



South Australian Catholic Primary Principals Association  
Novotel Barossa Valley Resort  
11-13 September 2013

# School Improvement

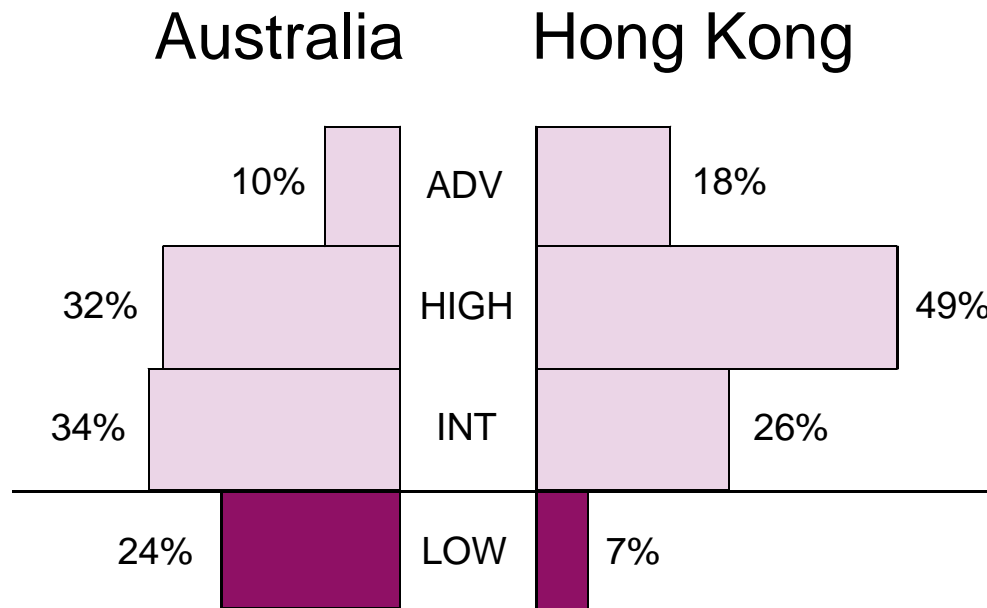
Geoff N Masters

Australian Council *for* Educational Research



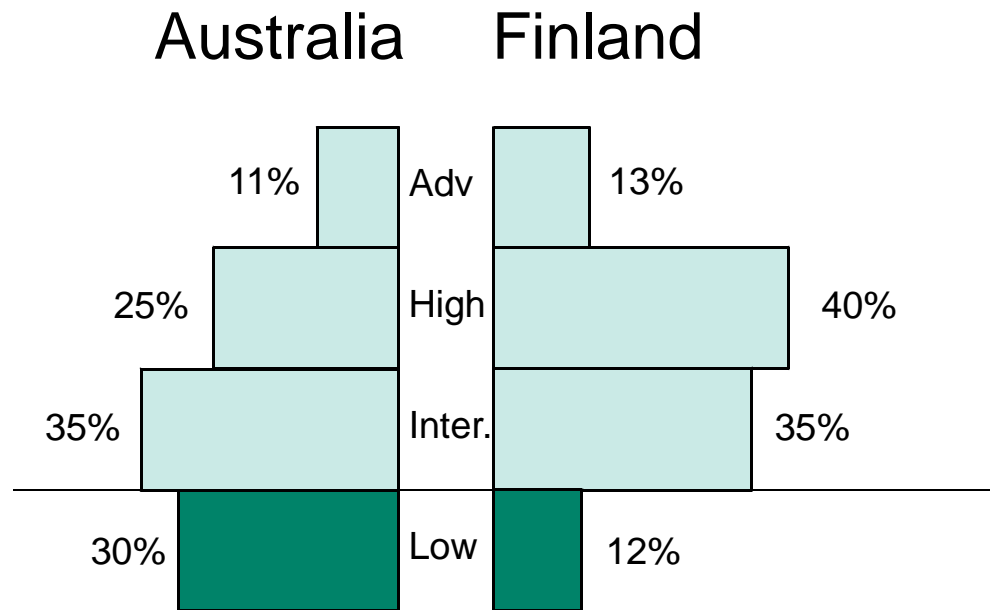
broader interest in 'school improvement'

## PIRLS (Year 4 Reading)



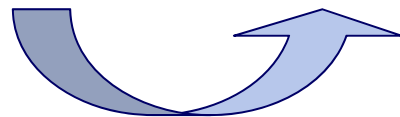
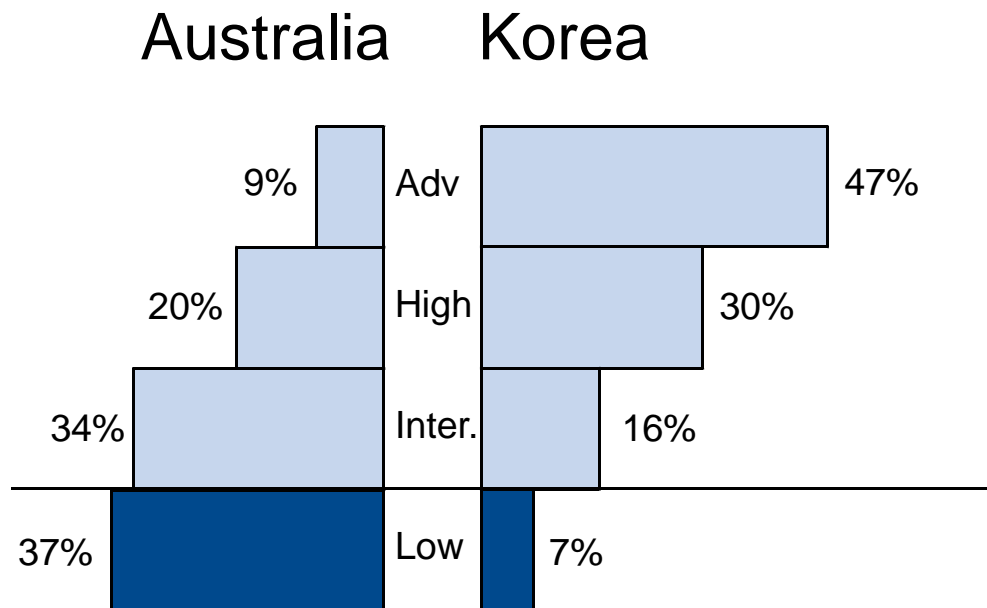
24% of Australian students were at or below *Low*.

## TIMSS (Year 8 Science)



30% of Australian students were at or below *Low*.

## TIMSS (Year 8 Mathematics)



**3.5 years  
of school?**

37% of Australian students were at or below *Low*.



'driving' school improvement

incentives? (sanctions / rewards)

How could we measure school improvement?

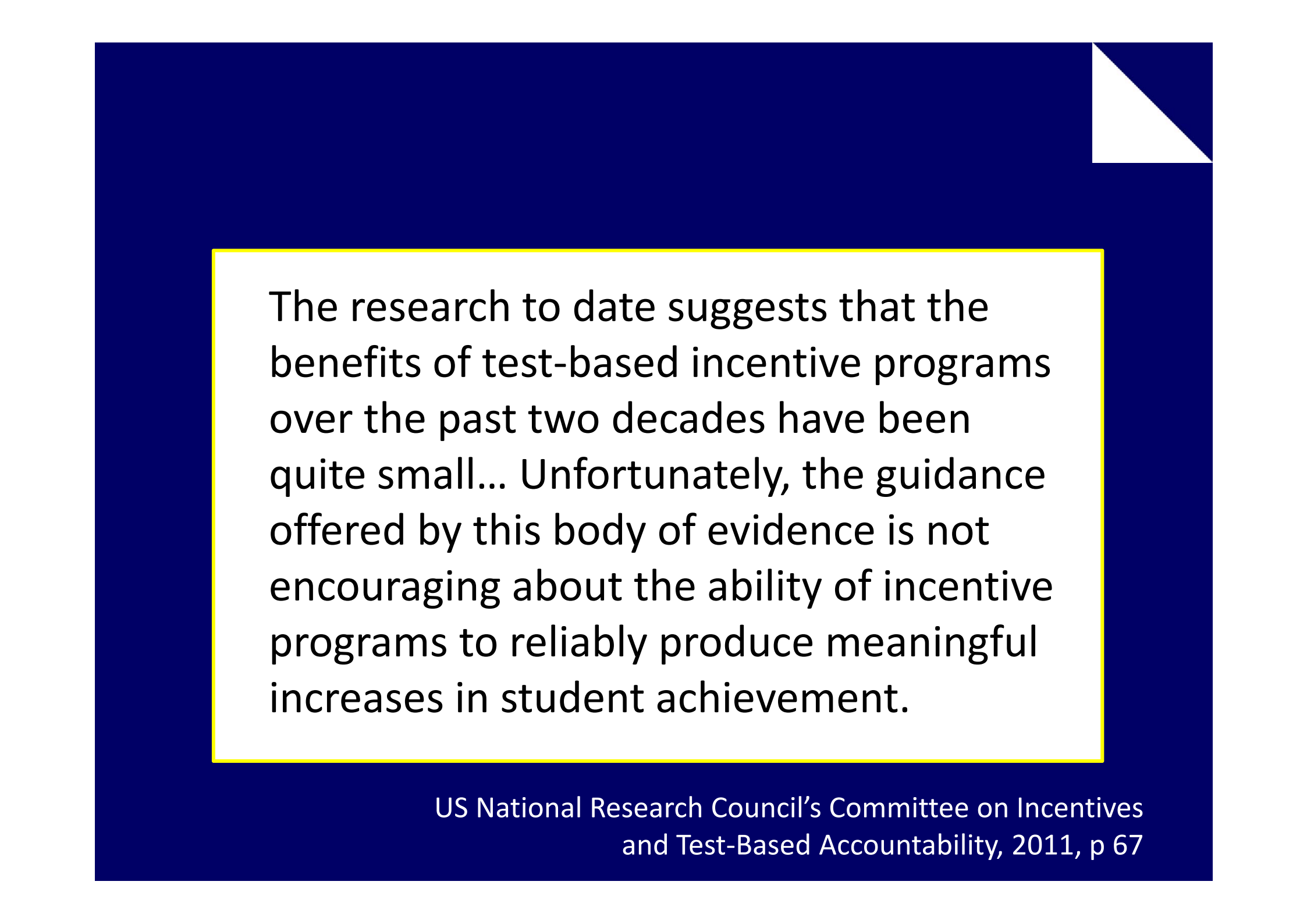
*Measuring and Rewarding  
School Improvement*

*Geoff N Masters  
Australian Council for Educational Research*

*April 2012*

*A discussion paper commissioned by the Commonwealth Department  
of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations*






The research to date suggests that the benefits of test-based incentive programs over the past two decades have been quite small... Unfortunately, the guidance offered by this body of evidence is not encouraging about the ability of incentive programs to reliably produce meaningful increases in student achievement.

US National Research Council's Committee on Incentives  
and Test-Based Accountability, 2011, p 67

Why have results-based incentives  
not been more successful?

RSA Animate Drive

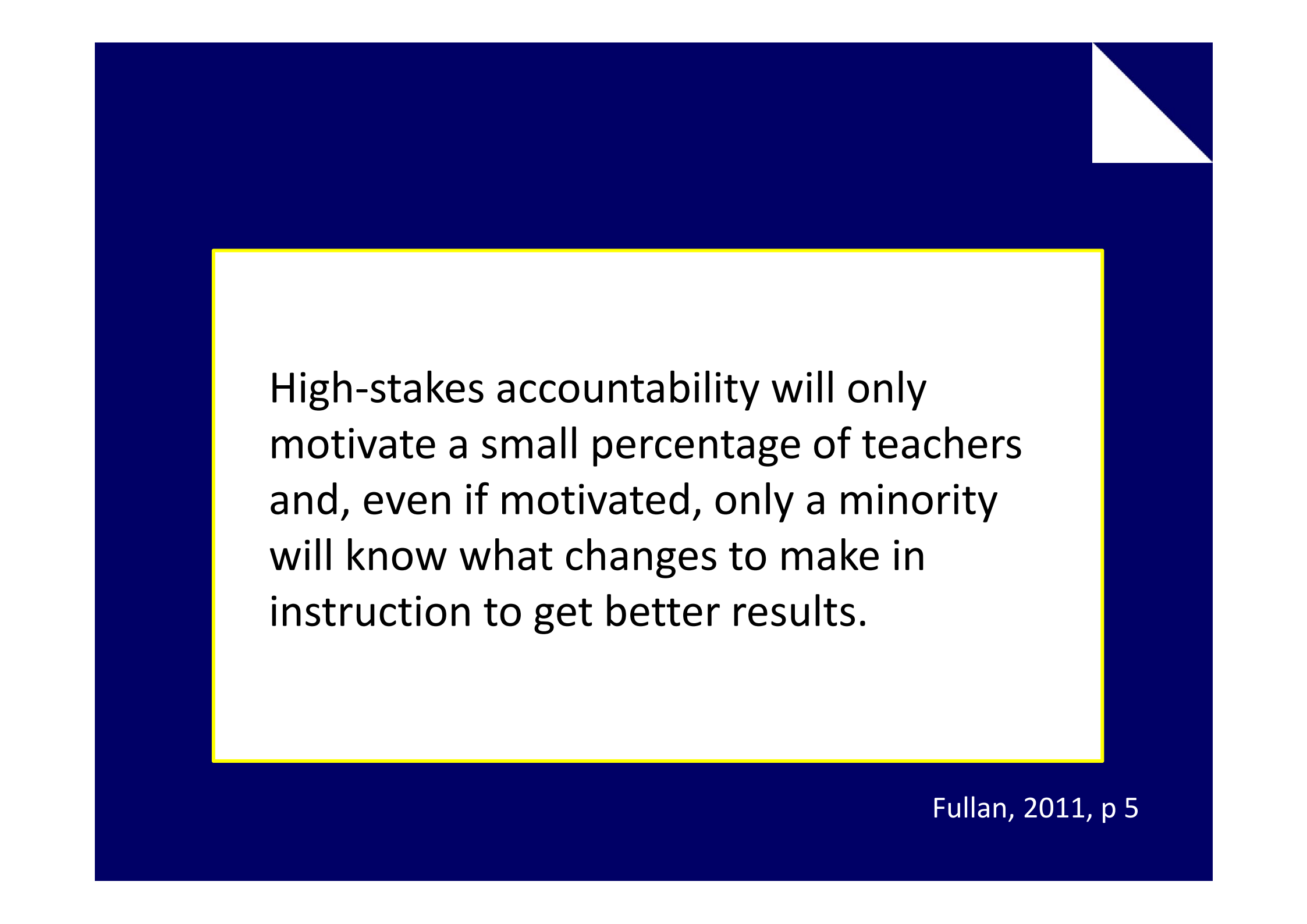




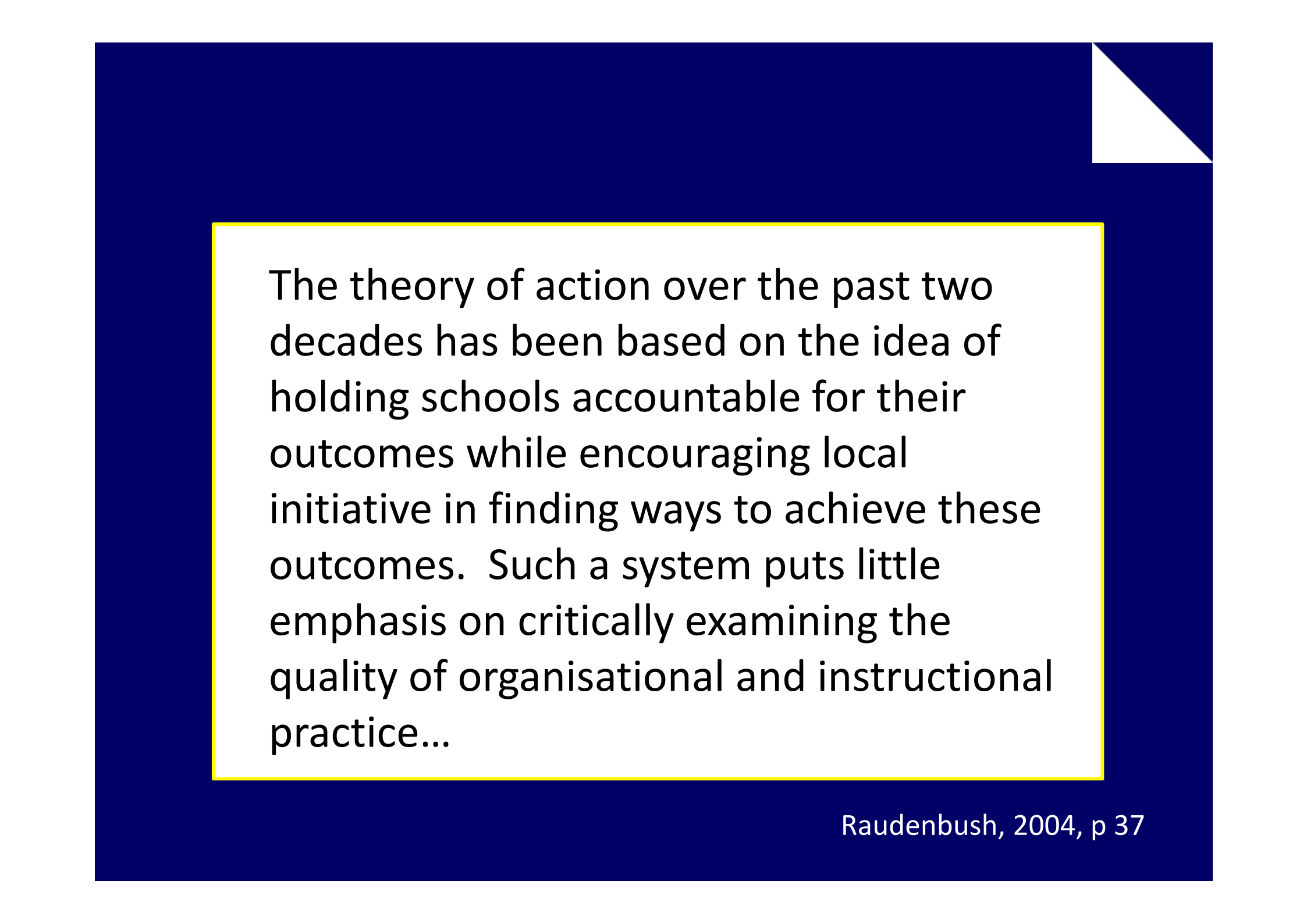
Research into the practices of successful companies shows that, in addition to focusing on results, high-performing companies invest heavily in building internal capacity and organisational health.

*Beyond Performance:  
How Great Organizations Build Ultimate Competitive Advantage*  
Keller & Price, 2011

People in schools are working pretty reliably at the limit of their existing knowledge and skill. Giving them information about the effects of their practice, other things being equal, does not improve their practice.



High-stakes accountability will only motivate a small percentage of teachers and, even if motivated, only a minority will know what changes to make in instruction to get better results.



The theory of action over the past two decades has been based on the idea of holding schools accountable for their outcomes while encouraging local initiative in finding ways to achieve these outcomes. Such a system puts little emphasis on critically examining the quality of organisational and instructional practice...

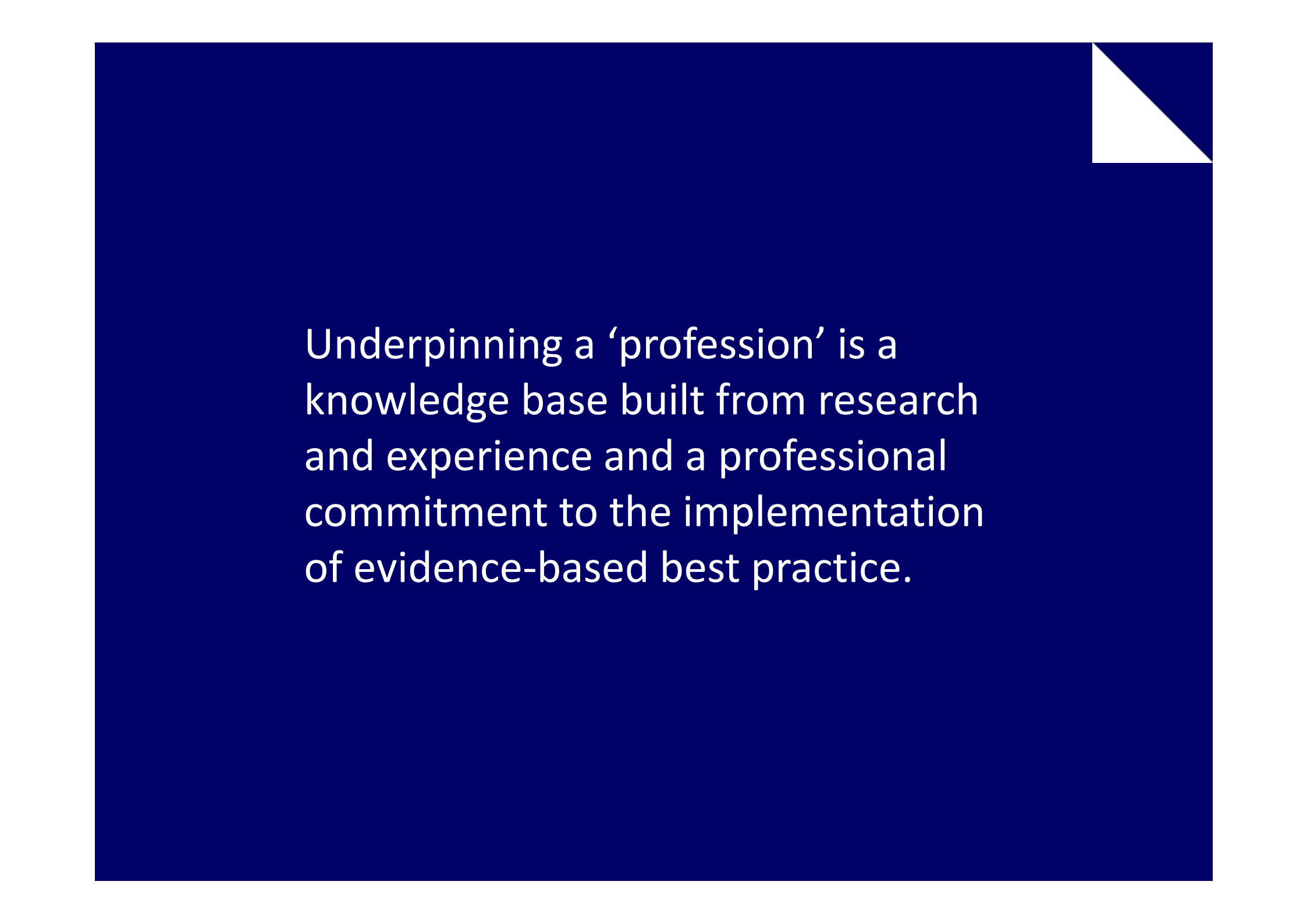
Identifying **evidence-based best practices** is far more difficult than holding schools accountable for outcomes alone...  
A mix of evidence based on outcomes and **assessments of practice** appears essential if accountability is to achieve its potential to improve schools.

## evidence-based best practices in Medicine (‘Standards of Care’)

*A standard of care* is a medical treatment guideline...

- a diagnostic and treatment process that a clinician should follow for a certain type of patient, illness or clinical circumstance
- in legal terms, the level at which an ordinary, prudent professional having the same training and experience in good standing in a same or similar community would practice under the same or similar circumstances

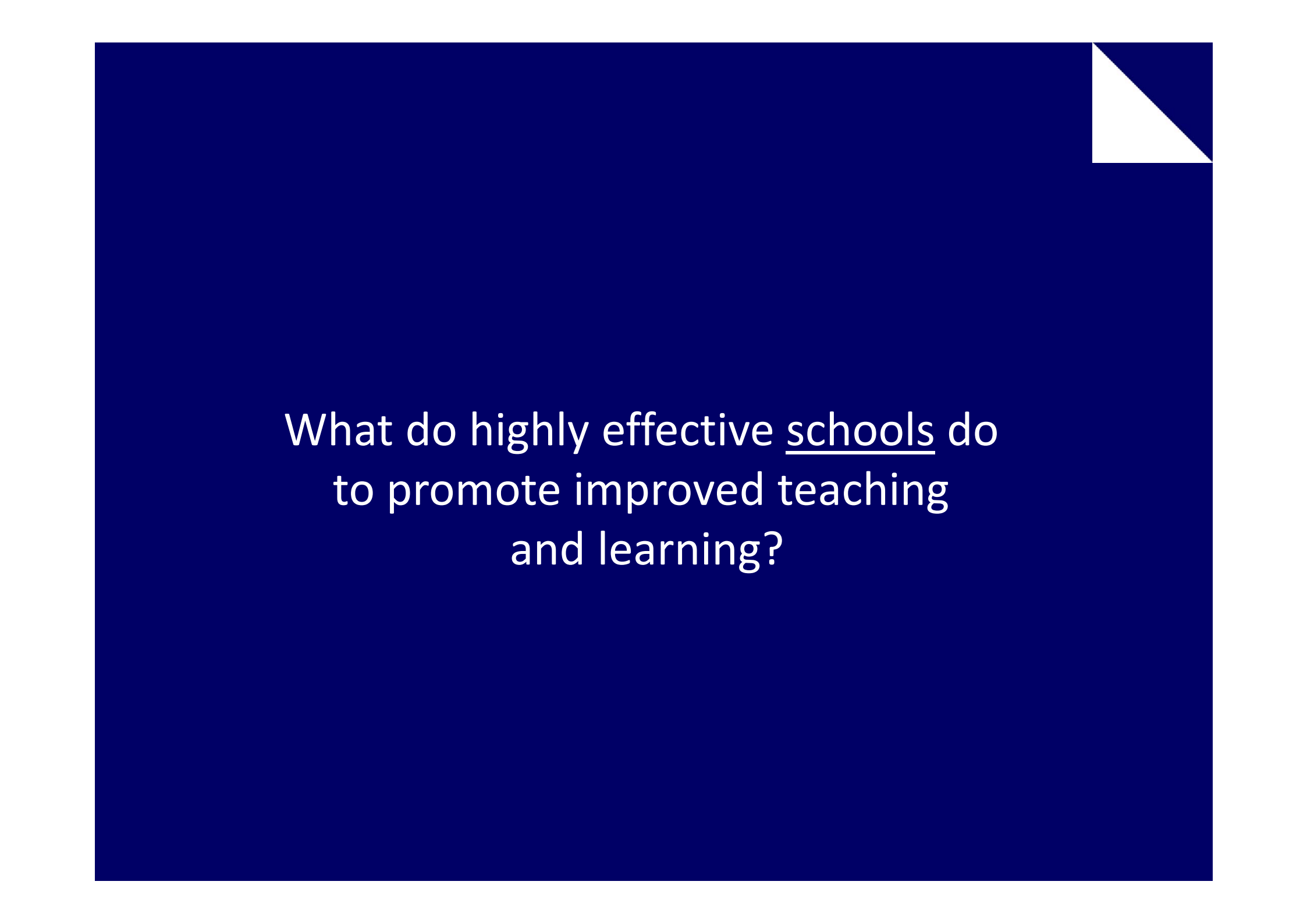




Underpinning a 'profession' is a knowledge base built from research and experience and a professional commitment to the implementation of evidence-based best practice.

The challenge for us as a profession is to continue to identify and promote 'evidence-based best practices'.





What do highly effective schools do  
to promote improved teaching  
and learning?

# An Explicit Improvement Agenda

1



## **An Explicit Improvement Agenda**

- The leadership team has established and is driving a strong improvement agenda for the school.
- This agenda is expressed in terms of measurable improvements in outcomes for students.
- Explicit, clear school-wide targets for improvement have been set, with accompanying timelines.
- There is a strong and optimistic belief on the part of all school staff that further improvement is possible.

# Analysis and Discussion of Data

2



## Analysis and Discussion of Data

- A high priority is given to the school-wide analysis and discussion of data on student outcomes.
- The school has a plan for the systematic collection, analysis and use of student data.
- Data are used throughout the school to monitor progress and to inform decision making.
- A high priority is given to building teachers' and leaders' data literacy skills.
- Teachers routinely use objective data on student achievement to evaluate their teaching effectiveness.

# A Culture that Promotes Learning

3





## A Culture that Promotes Learning

- The school ethos is built around high expectations and a commitment to academic excellence.
- There is a happy, optimistic feel to the school.
- Classrooms are calm but busy and interruptions to teaching time are kept to a minimum.
- Parents, school leaders and teachers work together in a mutually supportive way.

# Targeted Use of School Resources

4



## Targeted Use of School Resources

- The school applies its resources in a targeted manner to meet the learning needs of all students.
- Staff are deployed in ways that make best use of available expertise and interests.
- Discretionary school funds are applied to initiatives aimed at improving outcomes for students.
- The broader community is used as a resource in the development and delivery of learning.

# An Expert Teaching Team

5



## An Expert Teaching Team

- Teachers are experts in the subjects they teach and have very high levels of pedagogical knowledge.
- Teachers and leaders take personal and collective responsibility for improved student learning.
- School leaders place a very high priority on the ongoing professional learning of all staff.
- Teachers collaboratively plan, deliver and review the effectiveness of lessons.

# Systematic Curriculum Delivery

6



## Systematic Curriculum Delivery

- The school has a clearly documented whole school plan for curriculum delivery.
- The plan makes explicit what (and when) teachers should teach and students should learn.
- Considerable attention has been given to ensuring 'vertical' alignment across the years of school.
- Term and unit plans, classroom teaching, and regular assessments are aligned with the curriculum plan.

# Differentiated Teaching and Learning





## Differentiated Teaching and Learning

- Leaders promote differentiated teaching as a strategy for engaging every student in learning.
- The school recognises that some students require significant adjustments to their learning programs.
- Individual learning plans have been developed for at least some students.
- Regular data are used in all classrooms to make judgements about individual learning needs.

# Effective Pedagogical Practices

8



## Effective Pedagogical Practices

- School leaders have accepted personal responsibility for promoting improvements in teaching.
- School leaders have well-known positions on the kinds of teaching that they wish to see occurring.
- All teachers and leaders are committed to identifying and implementing better teaching methods.
- School leaders work with teachers to improve their teaching practices, including by providing feedback.

# School-Community Partnerships



## School-Community Partnerships

- The school uses partnerships strategically to access resources/expertise not available within the school.
- Partnerships address identified student needs and are formed with partners who can assist with those needs.
- The details of partnership programs are carefully planned and partner roles and responsibilities are clear.
- The benefits to all partners have been considered, and plans exist for evaluating the impact of partnerships.

## conclusion

We already have significant professional consensus on the kinds of evidence-based school practices that promote improved teaching and learning.

## nine 'domains' of school improvement

1. an explicit improvement agenda
2. analysis and discussion of data
3. a culture that promotes learning
4. targeted use of school resources
5. an expert teaching team
6. systematic curriculum delivery
7. differentiated teaching and learning
8. effective pedagogical practices
9. school-community partnerships



What does 'improvement' look like  
in each of these domains?



improving practice

**Outstanding**

**High**

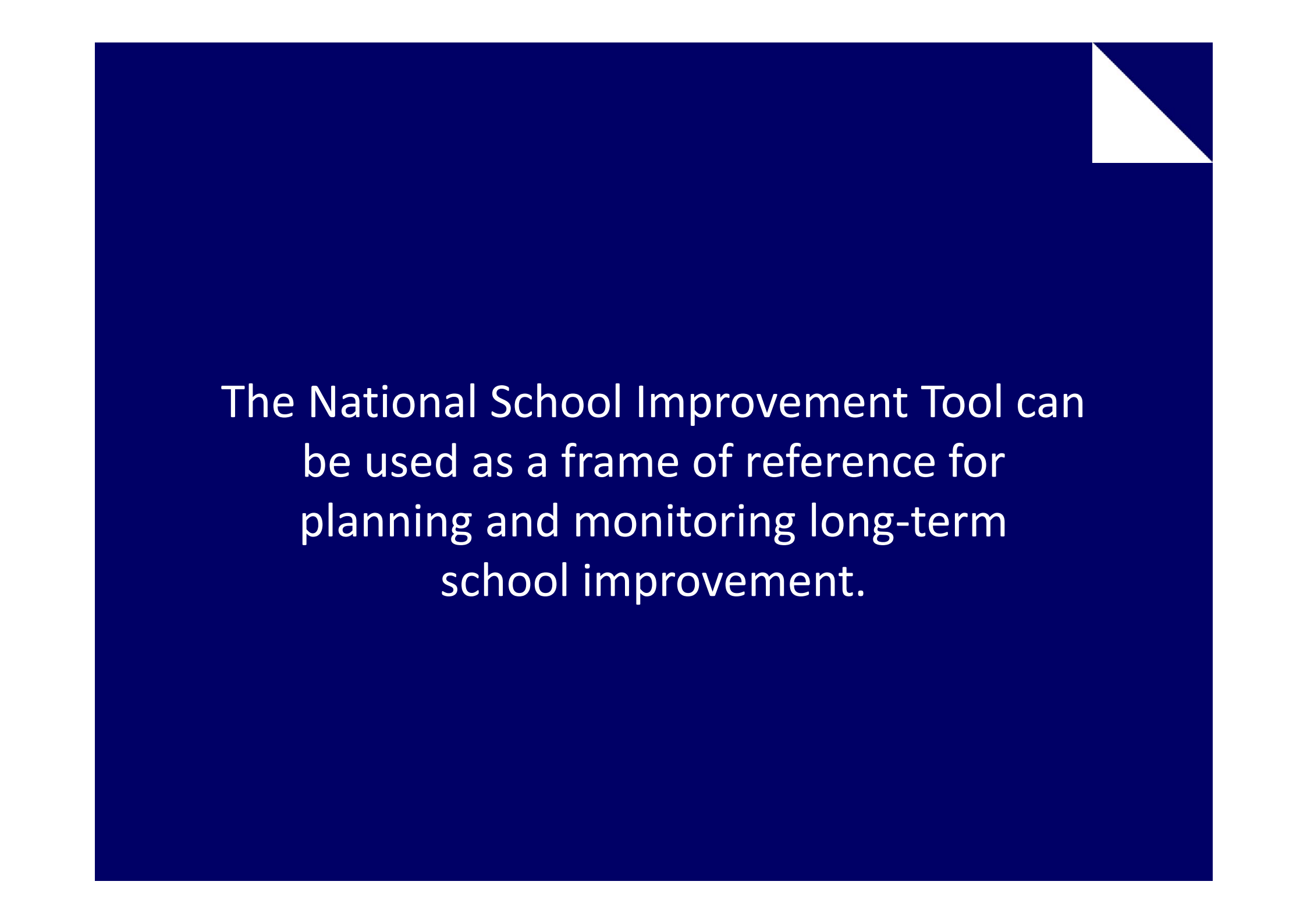
**Medium**

**Low**

The image shows the cover of a document titled "National School Improvement Tool". The cover has a dark blue background with a white border. The title is written in white text. Below the title, it says "Endorsed by Education Ministers" and "7 December 2012". There is a white triangular shape in the top right corner of the cover, resembling a folded page.

# National School Improvement Tool

Endorsed by Education Ministers  
7 December 2012



The National School Improvement Tool can be used as a frame of reference for planning and monitoring long-term school improvement.

## feedback from users


“The Tool provides clear guidance on what is required to improve student performance.”

“Although feedback can be confronting it is useful in providing information and direction for improvement.”

“The power of the learning is in the conversations.”

**What qualifies people to be called  
'leaders' is their capacity to influence  
others to change their behaviour in  
order to achieve important results.**

Grenny *et al.*, 2013  
*Influencer: The New Science of Leading Change*



For information on how the National School Improvement Tool can be used in your school, contact:

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