

Alliance for the
Study of School Climate
California State University, Los Angeles
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TRANSFORMATIVE connected school system

An Introduction to the Transformative Connected School System (TCSS)

Introduction

The Transformative Connected School (TCS) System is intended to help you make the highest levels of school function and effectiveness a practical sustainable reality at your school. All schools have a Transformative Connected School within them that is being held back by explainable and controllable factors. The TCS system will enable you to understand what is limiting your growth and achievement, lays out a road map for success, and provides facilitation, training and tools to help you get there. This document is intended to give you an overview of the system, and includes 1) an introductory rationale and comparison of TCSS to other approaches to school improvement, 2) an overview of system implementation and how we assist you in becoming a TCSS School, and 3) an in-depth explanation of the TCSS conceptual framework.

Part I: What is The Transformative Connected School System (TCSS)?

- **Unique Roadmap** - The TCSS is the only system that offers a clear, comprehensive roadmap for school success, success being defined as high functioning, effective, healthy and achieving communities. Many of its principles, practices and training are new to most educators. Although they may not have identified them as such, all schools to the degree that they are high performing have used TCSS principles to become high performing.
- **Research based** –TCSS combines decades of research in the effectiveness of Perceptual Control Theory (PCT) and *A Connected School* training, as well as ten years of research into school effectiveness by the Alliance for the Study of School Climate.
- **Long-term focused** –TCSS is not a program, it is a system of interventions that operate to fundamentally educate and as a result empower those within a school to produce healthier and more functional outcomes. The changes that take place are not overlays, they are foundational improvements. As a result, they do not have side effects like other programs such as students becoming addicted to bribes, or teachers having to betray their best values. All teachers and students win, and the growth attained is long-term and sustainable.

Features of the Transformative Connected School System

- **School Climate Assessment** – Using the Alliance for the Study of School Climate (ASSC) School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI). The SCAI was rated best in an independent study, and is one of only a few approved by the US Dept. of Education. It is the only instrument that uses an analytic-trait scale structure and theoretical construct defined by “psychology of success” and PCT levels of perception
- **Applied Perceptual Control Theory: A Connected School Training and Materials** – *A Connected School* is a fully developed system of practices and procedures that is based on Perceptual Control Theory (PCT), a scientific theory that is more accurate than stimulus

response theories in explaining individual and collective behavior. This approach to move a school from an authoritarian, fear-based climate to a climate of self-regulation and cooperation is outlined in the book, *The Connected School*.

- **Transformative Classroom Practices** – A groundbreaking set of principles and practices that outline how to make any classroom a high functioning place defined by individual and collective level psychology of success. Outlined in the book, *Transformative Classroom Management*.

Why is TCSS different and more effective than other educational “programs” currently available?

Not all school improvement approaches are alike. TCSS is both different and more comprehensive in a number of significant ways. First, TCSS is not a program, it is a system of interventions that operate to fundamentally educate and as a result change a school. When TCSS is compared to other school improvement and enhancement programs several contrasts can be drawn. These differences are outlined in the Table below.

	Transformative Connect School System	Typical School Improvement “Program”
Dealing with Real Problems and Solutions vs. Dealing with Symptoms and Band-Aids.	TCSS deals with the roots of student motivation and behavior rather than symptoms. TCSS promotes genuine responsibility and self-discipline, creating a context where basic needs are met which identify and support intrinsic sources of motivation. TCSS meets real needs – which make schools healthier and more conducive to academic achievement.	When examined closely, the fact is that most school improvement programs intended to solve problems in schools tend to deal with symptoms. So in most cases at best they address a surface concern. Too often they simply lead to replacing an unwanted condition with a slightly more desirable but still ultimately dysfunctional condition. Good examples of this are the use of extrinsic reward systems to motivate students who appear unmotivated, or colored card charts that use public shame in an attempt to change student behavior.
Long-Term Fundamental Fix vs. Short-term Add-Ons	Because the TCSS deals with the roots of school function and performance, it will make every aspect of the school better. And it WILL affect every aspect of the school. Because the TCSS creates fundamental changes in the way teachers, students and leaders approach their work and relationships, the results are long-term and lasting.	Most programs are intended to add a new set of practices over the top of the old practices and current ways of operating. As a result, they tend to come and go quickly without any real lasting effect. Moreover, they may or may not integrate with whatever else is in place and will rarely do anything to remediate fundamental problems at the school. Their results tend to be short-term and superficial.
Big and Small 3D Picture vs. Narrow 2D Picture	TCSS addresses both the macro level need for theoretical integrity as well as the micro level need for a concrete specific explanation for what to do in practice. TCSS has integrity because	Most programs, like medicines at best, can claim that they typically have an effect. But they cannot claim that ALL they do is “good.” Most programs have some negative side effects, especially

	<p>it is based on what makes humans and institutions functional and healthy. TCSS provides very specific answers to “what to do” kinds of questions. Every practical choice can be examined within the lens of TCSS. Moreover, it can be adapted to any teacher personality type or group of students.</p>	<p>in the long-term. Many programs suggest certain generic practices. But generic practices do not address specific approaches to unique situations and scenarios which more often occur in classrooms and schools.</p>
<p>Analysis, Problem-Solving, and Ongoing Evaluation vs. Diagnosis and Prescription</p>	<p>TCSS explains both what is holding back a school from the level of function that it could be achieving as well as what will be required for it to move forward. The assessment component of TCSS provides a clear concrete quantitative and conceptual assessment of where a school is at any point – that is a detailed diagnosis of the health of the school. Then it provides a clear roadmap and prescription for success, spelled out in practical indicators that can be measured and observed directly.</p>	<p>Most programs have no means of assessing where you are on your growth journey. Moreover, they do not provide a vision for an effective school. The best they can offer is the prospect that if you implement them with fidelity you may get a positive result.</p>
<p>Promotes Internal vs. External Motivation and Discipline</p>	<p>One of the basic tenants of the TCSS is that the only true control and discipline occurs within the individual and the collective as a whole. TCS promotes high function and achievement by promoting an internal locus of control and intrinsic motivation in a systematic and intentional manner. Every teaching choice is either promoting more extrinsic or more intrinsic motivation. TCS helps teachers understand which practices and messages will produce which.</p>	<p>Many programs claim to promote student motivation and responsibility, yet when examined more closely either rely to a great extent on extrinsic motivation, teacher-centered approaches, or mechanical gimmicks that inherently have the effect of undermining intrinsic motivation. PBIS, Wong, Canter, and Jones are all examples of programs that claim to promote responsibility, but over time show themselves to more often promote extrinsic motivation, a fragile obedience, an addiction to external rewards, and/or a justifiable rebellion to the manipulative practices in these programs.</p>

What are the Expected Outcomes of a Transformative Connected School?

- ✦ A sense of community and connectedness among everyone at the school
- ✦ An understanding of Perceptual Control Theory which provides a common language for discussing problems and potential solutions
- ✦ A “psychology of success” that pervades every aspect of the school
- ✦ Higher Student Achievement. See Appendix A.
- ✦ Improved student behavior. Data upon request.
- ✦ Better classroom and school climate. See Appendix A.
- ✦ Better student interactions (i.e., less bullying, less casual verbal abuse, less displaced aggression from the classroom).
- ✦ Better teacher-teacher interactions.
- ✦ A sense of school pride and vision
- ✦ No more need for bribes, gimmicks, stickers, and negative strategies.

Part II: Transformative Connected School System Components

TCSS is individually tailored to each school. Schools can elect to implement the TCSS to the extent that it works for them given their goals, needs and budget. Regardless of the level of implementation, undertaking the TCSS will produce long-term effects.

The TCSS takes a comprehensive systemic approach to implementation. It includes 1) Preplanning and Leadership Preparation, 2) Analysis/Assessment, 3) Training, 4) Facilitation and 5) Resources. Given that the TCSS is intended to be organic and systemic, the goal is that it is owned by each member of the school community, and it evolves with the needs and goals of each of the members of the staff individually and school as a collective. School change can only occur when those within a school identify that they have a need and decide that they want a solution to meet that need because it is meaningful to them. Real problems rather than symptoms are identified and addressed head-on. TCSS is neither a quick fix nor a “one fits all” approach. It requires understanding, critical thinking and creativity. Because every school community is different, solutions must be specifically tailored to that school’s particular needs. TCSS incorporates meaningful, long-term principles and practices that will make the school more effective. TCSS does not ask teachers to add something new to what they already doing. It is more likely that as a result of TCSS training, teachers will realize that they need to stop doing a lot of what they are doing. The TCSS provides tools that assist participants in their understanding of best practices and how to incorporate those practices in their classrooms.

Pre-Planning and Leadership

It is recommended that schools identify a leadership team to facilitate the process of growth. That team should include a representative group of teachers, at least one student representative, and at least one parent representative. An administrative representative is optional. This team should be stable throughout the process, working with the administration and the staff as a whole, to set goals, develop plans and encourage their peers’ efforts.

Analysis/Assessment

It is recommended that once schools have created a leadership team, they administer the ASSC School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI). The SCAI provides data for the leadership team and administration to enable them to determine where the school is at any point in time on the roadmap to success and implies key areas on which to focus in the improvement process.

Training

Schools can implement the TCSS to the extent that it desires. Training is provided that offers ever increasing depth of understanding of Transformative Connected School Classroom Practices and Principles.

- **Level I: TBD**
- **Level II: TBD**
- **Level III: TBD**

Facilitation

The TCSS staff brings decades of experience working with teachers and administrators to facilitate the process of school improvement and personal growth. The TCSS staff is led by Perry Good and John Shindler.

- Perry has been a teacher, therapist, author and speaker for 35 years and is currently President of New View Publications, a company devoted to teaching the applications of Perceptual Control Theory in schools, the social sciences and business. The company is the primary distributor and publisher of books devoted to explaining PCT and its applications in the helping professions worldwide.
- John has been an educator for 26 years and is currently a Professor at CSULA and the Director of the Alliance for the Study of School Climate. He teaches courses on classroom methods, teacher leadership assessment and classroom management. He has worked at the national, state, district, and school level, presenting and working directly with faculty and administrators.

Part III: Outlining the Transformative Connected School System Analytical Model

As you will see in figure X below, the TCSS analytical model can be represented in a single diagram that functions as a roadmap for school improvement. And as a system of interventions rather than a “program,” the TCSS functions as an instrument of assessment, diagnosis and implied improvement action. But building the model requires connecting a series of interrelated pieces. Each of the pieces is necessary to gain a complete understanding of the integrated roadmap that is developed when all the pieces are assembled.

The TCSS analytic model includes four main components. First, practices in any school can be placed within the teaching-style matrix that offers a simple way to classify teacher action into four categories (Shindler 2009). Second, all practices are examined in relation to the “levels of perception” (Powers, 2005). Third, practices can be examined in relation to their effect on the psychology of each individual student and the class and school as a whole. All practices can be viewed as either leading to or encouraging a “psychology of success (POS),” or a “psychology of failure” (POF) (Shindler, 2009). Fourth, the systems/organisms within the school (i.e., the students, the teachers, the classrooms, and the school as a whole) need to be understood as occurring within the PCT feedback loop.

To begin to understand what makes a school higher performing, it is useful to compare what occurs in high performing schools to what occurs in other schools. Figure A depicts three levels of school – low performing, high performing and where more schools are, somewhere in the middle. In every case, high performing schools are highly intentional, operating from an articulated vision. Staff and students in high performing schools collaborate with one another, and exhibit a great deal of mutual trust. In low performing schools, students and teachers function on what can be termed a sensory level of operation. When new programs are introduced in schools it can increase their level of function and continuity. These kinds of programs tend to drive the practices at middle functioning schools. What distinguishes the programs in higher functioning schools from those in middle functioning schools is a

set of systems and principles that have been intentionally cultivated. In addition, high functioning schools operate from, and promote within their students a psychology of success. Unfortunately, practices at low performing schools can often be seen to promote a psychology of failure.

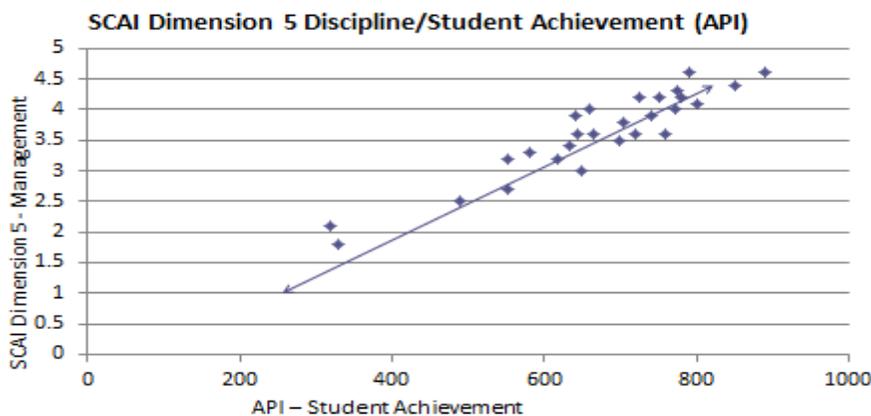
Figure A: Theoretical Construct for Each of the Three Levels of the ASSC School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI).

	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
System	Intentional	Semi-intentional	Accidental
Ethos	Sound vision translated into effective practice	Good intentions translated into practices that “work.”	Practices defined by the relative self-interest of faculty and staff
Effect on Students	Liberating Experience changes students for the better	Perpetuating Experience has a mixed effect on students	Domesticating Experience has a net negative effect on students
Level of Perception	System/Principle	Program	Sensory
Goal	Community and Self Responsibility	Order and Engagement	Obedience (or lacks a clear goal)
Psychology	Promotes a Psychology of Success	Promotes a Mixed Psychology	Promotes a Psychology of Failure

Research Support for the TCSS function levels

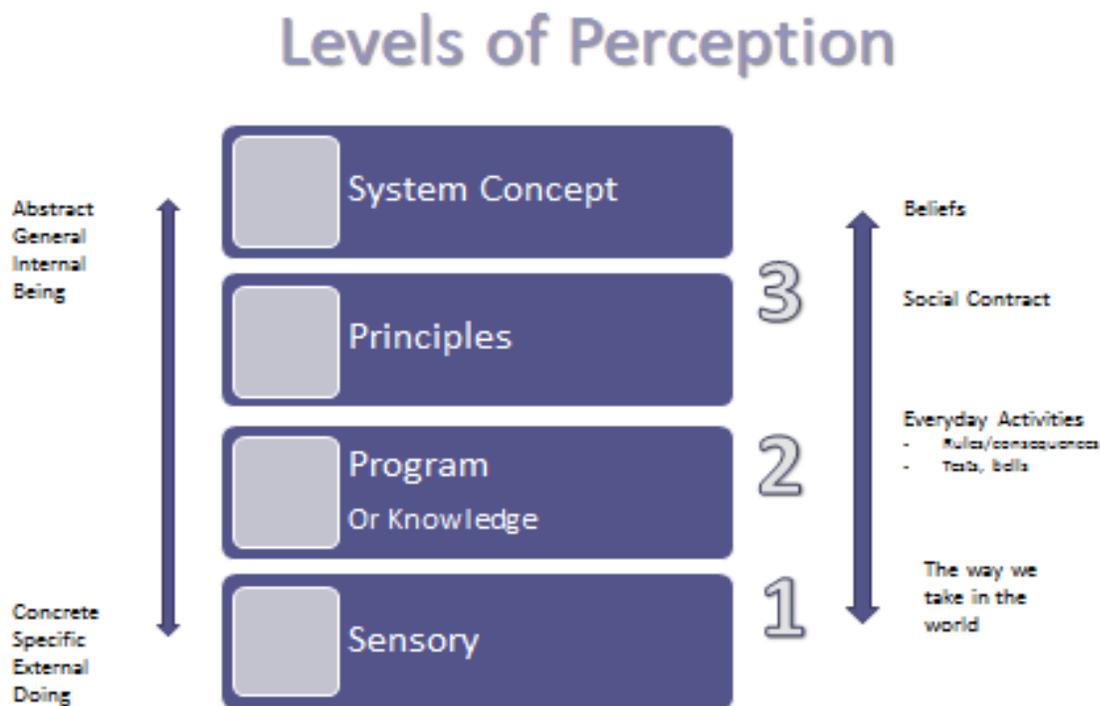
In a study of 40 urban K-12 schools, a strong relationship between the level of student achievement and the climate and function level that was measured (see Figure B and Appendix A). When schools were assessed with the ASSC SCAI used in the TCSS, and compared to the standardized test scores at the school, as can be seen in the figure, school climate and function level was shown to be an almost perfect predictor of student achievement at each school. Results from schools in several states that have measured both SCAI and student achievement show a similar pattern. The practices, principles and structures that characterize this top level of school performance are the essential features of the TCSS. It should be pointed out that no schools in which the dominant forms of classroom management and discipline were characterized by Wong, Jones or Canter found their way to the top of the intersection and all schools using principles consistent with TCSS could be found in the highest region.

Figure G: SCAI Dimension 5 score by Student Achievement (CA API)



The Levels of Perception

Perception refers to information received from the environment through our senses translated into neural signals that register in our brains. Powers has hypothesized a series of levels of perception, starting with very simple, concrete, perceptions (i.e., sensory) to increasingly more complex, abstract, ones (i.e., program, principle, and system). Our basic survival needs are mostly at the sensory level. When we refer to program level perceptions we are talking about such things as our daily routines, rules, policies, and procedures. Examples of principle level perceptions are internalized expectations and collective “ways things are done.” At the highest level, Powers identifies what he refers to as system concepts. Our world view, values and deep seated appreciations are at the systems concept level. It is useful to note that these higher levels set the reference signals for the lower levels. That is to say that our values as individuals, those within our classes and as school communities will guide our actions at all levels.



Given that higher levels set reference signals for lower levels, identifying and focusing on higher levels of perception as a means for better understanding ones environment is at the root of real learning. It is also at the root of effective classroom management and the development of a school culture that supports high achievement. It can be shown that in high performing schools, greater emphasis is placed on the higher levels of perception than in low performing schools. In low performing schools, students and staff are concerned with surviving the day and satisfying their basic survival needs. Teachers use shaming and bribes with the belief that this is what is necessary to produce results. Middle functioning and achieving level schools are characterized by creating rules and patterns and common practices that provide continuity. They operate largely at the program level. Students and teachers at these schools can usually explain what they are supposed to be doing, but are less able to answer why. Teachers in the highest performing schools use principles and systems concepts to guide

their decisions. Helping students learn to think for themselves, self-evaluate and problem solve characterize staff and students.

Success Psychology as a key to the TCSS Conceptual Framework for High Functioning Climate and a Predictor of Student Achievement

The TCSS intentionally promotes a psychology of success (POS) within the staff, and teaches them how to promote it within their students. In a TCSS classroom the teacher asks themselves the question, “Will this (potential) action promote more POS in the long-term?” and “Do I see evidence that what I am doing is promoting more POS?”

POS is defined by three inter-related factors (Figure D). These factors are 1) internal vs. external locus of control (LOC), 2) a sense of acceptance and belonging vs. alienation and worthlessness, and 3) a growth vs. fixed ability orientation. The continuum between POS vs. psychology of failure (POF) practices is reflected in SCAI item design.

Figure D: Sub-factors for the Theoretical Construct of Achievement Psychology

Psychology of Success (POS)	Psychology of Failure (POF)
Internal Locus of Control	External Locus of Control
Belonging & Acceptance	Alienation and Worthlessness
Growth- Orientation	Fixed-Ability Orientation

The concepts of self-esteem, achievement psychology, intrinsic motivation, basic needs satisfaction, are fundamental related to construct of a Psychology of Success (POS). Paring the research in this area down to its fundamental components, these three essential factors emerge to explain the degree to which an individual student or a collective group has a psychological orientation toward success or failure. Moreover, there are a large number of studies to indicate that each of the three factors is independently correlated with academic success (Auer, 1992; Benham, 1993; Dweck, 2000, 2006; Klein & Keller, 1990; Joseph, 1992; Rennie, 1991). Each fundamental component is explored here briefly and in more depth in Appendix B.

Growth vs. Fixed-Ability Orientation. Carol Dweck (2000; 2006) and her colleagues in their research over the course of 30 years have developed a very useful paradigm with which to examine academic self-concept, achievement, and motivation. They have demonstrated in a series of studies with students (Dweck, 2000; 2006) that future success is not as much the result of talent (i.e., fixed ability factors) or current level of ability, as it is the result of the orientation/cognitive strategy one uses to approach learning tasks (i.e., a growth mindset). Dweck offers a useful lens for distinguishing two contrasting cognitive strategies for feeling competent and how over time they have dramatically different results. When a student uses a growth orientation they view a situation as an opportunity to learn and grow. They do not see their performance within a situation as a measure of their innate ability as much as a measure of their investment – better results requires more practice. Students who approached tasks with a fixed ability orientation viewed the context as a reflection of how much ability they innately possessed in that area. The result is a student who is looking for situations that will not challenge their fragile self image or make them feel “dumb.” Dweck (2000, 2006) found that students with a growth pattern were more likely to persist in the face of failure and experience higher levels of academic achievement.

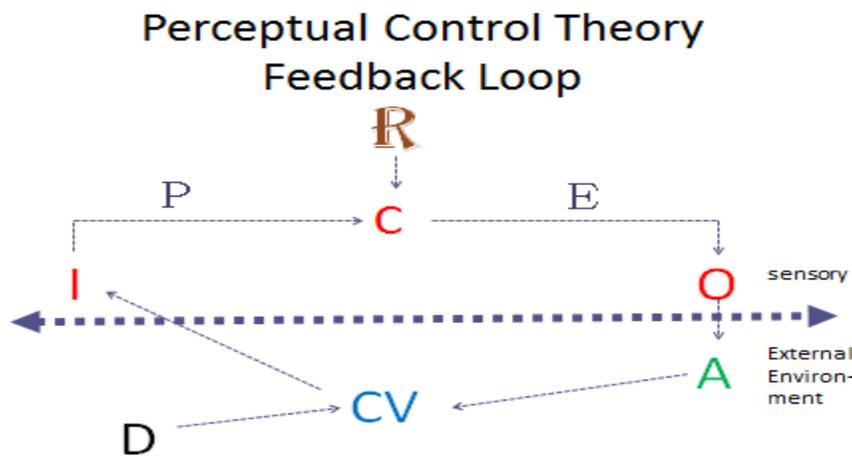
Acceptance and Belonging vs. Alienation and Worthlessness. This second factor within the framework for a POS reflects the degree to which any member feels connected, wanted and part of the group and the degree to which one likes and accepts one’s self. The more one feels connected,

accepted and acceptable, the more one will be able to express one's self, act authentically and be fully present to others (Osterman, 2000).

Internal vs. External Locus of Control. The third factor in the construct of POS is defined by one's sense of internal causality and orientation toward personal responsibility. The more internal locus of control (LOC) we possess, the more we feel that our destiny is in our own hands. It could be contrasted to an external LOC or an orientation that views *cause* as an external factor and one in which life "happens to us." An internal locus of control can be defined as the belief that one is the author of his or her own fate. An internal locus of control comes from having a causal understanding of behavior and effect. Another term we could use for internal locus of control is "personal empowerment."

The Feedback Loop and Why the TCSS and the PCT leads to more Psychology of Success

Among the distinguishing characteristics of the TCSS is that it incorporates an emerging scientific theory of how organisms interact with their environment – Perceptual Control Theory (PCT). Given that individuals, classrooms full of students, and whole schools function as organisms, PCT provides an effective model to understand and explain behavior and learning. It is contrasted in the TCS system to the stimulus and response explanation of human learning and conditioning. PCT provides both a more accurate as well as useful framework for educators as they try to understand how students actually learn and what they can do to facilitate that learning.



The best way to explain the elements of the diagram is to build it step by step. First, we differentiate between the organism and its environment by drawing a dotted horizontal line across the page. What is above the dotted line represents processes happening inside of the organism; what is below the dotted line is the environment in which the organism exists. It is the world outside of the organism. The diagram seeks to explain the relationship between the organism and its environment. The line is dotted to indicate that there is a relationship between the organism and the outside world. If the line was solid, there would not be a relationship between the two. This relationship is dynamic, in that what goes on tends to go on continuously and simultaneously at many levels. The diagram is not a flow chart, where one thing leads to another in a linear fashion, step by step in time, without feedback.

We can begin by putting together the parts of the organism above the line. The reference signal or R is the desired state of any environmental variable affecting the organism. So, for example, we might have a reference signal for a desired temperature in our heads. Information from the environment is received

as input (a square, in the diagram). The square means that some function occurs. In other words, the organism translates environmental input into a neural signal that can be understood by the brain. That perception is then compared with the reference signal (again, a square) and there is either a difference or not a difference between the two. So let us say that our reference signal is for the temperature to be 70 degrees. Our perception (input) is that it is 60 degrees. The result is error (a difference between the reference signal and the perceptual signal). When there is error (E), the organism acts on the environment to correct the error (output, again a square). Basically, the brain sends a neural signal to the muscles, and some action takes place to correct the difference. Thus, behavior is really about acting on the environment to obtain a desired or reference perception. In PCT language it is about controlling for the perception that is desired. The CV stands for the variable in the environment that is being controlled; in this case the temperature. Disturbances (D) are all the other factors in the environment which are also acting on the controlled variable such as wind in the case of the temperature. The PCT model is explained in more detail in Appendix A.

As the PCT model accurately describes the process an organism uses to control itself and its environment as an inherently *internal* process. Stimulus and response S-R theory assumes a largely external process. When put into practice students in a S-R dominant context cultivate a Reference (R) that is characterized to a great extent by an external LOC. While the process is still inherently internal (i.e., they are still controlling their system) they are deceived into perceiving what is happening as something that is happening to them. Teachers who rely on S-R techniques also incorrectly interpret the learning process as an external process. The result is teaching (as the Control Variable, CV) that is cultivating more external LOC and the references students use becoming progressively more external.

The TCS system and PCT assist teachers and students in understanding how they can promote a more organic and authentic learning context. In that natural condition, students feel a sense of connection to others, and a true understanding of the learning process defined by a growth orientation.

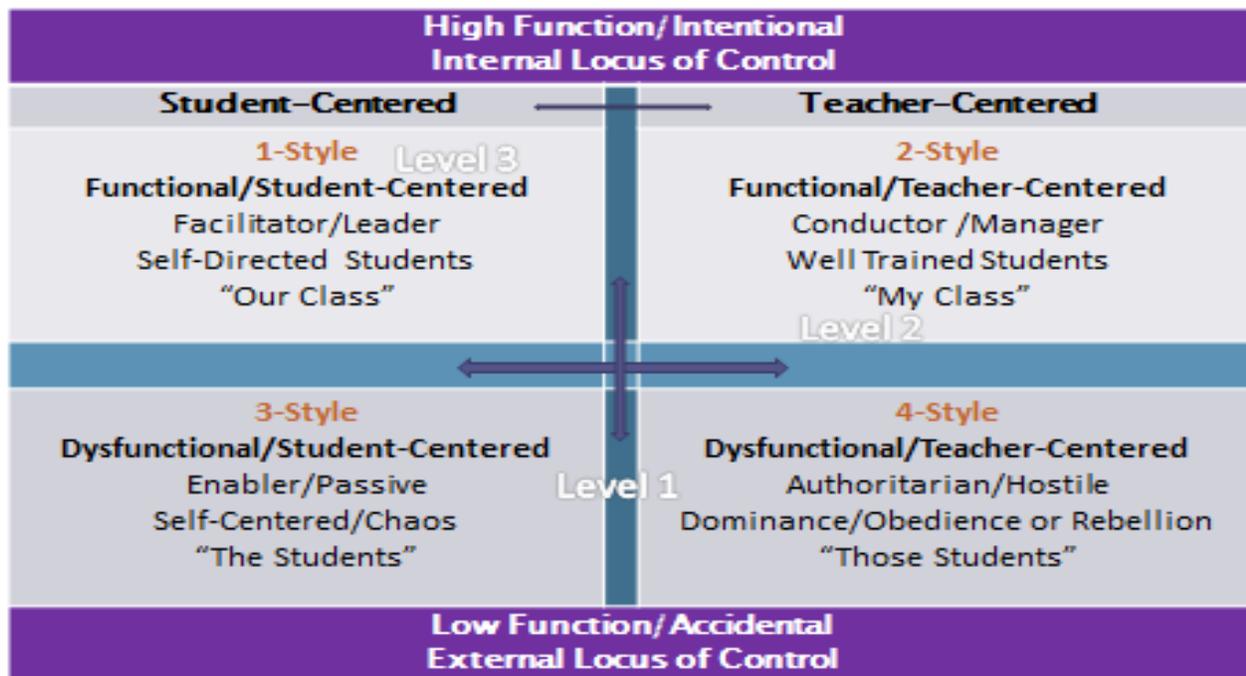
Teaching Style Matrix

To adequately classify teaching practices within a school or classroom, at least two variables are required. First, one variable must reflect the degree to which any practice leads to more or less function. Second, practices must be classified as being either more teacher-centered or student-centered. Shindler (2009) offers a two dimension matrix for classifying classroom management practices that uses these two variables. The result of this dissection produced four quadrants that represent very different kinds of practices and outcomes. These four “teaching-styles or orientations” are depicted in Figure E below.

The ASSC School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI) levels approximate onto the matrix as shown in Figure E. The low or 1-level practice/condition descriptions are defined by high levels of dysfunction/ external LOC, and either a 3-Style/passive approach or a 4-Style/dominator approach. The middle or 2-level practice/condition descriptions are defined by a traditional teacher-centered modest level of function approach. The high or 3-level practice/condition descriptors are defined by high levels of function, an internal LOC on the part of teachers and students and a student-centered approach. TCS is the 1-Style classroom.

These are rare, but consistently (and by definition) out-perform the other 3 styles of teaching.

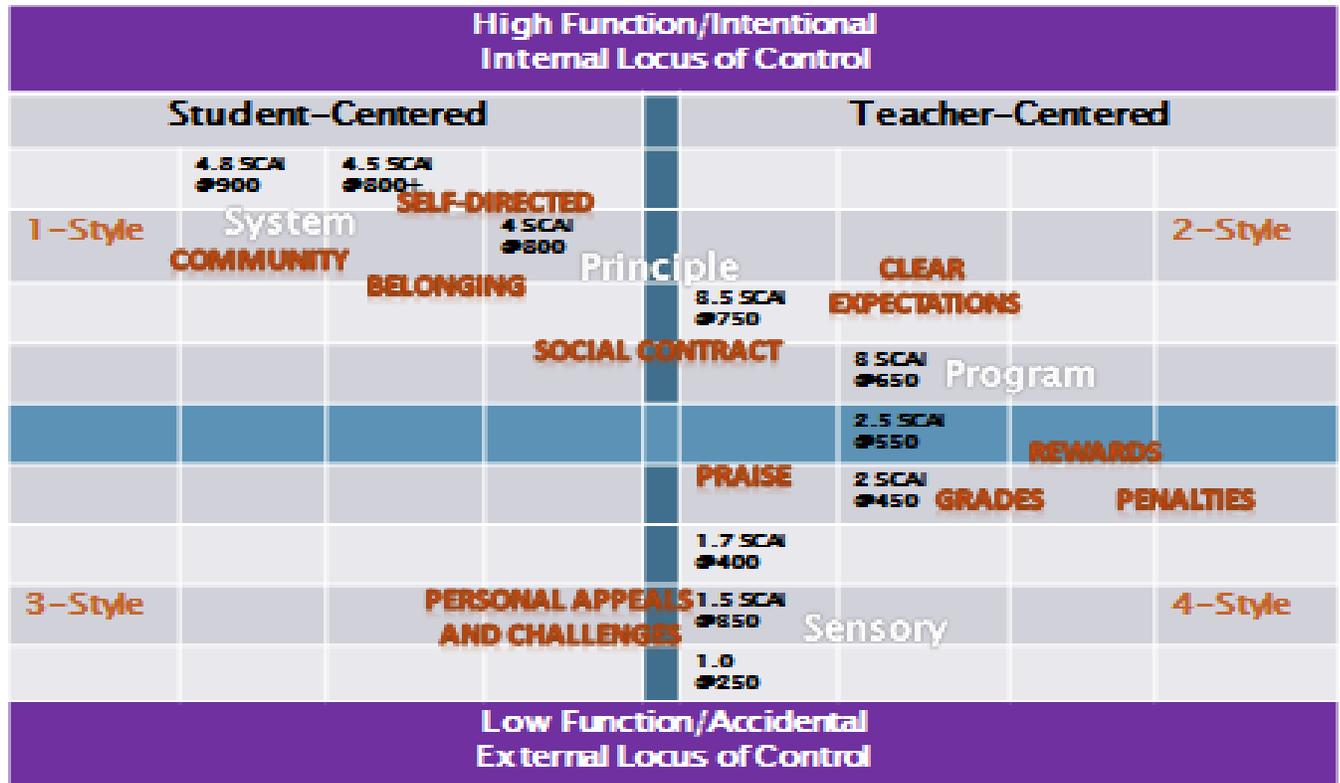
Figure E: Teaching Style Matrix – Orientation by Function Level



Putting it all Together – Depicting the TCSS Model in a Single Graphic

When all of the above elements are combined into one graphic depiction a fuller conception of the TCSS is revealed (see Figure X). The goal of the TCSS is to help the school move from where it is currently to the top (highest function and performance) and left (student-centered and intentional) corner of the diagram. As the diagram shows the data from the ASSC research shows that both school function and student achievement levels are highest in this top left corner. The corner represents the 3-level school operating on the systems concept level of perception. The school is defined by a high level of intention, mutual trust, a pervasive psychology of success, a sense of community and a high level of student self-responsibility.

Figure H: SCAI Classroom Management Ratings, and Corresponding Predicted API Score Correlations by Specific Teaching Practice



The path to this top function corner will be different for every school, but the path implied by the figure reflects the common locations along this journey toward excellence for most schools. While some schools sadly wallow in the bottom quadrants for a variety of reason, most schools function at the 2-level located in the 2-style teacher quadrant. These schools are defined by a program focus, and often a misguided belief that fidelity to their programs will lead to higher function. Our research says that this faith will more likely lead to staying stuck at the 2-level. 2-level schools are defined by a teacher-centered focus. Whereas in the 1-level school where there is an implicit level of trust in the students and the staff, in the 2- and 3-level schools there is less trust. As a result there is a tendency to implement all sorts of programs and strategies that bribe, coerce and threaten students into desired behaviors.

Many educators upon seeing this model presented either gain a feeling of great illumination. Others attempt to defend the need for schools to operate from the right side of the quadrant. What we would say to those educators is that when you look more closely at ANY school, you will see their climate/function and student achievement numbers as well as the school's common pedagogical practices fall neatly into this model.

The question to you is, “Do you want to accept that the high functioning Transformative Connected School System school is an explainable reality, and that if a staff commits to doing what it takes to move down the path to excellence, the results will follow, or do you want to keep trusting the assumptions that have gotten your school where it is today?”

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- Provides a comprehensive explanation of how to create the high functioning classroom, student self-responsibility, a psychology of success and a classroom community.
- www.transformativeclassroom.com
- www.calstatela.edu/faculty/jshindl/cm
- (or Google “Classroom Management Resources” it comes up #1)

Research from the Alliance for the Study of School Climate (ASSC).

www.calstatela.edu/schoolclimate

Resources from Paragon Educational Consulting, including complementary use of the PLSI for all TSC users.

www.