

# Results Now: How We Can Achieve Unprecedented Improvements in Teaching and Learning

A Book Review by Chris Kingsbery, Pennsylvania

Mike Schmoker, in his new book *Results Now: How We Can Achieve Unprecedented Improvements in Teaching and Learning*, urges educators to confront the brutal facts about American public education. Rather than offering a defeatist attitude about these facts, Schmoker encourages his readers to see them as opportunities to “blow the lid off school attainment, dramatically and swiftly reduce the achievement gap, and enhance the ‘life chances’ of all children, regardless of their social or economic circumstances.” (p. 2)

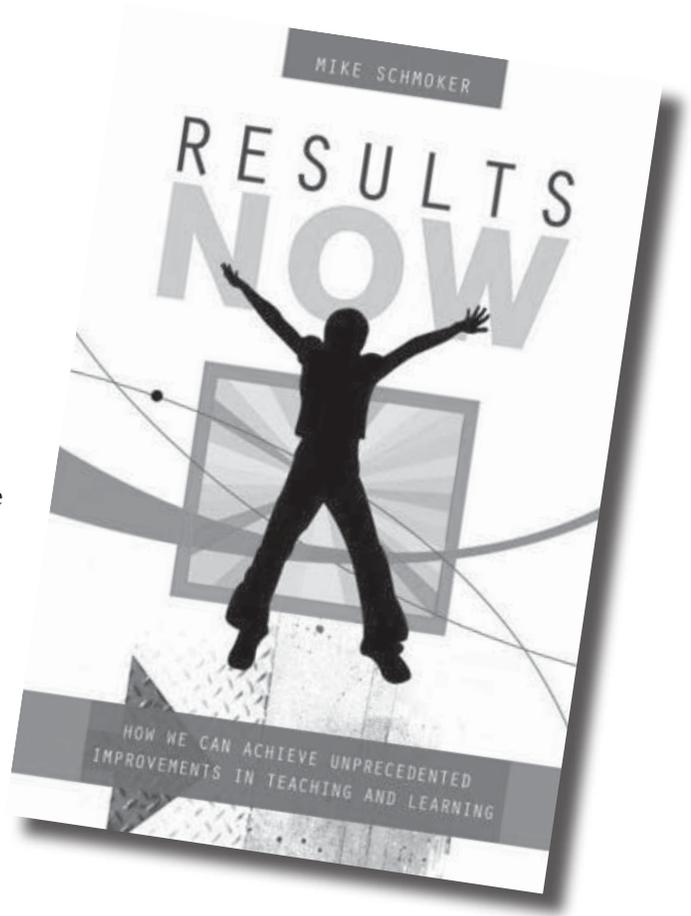
Schmoker’s focus is clear: in order to make any kind of gain the focus must be on instruction and the supervision of instruction. We must “address the monumental gap between common and effective teaching practices, and between typical and effective instructional supervision.” (p. 3)

In this very accessible text, Schmoker sets a tone of urgency for American educators and provides a simple yet elegant framework for using what we already know to transform both adult and student learning in our nation’s schools. The book moves from stating the brutal facts into a rationale for a focus on academic literacy across all content areas. Schmoker speaks to the power of “authentic literacy” and describes it as “teaching critical and argumentative literacy” (p. 165) through authentic experiences. His advocacy is strong and convincing.

His final chapter focuses on leading a professional learning community. This focus on clear leadership to sustain this learning environment was refreshing to read, as this seems to be the area where many such initiatives falter. He considers not only building-level leadership, but the role of the central office and state in promoting professional learning and accountability for that learning in our nation’s schools. His final conclusion is a call to action for “teachers and school leaders at the state

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or province, district and school levels to immediately and relentlessly begin to share, examine, and engage in dialogue about [the reality of schooling



in America] on every occasion—until our actions and commitments begin to erase the awful inertia of past decades.” (p. 164)

This book would be a useful text to use with school leaders to focus their improvement efforts. The language and message are simple yet compelling. The “solutions” offered are achievable and the results are what we are looking for. This is not a cookie-cutter formula for school improvement; it is a conversation starter that raises the sense of urgency we all need to share around the very real gap between what we know about instruction and supervision and what we commonly see in our schools. ■

Results Now: How We Can Achieve Unprecedented Improvements in Teaching and Learning, by Mike Schmoker, ASCD, 2006  
[www.ascd.org/books](http://www.ascd.org/books)

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