  
(2008)

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1111327.pdf>

The  
Instructional  
Leadership  
Show

THE PRINCIPAL CENTER

# Tight Example: Whiteboards for Assessment for Learning



The  
**Instructional  
Leadership  
Show**

 THE PRINCIPAL CENTER

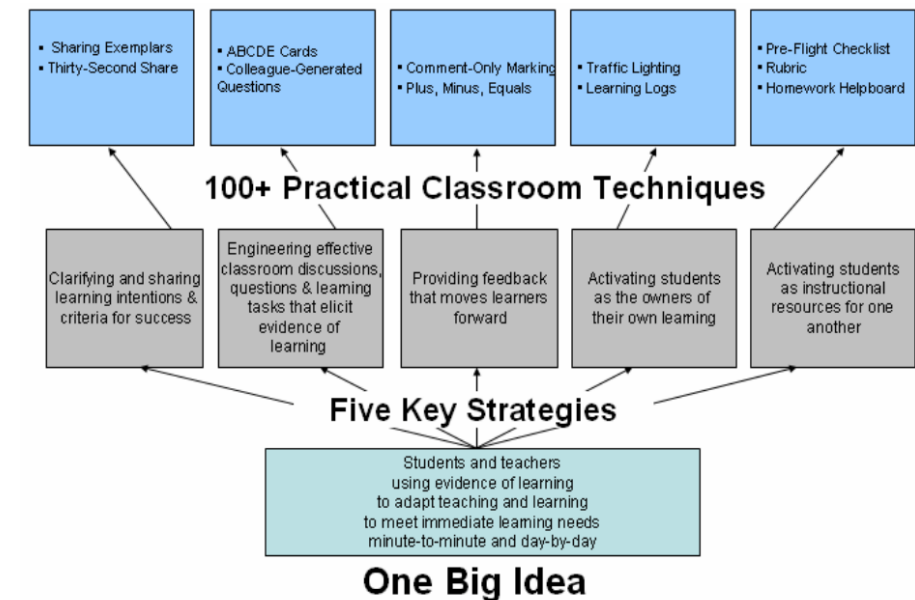
# Loose Example: Administrators Can't Mandate Techniques

“Teachers are accountable for both taking charge of their own learning and for making steady improvements in their practice. Selecting and practicing the techniques that make sense to you, as the person in charge of your classroom, is part of the learning process. If administrators fail to treat teachers as accountable professionals, the learning is short-circuited, and the expertise never develops.”

Marnie Thompson & Dylan Wiliam, *Tight but Loose: A Conceptual Framework for Scaling Up School Reforms*, p. 41 (2008)

The  
**Instructional  
Leadership  
Show**

THE PRINCIPAL CENTER





# Tight but Loose

PrincipalCenter.com/tight-but-loose



“In general, we would say that anything the theory of action does not require us to be tight about is something we can be loose about. This approach allows us to explicitly carve out areas of flexibility, and being flexible enables the intervention to adapt to different locales. But never forget that being tight is what ensures that it will work.”

Marnie Thompson & Dylan Wiliam, *Tight but Loose: A Conceptual Framework for Scaling Up School Reforms*, p. 41 (2008)

# Tight but Loose

PrincipalCenter.com/tight-but-loose

“...we see the differences between our schools as inevitable reactions to the diversity of contexts in which they operate, the variety of problems they face, and the variety of resources at their disposal—it might be possible to try to make all schools the same, but this would inevitably make them worse.”

Marnie Thompson & Dylan Wiliam, *Tight but Loose: A Conceptual Framework for Scaling Up School Reforms*, p. 42 (2008)

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1111327.pdf>

The  
Instructional  
Leadership  
Show

THE PRINCIPAL CENTER

# Tight but Loose

PrincipalCenter.com/tight-but-loose



“The Tight but Loose formulation combines an obsessive adherence to central design principles (the tight part) with accommodations to the needs, resources, constraints, and particularities that occur in any school or district (the loose part), but only where these do not conflict with the theory of action of the intervention. ”

Marnie Thompson & Dylan Wiliam, *Tight but Loose: A Conceptual Framework for Scaling Up School Reforms*, p. 42 (2008)

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1111327.pdf>

# Our New District-Level Program

The  
Instructional  
Leadership  
Show

 THE PRINCIPAL CENTER

## VIRTUAL LEARNING FRAMEWORK

[PrincipalCenter.com/framework](https://PrincipalCenter.com/framework)

# Our New District-Level Program: Virtual Learning Framework

- Flat-rate pricing for districts of any size
- License covers all teachers and staff
- Direct consultation with senior leadership team
- Includes the all-new Challenge
- Includes all-new Designing
- Engaging Virtual Learning program



DESIGNING ENGAGING  
VIRTUAL LEARNING



# Our New District-Level Program

The  
Instructional  
Leadership  
Show

 THE PRINCIPAL CENTER

## VIRTUAL LEARNING FRAMEWORK

[PrincipalCenter.com/framework](https://PrincipalCenter.com/framework)