

TEACHERS IN SCHOOLS BEATING THE ODDS
FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT ON COMMON
CORE ASSESSMENTS:
A PARTICIPATORY PERFORMANCE

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RESEARCH PURPOSE

- The primary purpose for the proposed research was to identify the school practices and policies found in elementary and middle schools whose students exceeded performance expectations on New York State Common Core assessments (as well as those that were used prior to the CCSS).

BACKGROUND ON THIS STUDY

- This study was conducted during the simultaneous implementation of three Race to the Top (RttT) innovations:
 - The Common Core State Learning Standards (CCSS)
 - New Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR)
 - Data-driven instruction (DDI).

These innovations were purportedly intended to improve student outcomes by disrupting status quo operations in schools and classrooms: They are “disruptive innovations” (Christensen, Horn, & Johnson, 2011).

The Common Core State Learning Standards (CCSS)

Shifts in ELA/Literacy		
Shift 1	Balancing Informational & Literary Text	Students read a true balance of informational and literary texts.
Shift 2	Knowledge in the Disciplines	Students build knowledge about the world (domains/ content areas) through TEXT rather than the teacher or activities
Shift 3	Staircase of Complexity	Students read the central, grade appropriate text around which instruction is centered. Teachers are patient, create more time and space and support in the curriculum for close reading.
Shift 4	Text-based Answers	Students engage in rich and rigorous evidence based conversations about text.
Shift 5	Writing from Sources	Writing emphasizes use of evidence from sources to inform or make an argument.
Shift 6	Academic Vocabulary	Students constantly build the transferable vocabulary they need to access grade level complex texts. This can be done effectively by spiraling like content in increasingly complex texts.

APPR

- New Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR)

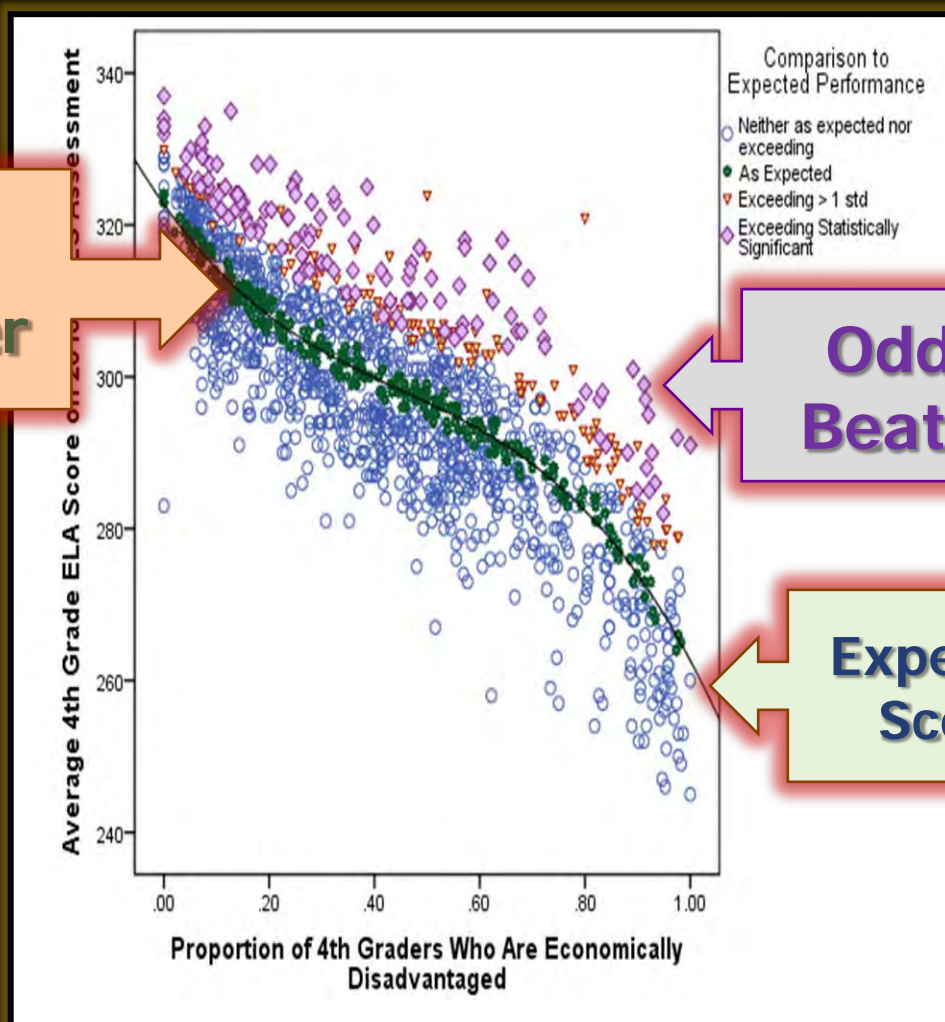
All teachers annually rated from “highly effective” to “ineffective” based on:

- Measures of student academic growth (20%).
 - State CCSS assessments
 - Student learning objectives (SLOs)
- Other measures of student achievement (20%).
- Evaluation of teacher performance (60%).
 - Using approved teacher practices rubric.
 - Mandated multiple classroom observations.
 - Teaching portfolios as negotiated.
 - Student and family surveys if selected.

THE STUDY DESIGN

- A mixed-method multiple case study of 18 elementary and middle schools
- “odds-beating” schools (n=12): those with above expected CCSS ELA performance based upon their demographic characteristics
- “typically performing” schools (n=6): those with expected CCSS ELA performance based upon their demographic characteristics

Typical Performer



Odds Beater

Expected Score

Odds-Beating Schools		School Pseudonym	Grade Span	% Economic Disadvantage	% White	% ELL	Average z Residual Range ¹
Rural	Elementary	Eagle Bluff ²	K-6	50	100	0	1.00-1.49
		Spring Creek	K-6	55 ³	90	0	1.50-1.99
	Middle	Ruby	6-8	50	95	0	2.00<
		Roaring Gap	6-8	40	65	0	1.50-1.99
Suburban	Elementary	Starling Springs	K-5	30	50	15	2.00<
		Yellow Valley	K-5	80	65	5	1.50-1.99
	Middle	Hutch Hill	6-8	20	90	0	<1.00
		Larabee	5-8	5	85	0	2.00<
	Elementary	Bay City	K-6	100	40	0	1.50-1.99
Large Suburban/Urban	Middle	Goliad	K-6	60	20	15	1.00-1.49
		Julesberg	6-8	35	50	5	1.00-1.50
		Sage City	6-8	60	35	15	<1.00
Typically Performing Schools							
Rural	Elementary	Wolf Creek	K-6	35	95	0	-0.20-0.00
	Middle	Tarelton	6-8	40	100	0	0.00-0.20
Suburban	Elementary	Sun Hollow	K-6	40	90	0	0.00-0.20
	Middle	Locus Glen	6-8	30	90	0	-0.20-0.00
Large Suburban/Urban	Elementary	Paige City	K-5	55	80	5	0.00-0.20
	Middle	Silver City	6-8	55	60	0	0.00-0.20
Average for New York				50	48	8	

¹ Ranges and rounding of numerical data are provided to ensure anonymity.

² All school and district names are pseudonyms

³ Schools highlighted are those with greater poverty, ethnic and/or linguistic diversity than the state average. Percentages for each subgroup are not provided as to minimize the possibility of deductive disclosure of any school or participant.

DATA SOURCES

District-Level Interviews

- Superintendent Interview
- Asst. Super for Curriculum & Instruction Interview
- Director of Special Education
- Community Outreach Coordinator
- Director of Assessment
- Director of Professional Development
- Director of ESL/Bilingual Ed
- Director of Student Services

School-Level Interviews and Focus Groups

- Principal Interview
- Building Leadership Team Focus Group
- **Mainstream Content Teacher Focus Group**
- Support Staff Focus Group (School Psychologist, Social Worker, Nurse)
- **ESL Teacher Interview (or Focus Group upon request)**
- **Special Education Interview (or Focus Group upon request)**
- Instructional Coach/Master Teacher Interview
- Individual Mainstream Teacher Debrief Interview

Other Data Sources

- Interpretive Memo
- Classroom observation protocol ELA Part 1
- Classroom observation protocol Math Part 1
- Classroom observation Part 2
- Documents
- Surveys:
 - (1) Of all Staff
 - (2) Of teachers of math and English Language Arts

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Common Core Research

NYKids researchers teamed up with other School of Education faculty to complete research on Odds-Beating Schools and the Common Core in 2014-2015.

News!

New book on the Common Core Implementation Study, [click here](#).

"Odds-Beating Schools in the Common Core Era," a research report by Dr. Kristen Wilcox and the U-Albany team, cited in the [New York Common Core Task Force Report](#), December 2015 (page23).

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Research Brief

Practices and Processes of Odds-Beating Schools: Examples from Representative Cases

Introduction

A research team at the University at Albany School of Education recently com-

What practices and processes distinguish odds-beating elementary and middle schools from more typically performing but



THIS ANALYSIS

- How do teachers describe their experiences implementing the Common Core State Standards?
 - In what ways do odds-beating school teachers' experiences differ from their peers in typically performing schools?
- How do teachers describe their experiences with the Annual Professional Performance Review system?
 - In what ways do odds-beating school teachers' experiences with APPR differ from their peers in typically performing schools?
- How do teachers describe supports for their adjustment to the CCSS, APPR, and DDI innovations?
 - In what ways do odds-beating school teachers' experiences with supports for innovation implementation differ from their peers in typically performing schools?



FRAMING

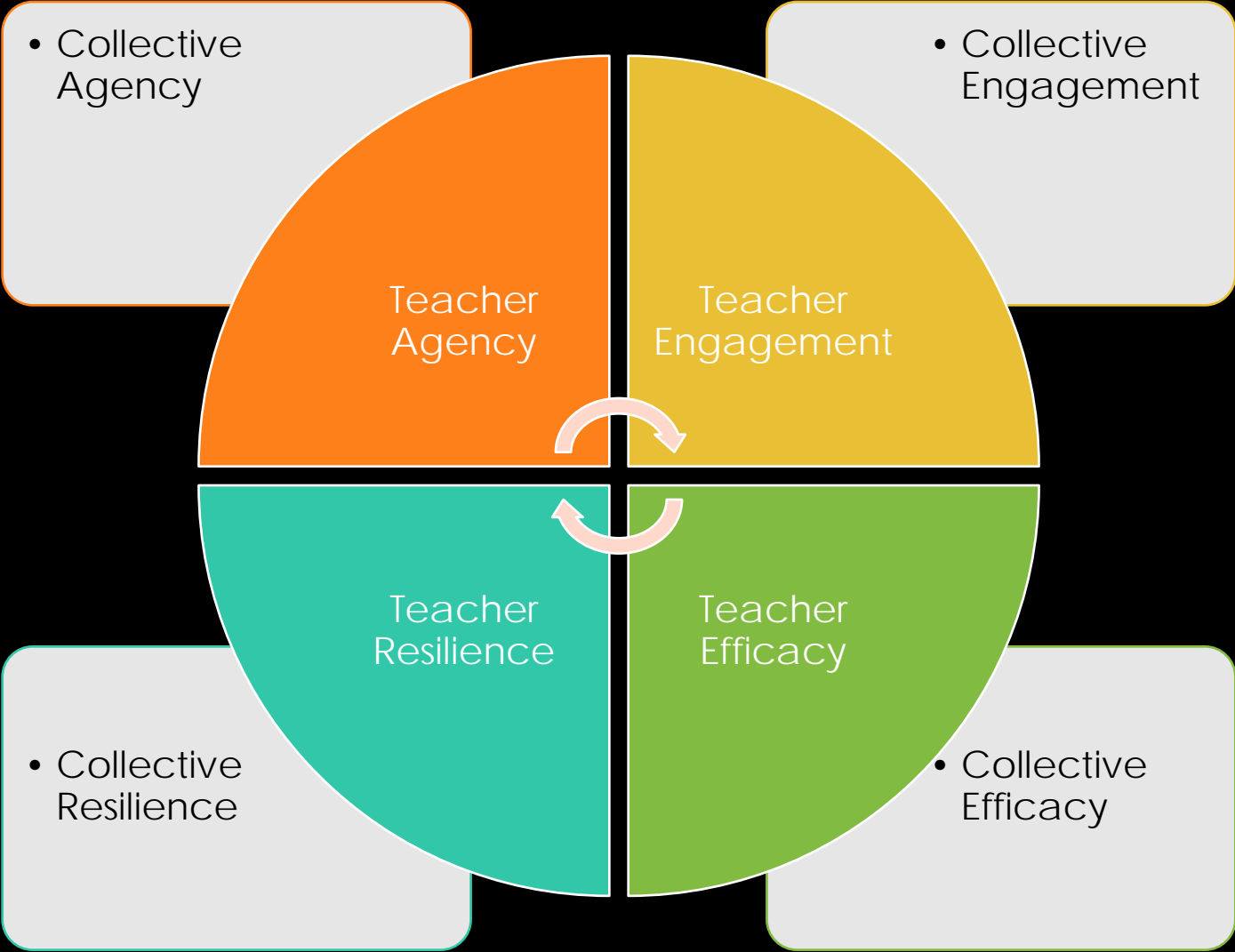
- The performance was shaped in response to the growing attention being paid to inter-school differences in teachers' **agency**, **efficacy**, **engagement** and **resilience** during times of rapid, dramatic innovation implementation (Eppley, 2015, Supovitz & Spillane, 2015).

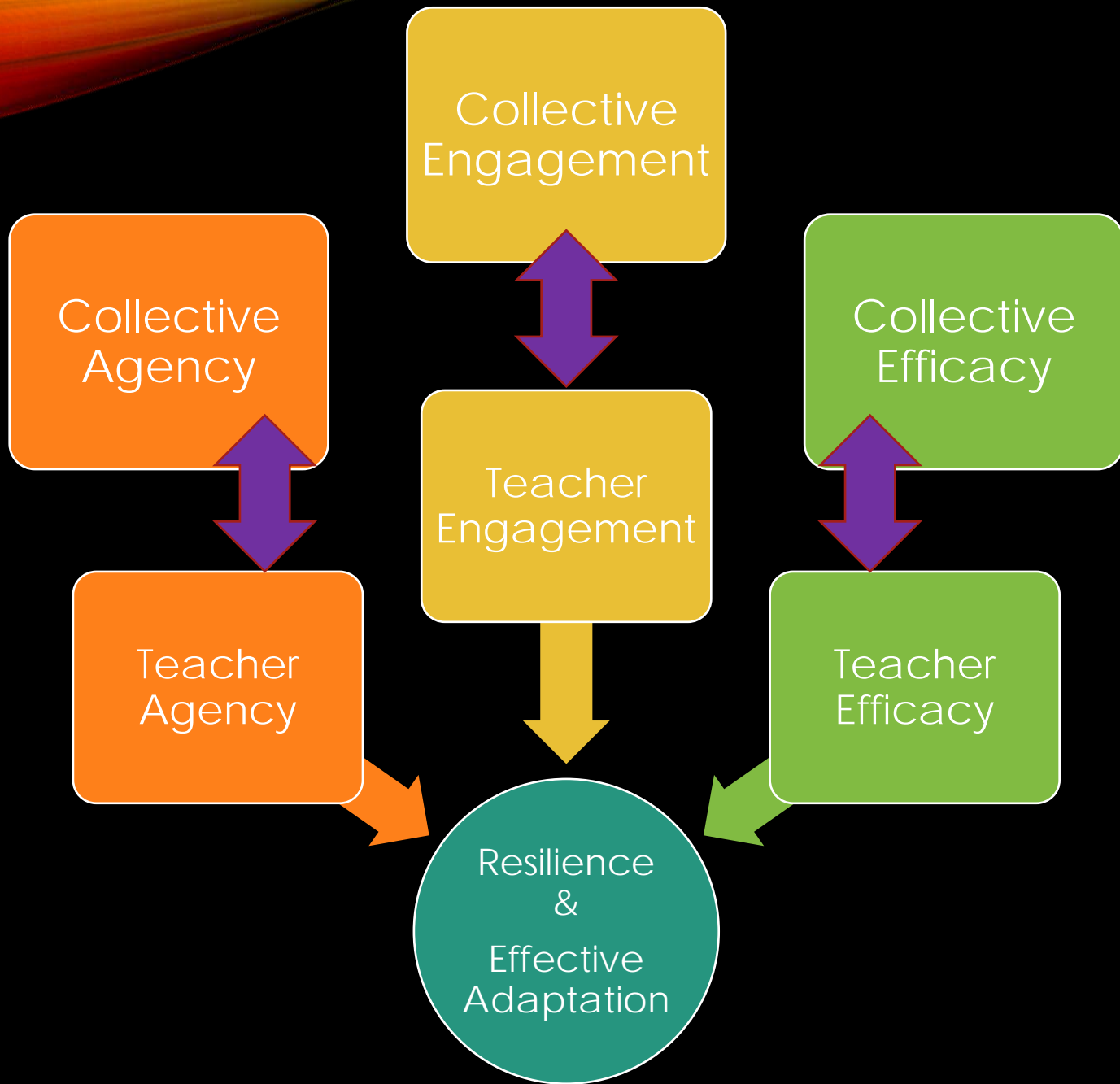
CRAFTING OF THE PERFORMANCE

- Phase 1: a priori coding for themes based upon the initial literature review (Maxwell, 2012) taking note of the logical sequences, natural turns, and thematic connections
- Phase 2: selecting passages that illustrate major themes in relationship to our research questions
- Phase 3: delimiting evidence to represent the interplay of perspectives and how they manifest teacher agency, efficacy, engagement, and resilience in different school contexts

ROLES

- Researcher: Female. White. Age 40 to 49 years. Graduate degree
- Narrator: No distinguishing characteristics
- Odds-beating School Teachers (Their voices in italics)
 - Nancy teaches in a low poverty and low diversity school
 - John teaches in a low poverty and low diversity school
 - Angelica teaches in a high poverty school
 - Kishmar teaches in a high poverty and high diversity school
- Typically performing School Teachers (Their voices in regular font)
 - Sarah teaches in a low poverty and low diversity school
 - Chen teaches in a low poverty and low diversity school
 - Kathleen teaches in a high poverty school

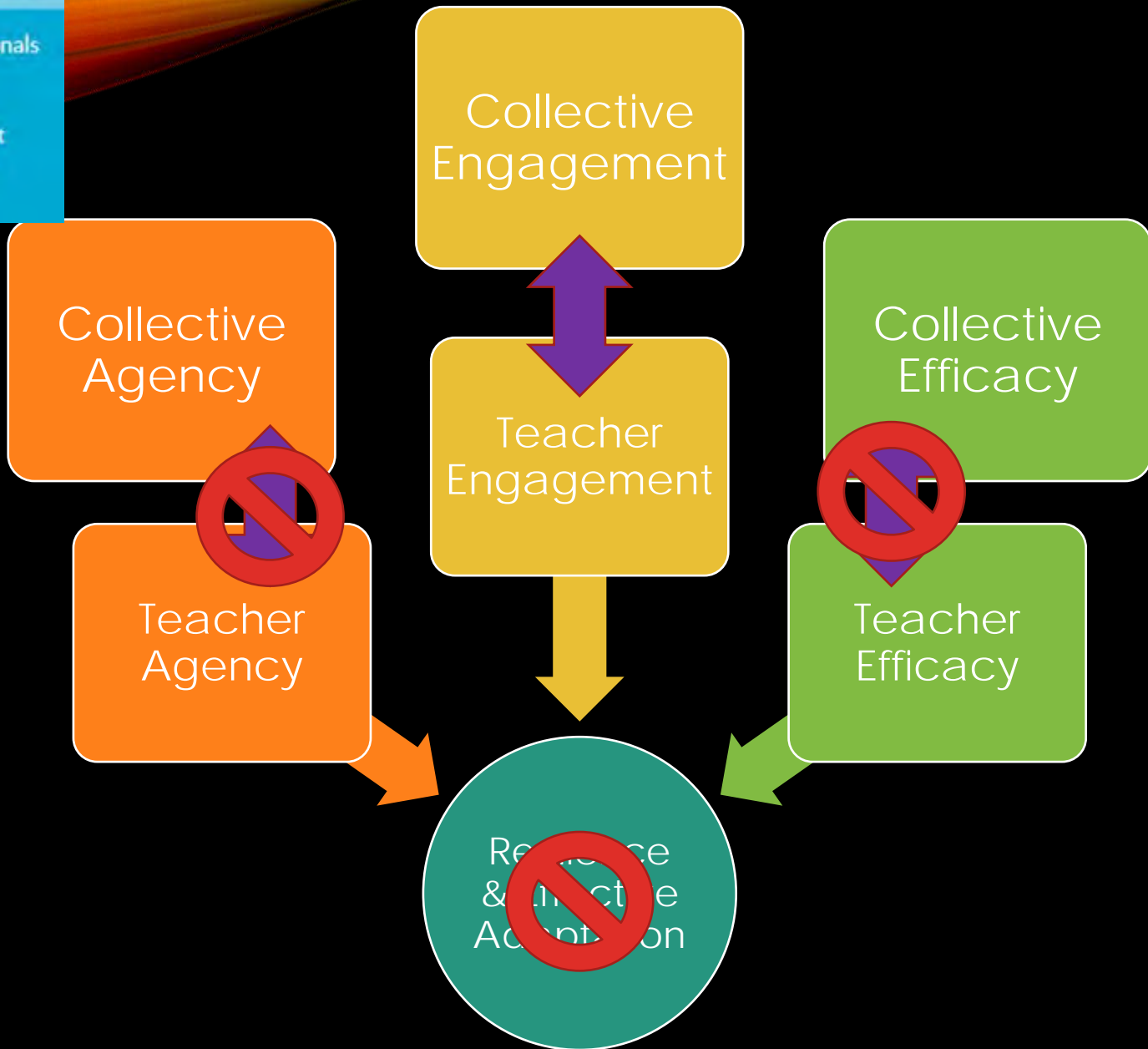




<p>District Office & School Leaders' Implementation Strategy</p>	<p>Make It Happen:</p>	<p>Help It Happen:</p>	<p>Let It Happen:</p>
	<p>Top-down compliance directives with scripted protocols, strict implementation timetable and fidelity standards, tight monitoring, And narrow training</p>	<p>Implementation entails mutual adaptation, and it is facilitated by responsive technical assistance, social supports, and needed resources, together with organizational learning mechanisms</p>	<p>Loosely-configured implementation plan with variable guidance and monitoring, technical assistance, social supports, and resources</p>
<p>Teachers' and Other Front-line Professionals' Motivations for Implementation and Performance Adaptation</p>	<p>Have-to Motives:</p>	<p>Want-to Motives:</p>	<p>Ought-to Motives:</p>
	<p>Front-line professionals feel like Implementation puppets, not expert professionals with discretion</p>	<p>Front-line professionals value the innovation and are committed to adapt, learn, and improve as they implement it</p>	<p>Front-line professionals feel a sense of obligation, but "their hearts aren't in it," resulting in variable implementation</p>

Have-to Motives:

Front-line professionals
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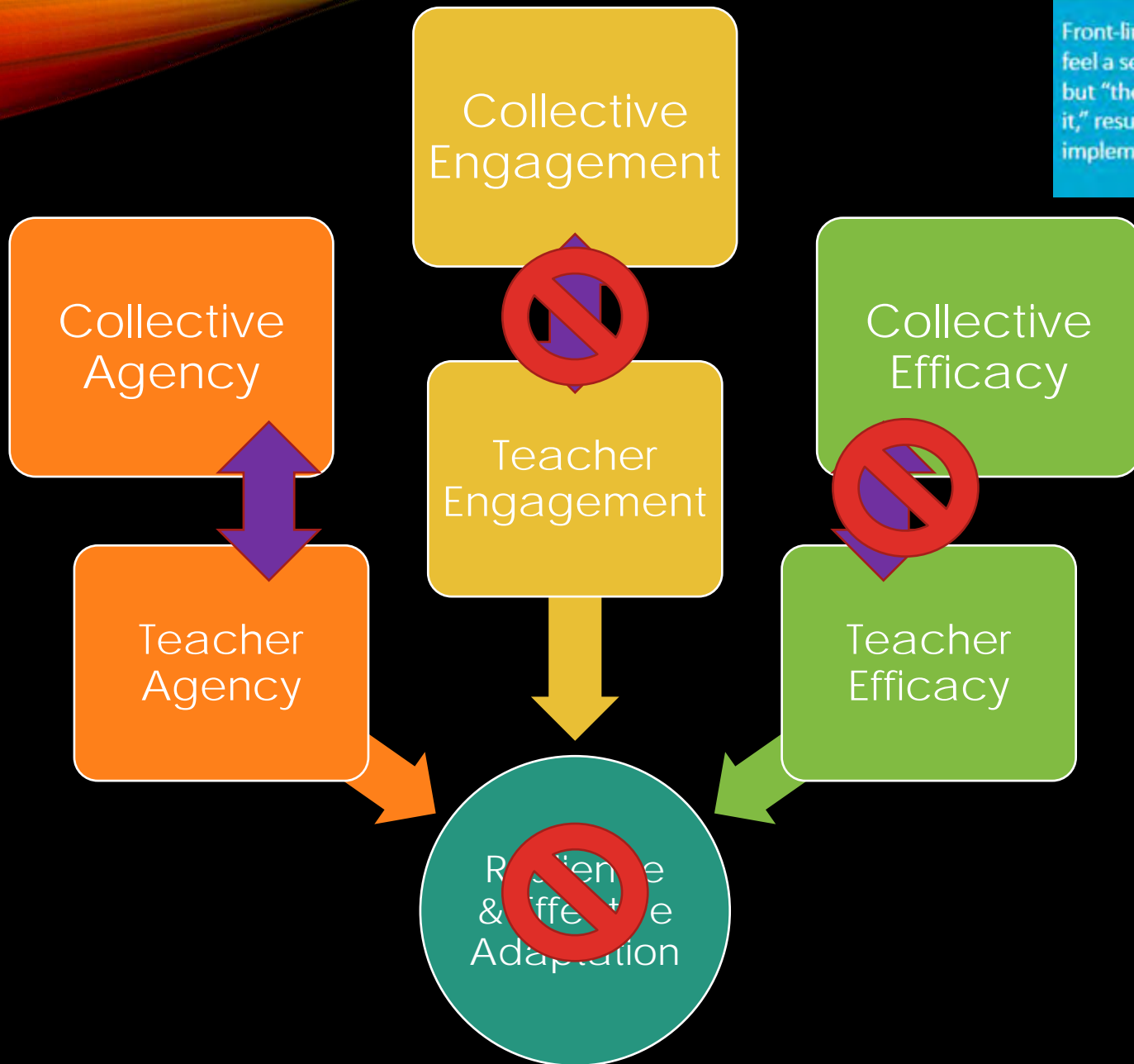
Collective
Agency

Teacher
Agency

There doesn't seem to be a lot of "hey I know you're a good teacher and I am going to let you do what you do best, because we hired you and we believe in you." And incrementally control was taken away from us. First it had to be you're teaching the same thing at the same time. Now we have to teach the modules. And now our grade books have to look identical. It's just one more thing in a litany of ways to take control away from us. I think it makes us feel devalued. - Chen

Ought-to Motives:

Front-line professionals feel a sense of obligation, but "their hearts aren't in it," resulting in variable implementation



Ought-to Motives:

Front-line professionals feel a sense of obligation, but "their hearts aren't in it," resulting in variable implementation

Well, I think innovation went out when the modules came in. - Sarah

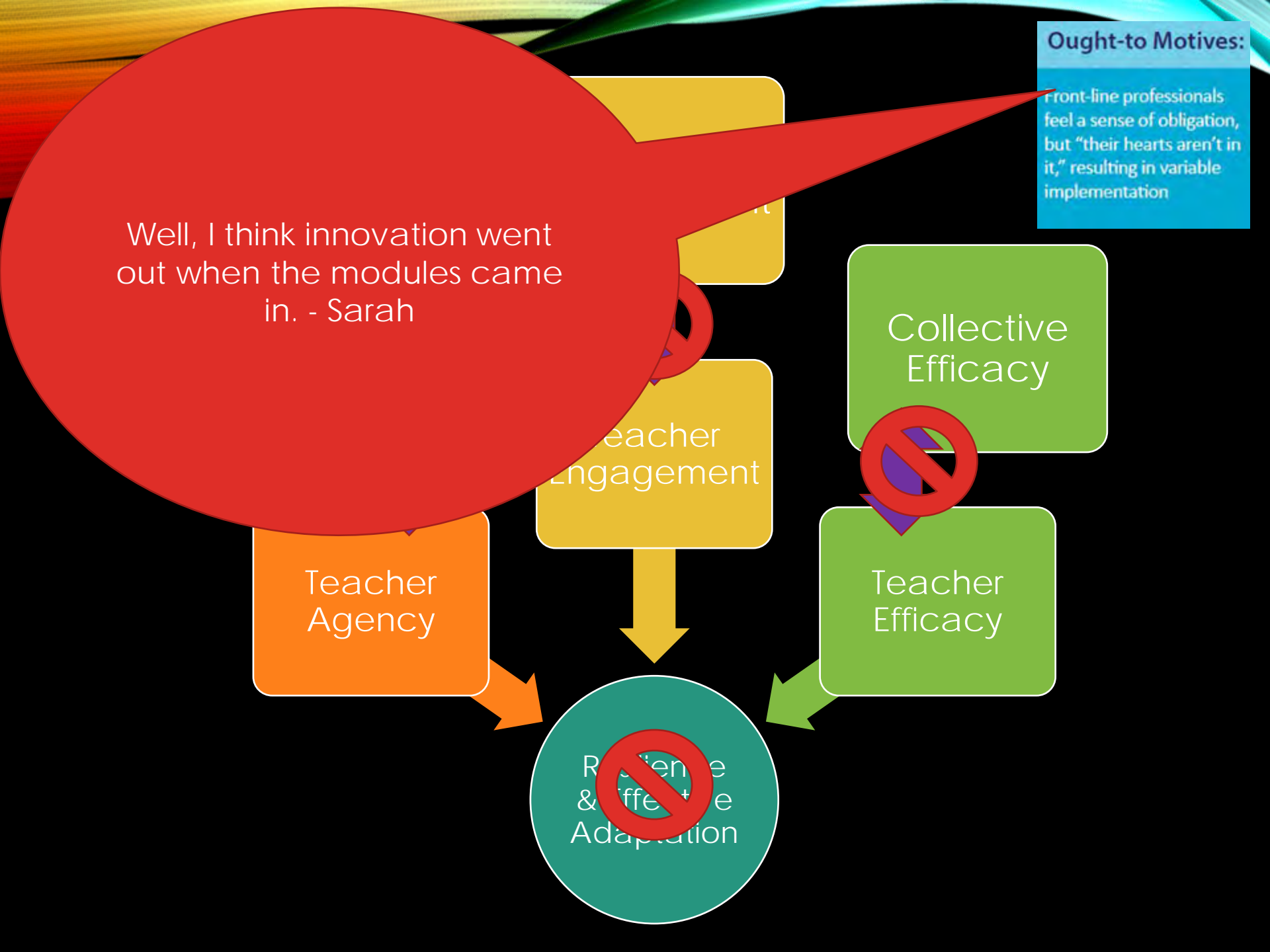
Teacher Agency

Teacher Engagement

Collective Efficacy

Teacher Efficacy

Resilience & Adaptive Adaptation



Want-to Motives:

Front-line professionals value the innovation and are committed to adapt, learn, and improve as they implement it



Want-to Motives:

Front-line professionals value the innovation and are committed to adapt, learn, and improve as they implement it

Collective Engagement



Teacher Engagement

Collective Efficacy



Teacher Efficacy

Resilience & Effective Adaptation

A number is not going to affect me because we get a score for the whole school. And anyway, I know I'm a good teacher. I know that everyone around this table meets their kids' needs and is dedicated. - Kishmar

POVERTY AND DIVERSITY

- Specific supports in odds-beating higher poverty and higher diversity schools
 - ✓ School-wide APPR scores (not individual)
 - ✓ Team approach to supporting children academically, socially and emotionally
 - ✓ Useful and sufficient professional development and material resources

TAKE-AWAYS TO SUPPORT TEACHERS' SUPPORTING CHILDREN

- ✓ Teachers interact, plan, and learn together and support each other in teams and professional learning communities
- ✓ District office and school missions, goals, and leadership priorities emphasize high standards and equity of opportunity for learning for all students
- ✓ New teachers are prepared for challenges of diverse student populations and experienced teachers have received effective professional development that is responsive to their needs and concerns in service of their sustained agency, efficacy, engagement, and resilience
- ✓ Innovation adoption and implementation proceed with teachers-as-partners and co-designers, including guidelines and mechanisms for top-down and bottom-up learning and improvement
- ✓ A district office-school "911 system" for teachers, enabling rapid responses to their needs for coaching, mentoring, peer supports, and responsive professional development resources to bolster engagement and emotional resilience in the face of challenges.

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For other related reports see "common core study" at <http://www.albany.edu/nykids/>