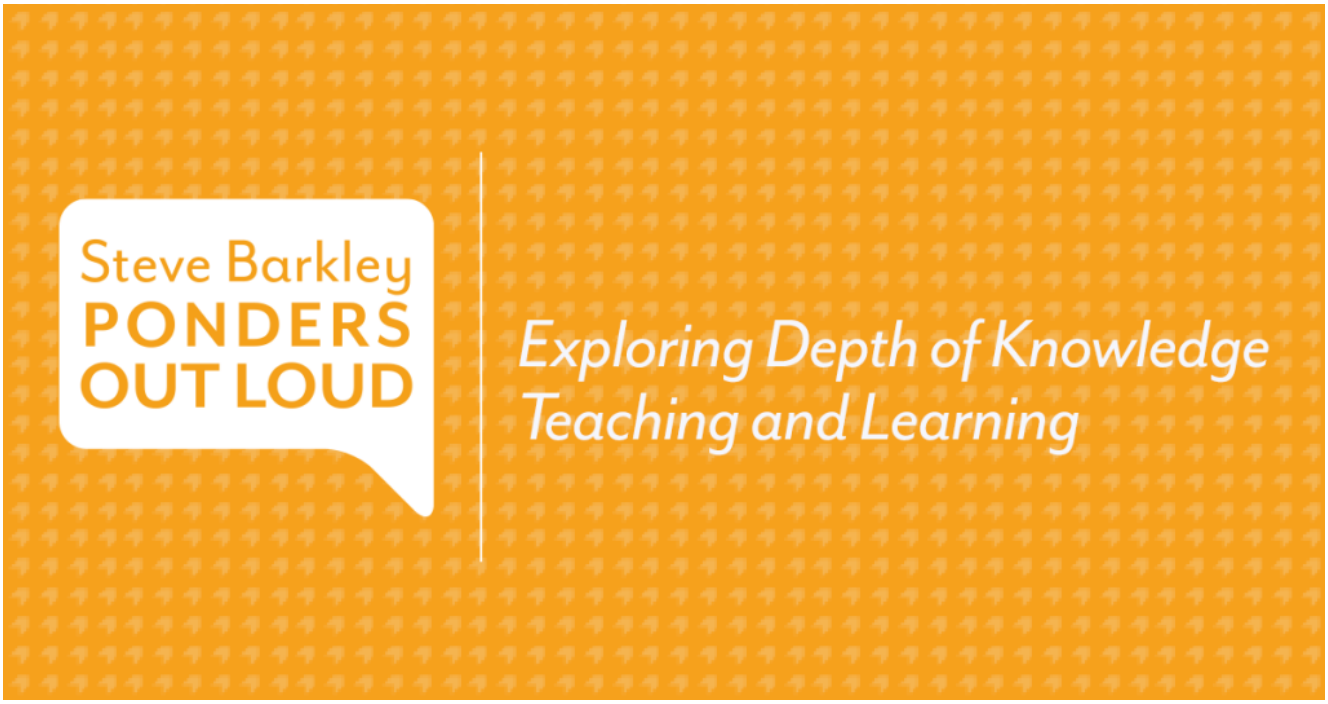
Podcast: Exploring Depth of Knowledge Teaching and Learning



The author of **Deconstructing Depth of Knowledge: A Method and Model for Deeper Teaching and Learning**, Erik Francis, joins Steve to examine what teaching and learning for depth of knowledge (DOK) looks like. Francis describes ways to support staff with ways to use DOK for differentiating based on the demands of standards and building upon the strengths and successes of students.

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Podcast Transcript:

[00:00:00.300] – Steve [Intro]

Welcome to the Steve Barkley Ponders Out Loud podcast. As instructional coaches and school leaders, you are tasked with guiding continuous teacher growth to create student success. This podcast looks to support you with strategies from experienced guests, as well as my own insights that I've gathered over the years. I'm thrilled to have you with us. Thanks for tuning in.

[00:00:29.990] – Steve

Exploring depth of knowledge, teaching and learning. Joining our podcast today is Erik Francis, an international author and presenter who specializes in providing guidance, support, and training to educators on how to develop rigorous learning environments. He explores educational experiences that engage and encourage students to demonstrate different levels of thinking and understand and use their depth of knowledge through inquiry by questioning with good questions. Erik has been a classroom teacher, a site administrator, an education program specialist with a state agency, and a staff development trainer. Through his company, Maverik Education, Erik has led and facilitated in-person and virtual professional development trainings at K-12 schools, colleges, and universities throughout the United States and internationally. Erik is the author of "Inquiring Minds to Want to Learn: Posing Good Questions to Promote Student Inquiry" and "Deconstructing Depth of Knowledge: A Method and Model for Deeper Teaching and Learning."

[00:01:45.320] – Steve

I've asked Erik today to take us on a deeper look at understanding depth of knowledge. Welcome, Erik.

[00:01:53.890] – Erik

Thank you, Steve, for having me, and thank you for inviting me on your podcast to share on this forum.

[00:02:00.600] – Steve

Terrific. I'm really looking forward to our conversation. I'm wondering if you could just start us off with a general description of what it means to learn at a greater depth.

[00:02:12.630] – Erik

That's a really great question because there's a lot of confusion and misinformation, miscommunication about what depth means. You can have deeper levels of thinking, which is usually categorized in a cognitive framework like Bloom's Revise Taxonomy or the solo taxonomy or Marzano's taxonomy of educational objectives. And those taxonomies categorize the complexity of the type and level of thinking students can demonstrate. The hard part about that, the challenging part about that is, what does that look like, sound like, and feel like? What does that look like to think deeply? What does that sound like to think deeply? What does that feel like to think deeply? When I talk about depth, I say that depth is communicative and depth is contextual. I have a statement, I say that the rigor is in the response. When I am learning deeply, it depends upon what exactly do I have to learn and how deeply do I have to comprehend and communicate my learning. If I just have to give you an answer, that's a very, very simple level because there's only one way to get that correct answer. Also, the answer is either going to be correct or incorrect.

[00:03:31.930] – Erik

The deeper levels would be the deeper levels of communication, the more extensive communication. If I had to explain and express with examples how I attained an answer, or justify or verify why the answer is accurate or appropriate with evidence or consider, conclude, or critique based upon evidence. That's a deeper level. If I have to explore and extend for an extended purpose or an extended period, that's a deeper level. So when I talk about greater depth, I don't look at it so much

as the cognition. There are deeper levels of cognition, and unfortunately, we categorize them as higher levels and lower levels, which often gets misinterpreted as, these are what we want and these are what we need to avoid. But when we talk about depth, it's more about communication and contextual. What exactly do students have to think about or learn and how deeply do students have to comprehend and communicate the depth and extent of their learning?

[00:04:34.100] – Steve

I put a question here, and it's going through my mind now, tying it back to reading some of the things on your website. I was going to ask you to talk about the concepts of applying DOK in teaching and learning. And what I'm recalling from being on your website and just listening to the response you gave, there's an understanding of the teacher knowing the depth of knowledge that they're seeking, but also the student knowing it. Have I got that right?

[00:05:07.600] – Erik

You do. You're on the right track. You are right with it. The teacher needs to know the level of depth of knowledge demanded and that is basically driven by the standards. So what I like to say is delivery intensity of a DOK teaching and learning experience, a depth of knowledge teaching and learning experience, depends upon two things: the demand of the standard and the the students. The teacher needs to know what exactly and how deeply that standard that they are addressing and assessing in a given grade level in a specific subject with certain content demands students to comprehend and communicate their learning. They need to look at the standard like the finish line in a race. This is what all kids need to reach and all kids need to cross. We need to believe that all kids can reach the finish line and cross the finish line. It may not be in the way that we understand or how to teach, or it also may not be in the time frame we have to teach them. But we need to believe that the kids can do that. When I talk

about the strengths of the student, that's where the DOK are levels because they're not a taxonomy.

[00:06:17.920] – Erik

They don't scaffold. Each DOK level describes one of four different ways kids can engage with their learning. So at a DOK one, all they have to do is answer, correctly or incorrectly. That's it. At a DOK 2, they have to establish and explain or express and explain with examples. At a DOK 3, they either have to justify or verify with evidence or consider concluding critique based on evidence. At a DOK 4, they have to explore and extend with examples and evidence for an extended period, which means more than one class period, more than one day, more than one week, more than even month or even a quarter. And the standard sets that. But then we need to look at it using understanding by design, begin with the end in mind. This is the finish line. Where are you on that pathway to proficiency? So if I have a DOK 2 standard, I need to know where they are on that pathway to proficiency and identify their strengths and build upon their strengths so that they can rise to reach and go beyond the DOK level. That's how I turn the DOK levels into a multi-tiered system of support or an RTI, where you start with the standard.

[00:07:40.030] – Erik

Your tier one is teaching grade level to the standard. Your tier two is the extended time you have, give the students who are struggling to achieve the standard at the grade level, maybe the foundational learning. And tier three is you may have to go to not only reduce DOK levels, but also reduce grade levels to find out where are they in their learning? For example, I just came back from a school and I was talking to them about their fifth graders who took an assessment, and they said the results of the assessment said they're reading at a second grade level. Well, what does that mean? What does it mean to read at a second grade level? I have to look at those standards and see what it means to read at a second

grade level or do math at a second grade level. Because I can't just say they're reading at a second grade level. Well, what does that mean? And that's what DOK does. It gives not only clarity, but also concrete measures and concrete communication of what exactly and how deeply students must understand and use their learning or comprehend and communicate their learning.

[00:08:50.300] – Steve

As I was hearing you lay that out, it struck me that, and I guess you hit on this now, you've mentioned the teachers need to know the levels before them, but I'm guessing they need to know the levels above them as to that hitting that appropriate level with their student so that it strikes me, especially secondary, that I have an understanding in that next science-level course, what is it that the student needs to be able… The depth they had to go here in order to be successful there.

[00:09:29.600] – Erik

Correct. You need to know what the pathway to proficiency is. You need to basically know, how am I tiering my instruction? What do I need to do? What do the kids need to do to basically achieve that standard? Because that's what DOK is all about. DOK starts with the standard. It originated with the standards. Norman Webb, when he created depth of Knowledge, he never created this to be a method of model for teaching and learning. It was a criterion for alignment studies. And the four levels were not a taxonomy. They were a rating scale. You would look at your standard's learning expectation, and you would see whether it's a one, two, three, or four based upon that criteria. And then you would look at your activities and assessments that address that standard, and you would code them a one, two, three, or four, and you would see how closely they match up with each other to see the degree of alignment. That's what originally was developed. When we went Common Core, they took the work of Karen Hess, who made it a measure cognitive rigor. What she did was she said the cognitive rigor

of a learning expectation depends upon the level of thinking students must demonstrate, as indicated by a cognitive framework, she used Bloom's, and the level of depth of knowledge demanded, according to Webb.

[00:10:47.090] – Erik

So she superimposed it. But again, it was more so categorical to say, what's the right level of rigor? I look at my verb and I say, this is where it is in Bloom's. And I'd code it for it to analyze, I'd code it as Bloom's four because that's the level is out of six. And then I would see maybe that all they have to do is analyze whether the information is in the text. Okay, well, they're either going to answer yes or no. That makes it a DOK 1. The coding of rigor would be blooms 4 – DOK 1. If it said analyze how the information is present in a text, now it's a DOK 2 because they have to explain how the information is used. Now it's a Bloom's 4 DOK 2. If it said analyze how the information supports the central idea or theme of a text, now it's a level 3 because I have to justify or verify. So I'm now at a Bloom's 4 DOK 3. So that's how that works. What I did with it, because a lot of people were using it as a method of model for teaching and learning. If you do a great deep dive into all the frameworks, the people who created them always tell you, Well, that's not I intended it to be.

[00:12:01.230] – Erik

I had a great conversation a couple of months ago with Dr. Tom Gusky, where he was explaining to me how Bloom's taxonomy is widely used, but often misused. I once had a conversation with Jay McTie, who told me that the six facets of understanding he developed with Grant Wiggins, they don't scaffold, but we get these interpretations out there. So what I did with it is that I turned it into a method and model for teaching and learning by saying, using it and turning it into an MTSS or RTI. You start with the standard, you tier where the students are, and you build upon their strengths so they can rise to reach and

go beyond that bar. That basically does two things. First of all, for the teacher, they don't feel like they have to start at a level one to get to a level three. They don't. You begin with the end in mind and you use it diagnostically to assess where the students are in relation to that standard. For the student, the student understands what they need to do so they can rise to reach and go beyond that standard. It's not about what they can't do, but what they can do at that level successfully and how they can get to the level of the standard.

[00:13:18.800] – Erik

Lately, because you write a book in 2022 and you learn so much from your experiences that you grow and develop, what I've been talking about with DOK is that I've said, I've turned DOK into a concept in which you have to ask what exactly and how deeply do the students have to comprehend and communicate their learning? You go through the great Larry Gainsworth method of unpacking standards, circle your verbs, underline your nouns. Now you know the skills and the key concept and content, or I like to say the skills and stuff. Then you take a highlighter and you highlight all the words that follow that first verb of an objective. Everything in the yellow is what describes in details what exactly and how deeply students must understand and use their learning. And you use the okay as a language to say, okay, so if the standard demands that, what does that look like, sound like, and feel like? How do I know they can do that? Well, if all they have to do is answer, that's a DOK one. And it's not you getting bogged down saying, well, first they have to do this, then they have to do this.

[00:14:26.190] – Erik

No, that's the step to completion. We need to show the visible learning. That's what I did with DOK, made the learning visible. If they have to explain or express with examples, it's a level two. If they have to justify or verify with evidence or conclude, consider a critique based on evidence,

evidence is key there. That's a DOK three. If they're exploring and extending for an extended purpose, not just doing a project-based learning or a project, is it purposeful? Is there some purpose behind this? It's not just seeing what the difference in the water levels are in where you live. It's measuring and comparing the difference in water levels over the years to come up with a plan for water conservation. That's a DOK 4. They can take an extended amount of time, but time is a characteristic, not a criteria. That's what I mean by simplifying. I know I over-explain it, but in a nutshell, what if we can simplify the learning to say, We want our kids to comprehend and communicate their learning in four ways. We either want them to answer correctly or incorrectly. That's a DOK one.

[00:15:42.330] – Erik

We want them to explain with examples or express their opinion with examples to support it. That's a DOK 2. Justify or verify some response, result, or reasoning, be it their own or someone else's. That's a DOK 3. Or conclude, consider critique based on evidence, that's also a level three, or explore and extend for an extended purpose in over extended period. That's a level four. It's not, what do they do today? It's, how do I know that they're learning it? And what can I get them to do to even communicate deeply or more extensively to really show me that they got it?

[00:16:24.990] – Steve

If I took those four that you just walked me through, and I'm a school administrator administrator or an instructional coach, spending time in the classroom watching the students and focus on what students are doing would give me an understanding of where they are in-depth of knowledge, or at least where they're working, what depth of knowledge they're working on. They may not be there yet, but they're working on it.

[00:16:56.820] – Erik

Exactly. So here's what I like to say, because I really I am really sensitive about how teachers see this and take this. I want teachers to know, depth of knowledge is not about the complexity and quality of your teaching. I want all teachers to know that you are teaching at deeper DOK levels. I even say to teachers, look, you're teaching at deeper DOK levels, to which sometimes administrators look at me and go, Erik, what did you just tell my teachers? Think about it. I'm explaining and expressing at a DOK 2, and what am I doing when I'm teaching? Instructing. I'm basically doing that. So I'm teaching at a DOK 2. I'm justifying and verifying whether my answers are accurate, whether the kids are accurate. That's a DOK 3. I'm considering different ways to teach it. That's a DOK 3. Or considering what I could ask them, critiquing through evaluation and concluding based upon how the students are doing, whether they're getting it or not. That's a DOK 3. I'm also as a teacher, and teachers are great about this, where you can make connections between your standards, your curriculum, and the real world, and your students' lives. That's a DOK 4.

[00:18:06.150] – Erik

So everybody is teaching at deeper DOK levels beyond a DLK 1. The question is, what's the level your kids are learning at? When I walk in a room, I'm not looking at the teacher, I'm looking at the kids. If I just see kids taking it in and just acquiring that knowledge and answering questions that they answer correctly or incorrectly, and a teacher is doing most of the talking, that's a DOK 1. I like to say a DOK 1 is like if your classroom runs a quiz show – it's Jeopardy or who wants to be a millionaire. Because if you think about it, who's the star of those shows? It's the host. The participants, they're not the stars. Flip that, the teacher's the star of a show at a DOK 1, and the students or the consultants are either going to answer correctly or

incorrectly. At a DOK 2, now the students are explaining how they attain their answers, or they're explaining how they address the problem or accomplish their tasks, or they're explaining the ideas and information, how it's presented in a text or pertaining to a topic. The student is now the star of the show.

[00:19:16.850] – Erik

So I like to say a DOK 2 for a student, now they have their own do it yourself television show. They are Bob Ross on the Joy of Painting. They are 30 Minute Meals with Rachel Ray. They're telling you how to cook. But they're the star. The teacher is the one who goes "and action," and now the kids are at the start. The teacher is more of a guide on it. At a DOK 3, the simplest way to do a DOK 3 is to give the kids an answer, an outcome or a goal and ask them how they could accomplish it within a given time frame. So what I used to do when I used to teach math is I used to basically give the kids the answer key for their test. And the kids would say, "Mr. Francis, you gave us the answer key." I go, "Right. You have to tell me why those answers are all correct." Or I don't say, "what's the central idea or theme of the story?" I give them the idea it addresses, and we discuss that idea, and then we go back to the text and I ask them, how does the text address this idea?

[00:20:21.790] – Erik

They come up with the central idea statement or the thematic statement and give me evidence from the text. That not only teaches them them how to do evidentiary level thinking, but from a test prep standpoint, that prepares them for what they're going to have, because here's what happens. You get the passage. Question number one, what's the central idea of this passage? You have four options. I call it the Vegas question because you got one out of four chances to get it correct. Most likely you'll circle what is familiar to you, not so much what the central idea. It's like, okay, I

understand that. The ones that the kids all get incorrect for the most part is which part of the text supports the central idea and theme. You're actually teaching them at that deeper level. The easiest way to teach it a DOK 2 is every time a student gives you an answer, you ask "you're right, but why?" if they're correct. And if they're incorrect or you need further clarification, you ask them, "what do you mean?" So this will go away from the single statement answer. So if I asked you, what is two plus two?

[00:21:29.980] – Erik

You would say…

[00:21:31.260] – Steve

Four, hopefully.

[00:21:32.290] – Erik

And I'd say, hey, you're right, but why?

[00:21:34.370] – Steve

Why. Got you.

[00:21:35.540] – Erik

Because that's the transferable learning. Now, DOK 4 is more of an extensive experience. DOK 3, what I like to say is skills-based TV reality shows like Lego Masters or Top Chef. On Lego Masters, you have to build a landscape. Here's your Legos. You got 30 minutes. How could you do it? Top Chef, you have to make a taco bar. Here's your ingredients. What taco bar can you create? You got 30 minutes. I also say it's like panel discussions. If you're watching NFL Sunday on Fox, or if you're watching Meet the Press, where you're moderating, you're having a Socratic discussion. DOK 4 is an extensive experience where the student develops their expertise. And that's where they have to go either address a wicked problem or basically create an impossible project. And they can't

solve the problem. They can only address it, handle it, resolve it, settle it, or walk away from it. And it's extensive in that point. So what I like to say is that those are more shows like Kitchen Nightmare with Gordon Ramsey. He's the expert who comes in. Can he salvage this restaurant, this failing restaurant? Yes, no, maybe so. It's The Apprentice with Martha Stewart.

[00:22:49.340] – Erik

I make sure I make that clear. Where people come together, they have to come up with a task, they have to complete the task, and they have to do this for an extended period for an extended purpose. Or it's Shark Tank, where you do something innovative with it. So that's basically when you're going into classrooms and when I do DOK walk-through observations, which I'm doing with a lot of instructional coaches and instructional leaders, I tell them, I don't want you to look at the teacher. I want you to look at the kids.

[00:23:17.760] – Steve

I'm just wondering, as we start to wrap up here, what supports do teachers need from school leaders to build greater depth into student learning?

[00:23:31.270] – Erik

Well, it's interesting you say that, because one of the things I found is that when you invite me in to talk about DOK for 2-6 hours, that doesn't work. It doesn't work not only for the time period that we have, but there's also the human resources. I discovered a theory out there. It's called the Diffusions of Innovation, and it's how you make changes. It's by a man named Everett Rogers. What's really interesting is that people use this to chart how make social changes. Marketers do this to see how they make a product go saturate into the community or change agents and technology. It breaks down like this. You have your innovators, and they're wild

about PD. They love it. These are the people in the real world, they sleep out for Apple iPhone, even though they can get them a few weeks later. Or they sleep out because they got to see that Star Wars showing, the first showing. In education, these are the people who are wild about professional development, but that's 2.5% of your population. The other is what he calls early adopters. These are the people who are willing and wanting to lead and learn.

[00:24:41.550] – Erik

These are the people who should receive the training. But it's not that I'm an instructional leader, I'm a principal. It's, are you willing and wanting to listen, lead, and learn with this initiative? Because those people are going to basically be the ones who make it diffuse it through your school. I like to call them, based upon Malcolm Gladwell's work, they're the mavens, where I'm turning them into the ones with expertise. They're the champions in that they believe in this, and they believe it works. And they're also the connectors because they're the ones who have to, what they call cross the chasm, which goes from the people who love professional development and the people willing and wanting to listen and learn to what they call early majority, which is 34% of your population who says, why do I need to do this? And after you train those people to be your instructional leaders and your instructional coaches, the mavens, the connectors, champions, they're the ones who connect them with the group with the early adopters. So they come back and say, hey, they're saying, why do I need to learn this? And we work together as a group to do it.

[00:25:55.030] – Erik

And then we come back and we basically convince them and address their concerns. Then you have the other % of your population, which is also 34%, and they call that late majority. And late majority are passive aggressive. They say, This too shall pass, and I'll just wait this out. And if I I have to do it, I'll do it. Reluctantly, but I'll do it. When

you get this and the support that you need is, you need to find that staff who can lead it and basically connect with the early majority. Get them on board. So late majority says, hey, what's going on over there? That looks interesting. Now, are you telling me this works? Because then what's going to happen is they're going to either get on board or they're going to come a part of what we call the 16% which I like to call as late mass. There's a term for it. The actual term is laggards. I don't think that's very polite, but I like to call it late mass. These are the people, they say one thing, nope, not going to do it. Now, they don't just do it out of defiance.

[00:27:01.740] – Erik

Sometimes they do it out of fear, sometimes they do it out of insecurity, sometimes they do it out of a response to change. When I talk with the instructional leaders and the administrators, what they need to do, they're the ones who need to basically have the conversation. What Jennifer Abram says, hard conversations. They're the ones who have the hard conversation. They need to go, the school leaders, the one who are the administrators, need to say, why are you hesitant to do this? Or why are you reluctant to do this? If they say, I'm concerned, I don't know about this, you tell them, we have people who will guide and support you with this coaching. We understand that. If they say, I don't want to do it, or they give you a reason, I don't feel like I need to do it, well, maybe they don't because they're doing well, so you have to find out how you can basically connect with them. Or if it's a defiance thing, then you have to say, look, maybe this is the direction we're going. This may not be the place for you anymore. And that's okay. Hey, but this is the direction we're going.

[00:28:03.590] – Erik

And this is what the kids need. So I'm going to give you a choice. You can take the help or you can say, You know what? This is not for me. And I will accept both. But here's what I

won’t accept. You can’t refuse it, and you can’t refute it. Because the late mass, though they’re only 16%, they’re allowed 16%. They’re the ones who are going to basically speak up, speak out, and oftentimes not speak politely, and oftentimes make it more personal than professional. That groundwork, that needs to be set. That needs to be the groundwork, is that if this is the direction the school is going. You can’t get everybody on board, but what can you do to convince people, to basically show people, to help people understand and help people realize that they can do this and it will hopefully benefit them and bring them as a part of it. Or if they don’t want to be a part of it, then that’s a whole different conversation. That’s the support we need to have. We need to basically have it where we can’t just go, okay, boom, here’s DOKP. Who are the people who are willing and wanting to listen, lead, and learn?

[00:29:20.260] – Erik

The innovators, but they’re scary because they’re like, oh, this is wonderful. This is great. Like, whoa, hang on there. Slow down. The people who know how to connect with the early majority who says, why do I need to do this? And that’s a great question. Focus on them. The late majority comes aboard because they get curious, and they’re either going to become early majority or they’re going to become late mass, and you need to have that hard conversation.

[00:29:46.730] – Steve

I had it described years ago as… Really what I’m hearing is you need a plan.

[00:29:52.740] – Erik

Yes.

[00:29:53.860] – Steve

Okay. And I heard it described by a superintendent as

invitational to expectational. So over time, what we're doing here, it's going to start out invitational. That's working with the folks that you described on the early end.

[00:30:13.650] – Erik

What you also said is over time. We can't do these one-and-dones. I mean, would you expect a student to be able to do physics, chemistry, and calculus in two hours and become not only proficient, but masters of it? No. Then what Why do we expect this of teachers? On the flip side of it, we always need to improve our craft. We always need to enhance our instructional talents. So that's why we have professional development. I can't tell you how many times, I even just heard it this past week that the principal said that I told the teachers, you're coming Erik and the teacher said, well, what am I doing wrong? Well, wait a minute. It's not that you're doing anything wrong. It's that you're doing well, but this is going to enhance it. That's the thing is that it's not how many kids are proficient, it's how many kids who didn't get proficient. Why? I mean, I had high proficiency rates, and I'm blessed for that, and I'm fortunate and lucky, but I didn't sit on my laurels and go, Okay, great. I got 80% proficiency. I got 85% proficiency. And of that, a smaller % of mastery.

[00:31:29.440] – Erik

But I got 15 to 20% who are not. What happened?

[00:31:34.590] – Steve

Bingo.

[00:31:35.270] – Erik

I get scared about that when you get the letter grades because we have a lot of schools right now who, because of cut scores, they have kids who they have 60% proficiency, and they're getting A's for their school. And they got it for growth,

great, maybe, but you still have 40% who are not proficient.

[00:31:57.020] – Steve

I just worked with one of those schools with 80%, and people are feeling good about it when they look around the other schools in the neighborhood that aren't hitting 80. Instead of shining the light and asking the question, who are these 20 and what does that mean to us?

[00:32:18.470] – Erik

Right. And see, that's the thing. Simon Sinek writes about this. He calls it the infinite game. I don't agree what he says in there about education because he says education is a finite game, which means that there's a goal and an an end. Like, sports have an end. You got to win the game. You got to get to the Super Bowl. You got to get to the Championship. The infinite game is, here's what it is now, but I need to keep on looking to the next, the future. Right now, I'm on top, but that's today. What could happen tomorrow? Where do I go from here? You hear that with schools. They go, oh, we got growth and we got this letter grade. Okay, great. What are you going to do for the next step? Because now, can you grow? Because you're not going to get that point. Because if you stay at the same level in growth, you're not going to get that point. And that's why schools go from, how do I go from A to a C? So we need to always say, we got that letter grade. Great.

[00:33:16.680] – Erik

It was a great season. We won the Super Bowl. Fantastic. Now we're in a new season. Are we going to get to the Super Bowl? There's no guarantees of that. And I've even had a way of work with teachers, and And not a criticism, but they say, these are my scores last year, and I got this many proficient. Well, this year, I'm not this many proficient, so it must be the kids. Well, no, no, wait a minute. And what's even better is that that person moved up with their kids. So what they had in

the last grade is the same kids. So you got the same team. So I had to make the analogy. I said, and this was back in the day, I said, who won the Super Bowl last year? And they go, The Los Angeles Rams. And I said, and Did the Rams win the Super Bowl this year? No. Okay, but you still got the same team. It's not what you did last season. It's what you're doing now. And that's the thing. If you want to celebrate the A, that's great. But you got to keep that eye on the prize, that you're always growing, that we did great last year.

[00:34:22.910] – Erik

It was a great year. What's happening? You got 40% of your kids not proficient, according to that assessment. Why? What happened on those days? And it may not be that they didn't know it. Maybe it's that the assessment wasn't aligned to how you were instructing. Maybe that was a week somebody found out their parents were getting divorced or they didn't feel well. And also now you're going into this year with 40%, but the 60 % you're going in with that's proficient, that's what they were back in April, when you basically intensified the last three weeks to prepare them for that test, that's where they were based on an assessment taken in April. Okay, now we've gone from April, May, June, July – four months. A lot can happen in four months. You got the summer slide or learning loss or something happened to that child over the summer, social and emotionally, that maybe poof, it went out of their head that there's things on their life. Or maybe last year was just not a good year for them. So what I like to say is, and as you go back, what supports do teachers need from school leaders?

[00:35:40.690] – Erik

I like to say we go in with the idea that no one is at grade level when they get to you. No one. Now, give to teachers like to say, Well, some kids are above grade level. I go, Right. No one's at grade level. What is grade level? The standard. This is what it means to demonstrate proficiency in this grade

level in this specific subject with this certain content. You don’t have to like it, but this is the measure. This is basically our finish line. Now, where are you on that track to proficiency, on that pathway to proficiency? When I tell teachers, I say, what do you teach? They go, Fifth grade. I said, well, were your kids fifth graders last year? They go, no. I go, then they’re not fifth graders. They’re not grade level. They’re fourth graders coming from fourth grade, and they were whatever they were based on a test they took in April or something happened over the summer. Start with the end in mind, understanding by design. Go do that. Start with the end of mind. Diagnose where they are in a track. You don’t have to go on your market set, go to get to the finish line.

[00:36:46.460] – Erik

They’re not racing. You’re training them. You’re coaching them. This is the race. Finish lines are defined by their races. I like to say with DOK, a DOK 1 is like a dash. Get to the finish line. A DOK 2 is an obstacle course and a blow up on your backyard because now you got to apply your skills and you got to use that information to get to it. A DOK 3 is an American Ninja course because now you got to think strategically, how do I get to that finish line? A DOK 4 is a triathlon because now not only am I running, but I’m also bringing in swimming and biking. What I do is I flip it horizontally and I say to people, which is the better race? They said, nothing’s better. It’s just a different expectation. I said, that’s the DLK levels. Don’t think of a four as better than a one, because if the standard just demands the kids to do a dash and you’re teaching them to do a triathlon, great, but they’re not hitting the standard.

[00:37:50.100] – Steve

Well, Eric, you pushed my depth of knowledge a lot, and I appreciate it. What’s the best way that listeners might follow up with you, find your book, books about the work you’re doing?

[00:38:02.660] – Erik

Well, my books are published by SolutionTree. So if you go to solutiontree.com, that's where you'll find the books. The specific URL address is for the depth of knowledge, it's solutiontree.com/truedok. And for "Inquiring Minds Want to Learn," which is the questioning, it is solutiontree.com/inquiringminds. I also have a website. It's www.maverik.com, there's no C in Maverick and no C in my name. M-a-v-e-r-i-k. Company is actually to play on my name, but it's also my daughter's names are Madison, Avery, and Amanda. I'm also a child of the '80s, so you probably guess what my favorite movie is, Topgun. So no C in Maverick. If you put a C in Maverick, you'll get Tom Cruise's page.

[00:38:51.640] – Steve

We'll put your website in the lead-in to the podcast, make it easy for people to check back and forth. Thank you so much.

[00:39:02.250] – Erik

Thank you. I appreciate it.

[00:39:04.790] – Steve

Thanks for listening, folks. I'd love to hear what you're pondering. You can find me on Twitter or LinkedIn at Steve Barkley, or send me your questions and find my videos and blogs at barkleypd.com.