Framing on Your Feet:

Using the Core Story to Answer Frequently-Asked Questions

The vast majority of questions and comments that communicators hear from the public and policymakers can be predicted by the research-based **"swamp"** of cultural models on that issue.

If you can predict, you can prepare.

A strategic framer prepares by anticipating the questions that will emerge from the swamp; considering the 'traps' that are lurking in a possible response; and then, choosing a well-framed response with the potential to build a more productive way of thinking about the issue. The essential strategy here is to think about how to turn unproductive frames embedded in questions into opportunities to advance a more effective message.

The sample question-and-answer sequences here show this tactical thought process in action. The exemplars come from questions and issues raised by stakeholder groups, but the models aren't intended to simply script "the right answers" to questions you might be asked. Rather, this is a teaching tool, offering illustrations of how to talk more effectively about specific sub-topics in education by applying the research-based insights of the Core Story of Education. While communicators are welcome to use the recommended responses, we also encourage you to use the analysis of 'false start' and 'well-framed' answers to build your capacity to apply these principles fluidly throughout your communications practice.

ASSESSMENT

"There is already too much emphasis on assessment in our schools. We don't need more testing - we need more teaching! Why don't we just get rid of all these tests and let teachers teach?"

ANSWER

The False Start Answer

Many people agree with a desire to move schools away from the overuse of standardized tests, and we all agree that we need to let good teachers do their jobs. But we shouldn't forget the important role that standardized achievement data has played in creating better schools. It lets us see where we have achievement gaps between whites and minorities or other disadvantaged students, and where we have more work to do to make our schools more fair and equitable. Let's also remember that assessment is about more than standardized tests. There are many different kinds of assessment, such as portfolios, performance assessments, and observation.

The Reframed Answer

We need the talents and contributions of all learners to build a strong future for our community. Our schools need to work to develop the potential of all students, and we can do that work better with a rich assessment system. When you drive, you don't keep an eye on things by consulting only the speedometer but ignoring the mirrors and other gauges. In a similar way, effective assessment doesn't look to only one measure of learning. Instead, it offers educators a whole set of indicators, just as drivers use a whole range of information from the dashboard, windows, and mirrors as they go along. In education as in a car, a range of indicators lets us know what is working, what needs to be checked, what needs immediate attention. With all that information, we can better support the learning of all children.

ANALYSIS

The False Start Answer

- By repeating the phrase *standardized tests* several times, the communicator only invokes and strengthens public thinking that 'Assessment = Testing." This makes it harder for the public to appreciate the important role that formative assessment and direct assessment plays in instruction.

- Framing equity issues in terms of the *achievement gap* or *fairness between groups* often invokes zero-sum, us-versus-them thinking. Also, without careful, proactive framing of why some groups are performing less well than others, the public defaults to deficit thinking about those groups.

- Simply listing different kinds of assessment isn't enough to shift the deeply ingrained assumption that "assessment = testing."

The Reframed Answer

- This response begins with the Value *Human Potential*, which builds public support for authentic approaches to assessment as well as more attention to equity in education.

- The use of the Explanatory Metaphor *Dashboard* focuses on the need for multiple methods of assessment, while it avoids directly addressing the distracting issue of standardized testing. It also gets the ultimate purpose of assessment into the frame, channeling attention to the use of data to guide better educational decision-making.

"I understand that standardized tests aren't perfect, but let's face it, they are better than nothing. Schools have to use something that is feasible and affordable. Is there a practical alternative to "fill in the bubble" tests?"

The False Start Answer

Although they may appear low in costs, today's testing programs are penny-wise but pound-foolish. They are aimed at the lowest common denominator of basic knowledge, when what we really need to know more about is student ability to problem-solve and analyze complex information. For test results to be useful to teachers, we need tests that show us how students think, not just what they know.

What we do is the opposite of what we see in the testing programs of high-performing countries. Instead of doing what Finland and Japan do, which works, here in the US we have a jumble of poorly designed tests that are different state by state. We're completely unable to measure the most important learning goals. The data we get back is not useful to teachers' efforts to understand where students are falling behind and what could be done to push them to learn more.

Current investments, which still total less than half of 1% of overall per-pupil spending, could support much higher-quality assessments, including performance tasks that tap critical thinking and problem solving skills, if they were refocused to do so. We should reallocate resources to develop a coherent system that not only provides assessments of higher-order skills, but also offers formative and interim results to guide data-driven instruction.

The Reframed Answer

This issue strikes me as one that calls for us to tap into that great well of American ingenuity to come up with a clever solution. Here's the real problem. Today's testing programs are so narrowly defined that they are like using only our speedometer to figure out how well your car is performing. We need to have many different kinds of information available to stay on course – it's risky to drive without checking mirrors, or to ignore problems that we find out about through those 'service needed' warning lights. In the same way, we need to think about the whole dashboard of measurements we can use to support much more efficient progress in schools. The tests we have now are generally not suited to measuring the most important learning goals. For one thing, we need to include realistic performance tasks that tap the critical thinking and problem solving skills that are essential for the modern economy. And we need to align each gauge with the goals we set for our progress.

In one way of analyzing education budgets, we spend less than half a penny of each education dollar on assessment. It probably wouldn't be a bad idea to spend a little more, since it's so important to know how students are progressing. But we could also get more bang for our buck. A wise use of resources would be to develop a much more coherent system that lets us see how deeply students are learning. If we think about information as an ingredient, we want to know whether students can cook with it – do they have to follow a recipe, or can they improvise and figure out new ways of using it? There are great tests out there, already designed, that get at this kind of thing – but we need to get to work on implementing them in a step-by-step fashion across the country.

The False Start Answer

- Advocating for more advanced skills without priming the public with a forward-looking Value (such as *Progress or Future Preparation*) is likely to call up "back to basics" thinking and undermine support for reforms based on updated approaches to teaching and learning.

- Justifying arguments based on international comparisons can backfire with the public. FrameWorks' research suggests that ordinary Americans rationalize such data away by appealing to stereotyped notions of what makes other countries "different," missing the point about alternative ways of organizing a system.

The Reframed Answer

- Opens with the Value of *Ingenuity*, which builds public support for innovation and heads off the public's tendency to slip into *Fatalism*.

- Uses the Explanatory Metaphor *Dashboard* to explain the underlying problem with over-relying on a single method of assessment, and offers a critique of the existing system without feeding into a *Crisis* frame.

- Uses Social Math to put the assessment budget statistic in perspective, comparing ½ of 1% to an everyday unit of measurement.

- The vivid critique of the existing state of affairs is a *Crisis* frame, which contributes to the public perception that the education system is "broken beyond repair." This frame saps public will for meaningful change.

- The concluding paragraph is filled with education and policy jargon that bears little meaning to the public.

- Avoids education policy jargon, and repurposes the reclaimed communications real estate to build a productive understanding of what deeper learning means, and how it might be assessed.

- Ends on a note of *Pragmatism*: Solutions exist, we just need to get down to the hard work of putting them in motion. No need to mention that some of these solutions might be Finnish!

"Other professions get raises based on performance, but teacher pay just goes up each year, no matter whether they're doing a good job or not. Why can't we just use student test scores to offer raises, bonuses, or other merit-based pay for teachers?"

The False Start Answer

Across the country, dedicated teachers work long hours, after school and on weekends, without additional compensation. They reach into their own pocketbooks to pay for school supplies and make sure that there are a few snacks handy in their desk when kids come to school too hungry to pay attention.

There's no test that can measure this kind of compassion and caring. So I get very uncomfortable when we start to define what makes a good teacher through this very narrow lens of student test scores.

Not only that, but making tests carry such high stakes has some negative effects. In places where districts have experimented with linking test scores to educator pay, we have seen a very troubling trend of "teaching to the test," and also, we have started to uncover widespread cheating. These issues seem to happen especially in schools that serve students in poverty or students of color.

Instead of putting so much misguided effort into figuring out which teachers deserve a raise, we need to give all teachers a raise. Low teacher pay comes at a high cost for schools and kids, who lose good teachers to better-paying professions. Some 20 percent of new public school teachers leave the profession by the end of the first year, and almost half leave within five years. Low pay is a big part of this teacher turnover problem.

The Reframed Answer

The issue you raise is really about how to ensure that there's effective instruction happening in classrooms across the country. To move our country forward, we need to do a better job of maximizing our educational resources. There's plenty we can do to get all the sections of the "orchestra" that is education in tune – we should think about the role that school boards, test-makers, curriculum designers, and others play in student and teacher performance.

But I agree that we should take on the challenge of figuring out how to measure how well the teacher section is playing, and then communicate those results to the other sections. The way to do this is to use multiple ways of assessing their performance - in the same way we use the many gauges on a dashboard to monitor how things are going when we drive, not to mention the windows and the mirrors. Likewise, we must do a better job of using some kinds of data to provide feedback to individual teachers, and others for comparing teachers across schools, schools districts and states.

When it comes to linking student test scores to teacher evaluations, the idea of the dashboard offers us another lesson. It's important to use any data collection tool in the way it was intended. The instruments we use to look at what teachers are doing shouldn't be the same ones we should be using to look at student learning. You don't look at the odometer to tell how much gas is in the tank! In evaluating teachers, we need to focus on practical solutions that recognize the complexity of the situation.

The False Start Answer

- By falling into the 'Caring Teacher Trap,' this answer is likely to focus the public on reforms that boil down to "fire the teachers who don't care and get some who do."

- By focusing the answer entirely on teachers, this answer is likely to reinforce the public's assumption that *"teachers are the system."* When thinking with this model, only a very narrow set of education reforms are "easy to think," – among them, teacher merit pay.

- The criticism of the use of student test scores is framed in such a way that contributes to the public perception that advocates for teacher working conditions are "just obstructionists" and are protecting self-interested teachers.

The Reframed Answer

- Uses the "bridge and pivot" technique to shift the discourse away from the unproductive frame embedded in the question, and back toward the Core Story.

- Uses the Values *Progress* and *Pragmatism* to build the understanding that "disagreeing" is not "obstructing," – establishing the communicator as looking for reasonable solutions.

- Uses the Explanatory Metaphor *Orchestra* to establish teachers as one part of the larger education system.

- Uses the Explanatory Metaphor *Dashboard* to quickly establish the expert view on assessment validity.

EQUITY/DISPARITIES

QUESTION

"I notice that your new report takes on the issue of equity in education – pointing out the stark disparities in outcomes between African American males and white males. And, this seems to be an issue getting more and more attention from policymakers. Could you talk about what causes this problem, and how to fix it? "

ANSWER

The False Start Answer

Recognizing that increasing the number of Americans with college credentials is a necessity for America to be globally competitive in the 21st century, we've set a national goal to become a global leader in post-secondary attainment by 2020. At the same time, recent studies show only 47% of Black males graduate from high school—far short of what we need for our nation to stay ahead of countries that are adding to their ranks of highly educated workers. But this isn't just an economic issue; it's a moral issue. It is simply unconscionable to continue to allow the systemic disparities that we see by race, social class, or zip code. These outcomes aren't about the abilities of Black males – they are influenced more by the social policies and practices that WE put in place to distribute educational opportunities and resources. We are long past due for a deliberate, intense focus on redistributing educational justice. We must transform the system from the ground up to disrupt the trajectory for Black males.

The Reframed Answer

Recognizing that increasing the number of Americans with college credentials is a necessity for America to have a workforce ready for the complex, knowledge economy of the future, we've set a national goal to dramatically increase Americans' post-secondary training. At the same time, when we take a level-headed look at what needs improvement in our education system, it's clear that we have some work to do when it comes to ensuring quality across the board. For our communities to have the talents, skills, and potential of Black males available to our communities, we need to take practical steps to improve their school experiences and outcomes. Nationwide, only 47% of Black males graduate from high school—far short of the trajectory and post-secondary credentials needed for our nation's progress toward an agile, adaptable workforce. We can't afford to continue with a system in which race, social class, or zip code determines the quality of the public school American children attend. We need an intense, common-sense plan for redirecting and remodeling the educational trajectory for Black males.

ANALYSIS

The False Start Answer

- Justifies attention to disparities by evoking a *Global Competition* frame. This frame brings with it an overall narrative that America's best days are behind her – a frame that calls up a backwards-facing orientation that's hostile to forward-facing reforms.

- Introduces a stark statistic about a stigmatized group without strong cues that direct people to interpret it as evidence to "fix the conditions." So, the public is likely to think there's a need to "fix the people."

- Strays into Rhetorical Tone, which resonates with "the choir" but alienates bystander publics.

- Ends with a call for major restructuring. Framing reform as the need for sweeping changes is likely to backfire with the public, who will reason that the problem is too big to fix.

The Reframed Answer

- Starts the case with an appeal to *Workforce Preparation*, which builds measurable support for education reform without the unproductive frame effects of *Global Competition*.

- Appeals to the Value *Human Potential for Common Good* before introducing facts or arguments about race equity, to remind the public why we all have a stake in this issue.

- Maintains Reasonable Tone throughout, which establishes the communication as a message for "everyone," not just those who are already aligned with the issue.

- Evokes *Pragmatism* through words such as 'level-headed' and 'practical.' This helps to de-polarize the issue of race.

- This reframed answer would be even stronger if it concluded with the frame element of Solutions – highlighting a promising, feasible policy or program.

"Approaches like 'student-centered learning' and 'personalized learning' sound nice, but let's face it, aren't many kids so far behind that they would benefit more from a more regimented approach that focuses squarely on narrowing the achievement gap?"

ANSWER

The False Start Answer

The racial disparities in our nation's education system are shocking. Pick your state, pick your statistic - in South Los Angeles, only four percent of students graduate from college; in Baltimore, less than 10% of black males are reading on grade level. So - I am very glad you raised this critical issue. The stark reality is that the odds are stacked against our students.

One of the ways that we stack the odds against urban students is in the draconian approach many schools take to teaching them. In a myopic effort to raise test scores, they narrow the curriculum, strip away the arts and recess, and alienate students by adopting harsh, punitive disciplinary codes. All of these things communicate lower expectations for students. And then, we wonder why they don't perform well.

In contrast, urban schools that put students at the center of their learning, that offer them not just the basics but "the new basics," teachers are seeing wonderful results. They treat students as leaders – and the students live up to the expectations.

The Reframed Answer

In a complex, modern society, we have many roles to fill and need a diverse set of skills and talents available. When we approach education in a one-size-fits-all fashion, some children don't get learning opportunities that fit. On the other hand, when we set up schools so that we can identify and build on children's interests, we maximize the human potential that is within our community.

Right now, our uneven education system runs the risk of losing this potential. If we think of learning opportunities as "charging stations" for children's potential, we can see that some communities offer many ways to charge up - energizing schools, lots of interesting extracurricular activities to plug into, safe and inviting places to play and explore. In other communities, it's harder to find a place to charge up for learning. I think that a student-centered approach to learning is all the more important in areas where the network of learning opportunities is patchy. Research shows that student-centered approaches, such as project-based learning, engage kids deeply and allow teachers to tailor learning to the different skill levels that may be present in a diverse class.

ANALYSIS

The False Start Answer

- By spending more time on the problem than on the Solution, this response misses an opportunity to expand on the alternative approach the communicator wants to advance.

- Rhetorical, defensive Tone limits the appeal to those who are already aligned with the issue; it's unlikely to draw in bystander publics.

- In failing to specify a process by which inequities arise, the communication leaves the public to fill in individual-level explanations. They're likely to blame inequities on unmotivated students, inattentive parents, or inadequate teachers – and give little thought to policy-level drivers or socioeconomic factors.

The Reframed Answer

- Starts the case with an appeal to the Value *Human Potential for Common Good*, which reminds the public that we all have a stake in the outcomes in urban communities.

- Points to the availability of learning opportunities as the mechanism that drives learning outcomes – using the Explanatory Metaphor *Charging Stations* to make this abstract concept concrete and "sticky."

- Maintains a Reasonable Tone throughout, fostering a sense that the interaction is about civic dialogue and problem solving – not just "politics as usual."

"What should be done to meet the needs of students whose first language isn't English?"

The False Start Answer

Access to bilingual education is critical to many language-minority children, with Latinos making up one of the largest groups of English learners. Conclusions from five separate meta- analyses confirm that children who receive instruction in their native language have higher rates of academic achievement, even when the markers of achievement are in English, compared to their peers who receive less instruction in their native language. Longitudinal research demonstrates the long-term benefits of instruction in a child's native language and the significant costs associated with immersion in English language instruction. This research demonstrates that quality bilingual programs can close academic achievement gaps between language minority and majority children.

The Reframed Answer

Opportunities to learn are like charging stations - our schools, our libraries, and interactions with responsive adults are all places to plug into learning. All children need many chances to charge up for learning, but for children whose first language is a language other than English, it can be harder to find places where they can connect. Research shows that when children have chances to connect to school instruction in their native language, they have higher rates of academic achievement, even when we evaluate them in English.

There's a great deal of evidence from a very large body of rock-solid research – it all points to native-language instruction as an effective way to power up the learning of language minorities. High-quality bilingual instruction programs can link up English learners with the charging opportunities we need them to have to participate in and contribute to our communities and our workforce.

The False Start Answer

- Establishes the issue as "about" Latinos – rather than as one with implications for us all.
- Use of technical language (meta-analyses) frames the topic as one for experts to consider – leaving the public out of the communication.
- Falls into the *Missing Process Trap* by failing to explain how and why native language instruction is more effective than alternatives.

The Reframed Answer

- Establishes the topic as "about" the most effective approaches to learning, which invites a broader swath of the public to consider the issue.
- Specifies how language influences learning – using the Explanatory Metaphor *Charging Stations* to point out the need to for students to "connect" to learning.
- Closes on a collective benefit by using the Value *Workforce Preparation*.

SKILLS & LEARNING

QUESTION

"There is a lot of attention these days to hands-on learning and new ideas about teaching, but we also hear from parents, employers and university professors that students can't do basic math without a calculator. Shouldn't we focus on creating a firm foundation of basic skills in math before we spend time and money on these other approaches?"

ANSWER

The False Start Answer

There is no doubt that math skills are essential, and they are, in fact, embedded across the STEM disciplines. You can't be an engineer without a strong grasp of math. But the more important thing to think about when it comes to math is that we are aiming far too low. If we think of math as just getting kids ready to balance their checkbook, we're missing the point. Let's face it – these days, with online banking, checkbooks balance themselves. Instead, there must be a greater emphasis on higher math. We need to insist on algebra for each and every high school student. That's right: each and every student, regardless of whether they think math is their "thing" or not. We can accomplish this by shifting curriculum in some simple ways – for instance, spending a lot more time on fractions, even in kindergarten.

The Reframed Answer

As we set out to improve learning, our most important goal should be to create agile, adaptable problem-solvers capable of taking on the challenges and opportunities of the future. Preparing for the surprises ahead will require adding new content to the traditional curriculum, and updating the ways we teach science, technology, engineering and mathematics — what curriculum experts call STEM for short. The interwoven knowledge and skills of STEM subjects are all vitally needed in the 21st century. As a nation, we simply can't afford to let any schools remain stuck in outdated ways of teaching these critically important skills. Engineers and scientists don't merely have jobs – they create jobs. We can make a big difference in developing more engineers and scientists by updating the way we teach. One of the most important shifts is to begin to think about math skills as working much like strands of a rope. Each strand must be strong for the rope to be strong and useful. So yes, the computation strand must be strong, but one of the best ways to strengthen it is to have students apply straightforward math procedures to complex or open-ended problems. Teaching this way strengthens the problem-solving strand at the same time. Weaving these skills together is a way to make mathematics appealing, and it creates the ability to think through challenging problems, both inside and outside of the classroom.

ANALYSIS

The False Start Answer

- By restating the idea that mathematics acts as a gatekeeper to the "other" STEM disciplines, this response reinforces the unproductive public perception that *Engineering Is Specialized* and therefore suited only for students with particular talents or gifts.

- By trying to dislodge *Back to Basics* thinking through colorful argumentation, this response strays into Rhetorical Tone and thus runs the risk of sending the meta-message that this is a politicized or partisan issue – and as a result, is likely to fail to engage 'bystander publics.'

- The response pivots to a concrete Solution, but the "simple" suggested step feels oddly mismatched with the scale of the problem that has been established.

The Reframed Answer

- A strong dose of *Future Preparation*, with a focus on the innovation needed for tomorrow, acts as a reframing antidote to the *Back to Basics* thinking evident in the original question.

- The use of the Explanatory Metaphor *Weaving Skills Ropes* helps to establish the need for "the new basics" without using that term, which is likely to call up *Back to Basics* thinking through association. Instead, the metaphor helps to establish the need for both procedural and conceptual skills in math, explaining their mutually reinforcing nature in an accessible, "sticky" way.

"The latest international test scores are utterly depressing; clearly, America is falling behind. What do we need to do to get back on track in education?"

ANSWER

The False Start Answer

I've heard some say that these scores are a wake-up call – but I say, it's an alarm that we've been hitting the snooze button on for years. In the meantime, other countries have been outworking us. The Chinese are running a great education system; so is Hong Kong. So let's wake up, and see what we can learn from these systems. They've spent a lot of time investing in the preparation and support of teachers. They create the tools and conditions that teachers need to teach, and they have mutual respect and accountability. Finally, they don't expect teachers do to it alone. Kids have a role in terms of education, parents have a role in terms of education, teachers have a role in terms of education, and policymakers do as well. This work has to get done collaboratively. School systems by and large do not work collaboratively. We have to create a culture where teachers and administrators work together to improve.

The Reframed Answer

Business leaders and educators agree that we need to do better, because the workforce of the future is going to require more advanced skills like problem-solving, critical thinking, cooperation and team-building. When we talk about 21st century skills or deeper learning, these are the types of skills we mean. So how can we ensure that the next generation of American innovators develops the skills it will need for the modern economy? Science tells us that the process by which skills develop is a lot like weaving a rope. Skill ropes are made of cognitive, social and emotional strands. A skills rope needs each strand to be strong and woven tightly together so they can support each other. Effective schools are already teaching in ways that allow students to develop thinking skills and people skills in tandem - they've adopted research-based teaching methods that encourage questioning, engage learners in challenging tasks, and give students chances to work in teams. These types of teaching approaches build communication and teamwork skills while working on rigorous content, and also foster student motivation, so the cognitive, social, and emotional all develop together. We know it works, and it simply makes sense to expand these effective practices to all of our schools.

ANALYSIS

The False Start Answer

- Plays into the *Crisis* frame embedded in the question – which can depress public engagement in an issue.

- Fails to dislodge the *Tangible Triad* model, in which educational outcomes are entirely due to the actions of students, teachers, and parents.

- Appeals to the Value *Collaboration*, which FrameWorks research revealed does not build public will for improving teacher supports.

The Reframed Answer

- Frames the issue as serious and worthy of attention – but maintains a positive, optimistic tone that invites the public to entertain the possibility of meaningful change.

- Focuses on "how," not "who." By using an Explanatory Metaphor to frame the issue in terms of a process –that of skills acquisition – this response avoids the blame game and moves toward a debate worth having.

- Closes with a strong dose of Pragmatism, which can counter the sense of fatalism that emerges with a *Global Competition* frame.

SPACE & TIME

"It seems that given all the competing demands on our public budgets these days, something has to go. Why shouldn't we cut 'nice extras' such as sports, arts, or after-school programs?"

ANSWER

The False Start Answer

It's important for children to get a well-rounded education that includes athletics and the arts – different children will gravitate toward different sports or creative pursuits, but they are an important part of healthy development. Many families invest in additional instruction in a broad array of subjects, signing their children up for violin or drum lessons, or football or ballet. They make sure that their children get personalized support outside of school. However, children in communities of poverty are left on the sidelines – these private extra-curriculars just aren't in the budget for too many families. This only widens the gaps in opportunity and achievement that threaten the nation's future. Low-income youth need more opportunities to learn. And, it's also important to keep in mind that many of these children come from communities with high rates of crime and violence. After-school and out-of-school programs can ensure that they are safe in the idle, at-risk hours after school and during the long summer months.

The Reframed Answer

Our state needs to develop the skills and interests of all children, so that their talents are available to our communities in the years ahead. Children need access to lots of "pollination points" where they can engage their minds and grow their interests. Additional instruction in a broad array of subjects and personalized support outside of school is sometimes available via private, tuition-based providers, but leaving each family to fend for themselves isn't a practical solution for the shared challenge of ensuring that all children have the learning opportunities that are essential for healthy social, emotional, and physical development. Some communities lack the libraries, science centers and recreation spaces that provide chances to be pollinated by ideas and experiences. Expanding these points in the after-school hours and in summers allows learning to take hold and ensures that kids get the stimulation they need from their communities.

ANALYSIS

The False Start Answer

- This response falls into the *Individual Gain* trap, focusing on the benefits for individual children and the efforts of selected families to secure educational opportunities for private gain.

- By framing differential access as a "gap," this response could cue *Zero Sum Thinking*, in which the public reasons that more for low-income youth means less for affluent families.

- Positioning afterschool programs as a way to keep disadvantaged kids away from crime obscures the fact that informal learning is essential for all children's healthy development. It also limits the discussion to safety concerns, obscuring a focus on quality.

The Reframed Answer

- Opening with the tested Value *Human Potential* fills in an essential point in an advocacy narrative: why this issue matters to us all and what is at stake for society.

- Using the Explanatory Metaphor *Pollination Points* establishes informal learning as an essential part of an effective education system, not merely a "nice extra." This helps to make a strong case against cutting support for informal learning.

- Focusing on the shared benefits of essential public institutions - such as libraries and recreation centers – establishes informal learning as a public issue.

"I'm skeptical of this proposal to add 300 hours to the school year. Kids need time to just be kids. Why should we get rid of summer break?"

The False Start Answer

The simple fact is: we need to radically redesign our school calendar in order to get radically different outcomes. Summer break is a holdover from a time when families worked in agriculture and kids were needed to help on the farm. That's just not the world we're living in any more.

To prepare students for college or a middle-class job in today's economy, the conventional basics are not enough. Students need to know how to solve complex problems, work independently and in teams, and how to think critically. Teaching these skills takes more time and a more personalized approach than most schools offer today. With more time in the school calendar, schools can offer a well-rounded curriculum, more individualized support for students, and more time for teachers to hone their craft.

For high-poverty schools, more time means more learning opportunities for children to succeed in school and in life. This new direction will allow for the intensive turnaround models that will help us close our achievement gap.

The Reframed Answer

To move forward in education, we need to update our thinking about where and when students gain the important skills our communities need them to have in the future.

One smart step we can take is to start thinking of learning as a process that's something like pollination - with ideas and experiences flowing into and out of schools. Pollination point schools let students bring in influences from the communities that surround them, and also let them take what they are learning in school out into their communities to learn and contribute. This grows students' motivation and engages them fully in their learning.

The adjusted calendar we're proposing allows for this cross-pollination to take place more effectively. The longer day lets us build in longer chunks of class time, so students can explore a topic more deeply, rather than moving from subject to subject every 40 minutes. This is a shift, but I think that we've seen that this is an area of education that is due for a renovation.

The False Start Answer

- By opening with the need for "radical change," this response falls into the Revolution Trap. It's likely to cue the strongly nostalgic views that make Americans resistant to changing the education system.

- Mentioning "the basics," even to go beyond them, is likely to backfire.

- This response frames the benefits of "more time" as accruing to individual students or certain groups. As a result, the public is more likely to focus on their own personal stake in the issue and less likely to consider the broader implications for society.

The Reframed Answer

- Opening with an appeal to the forward-looking Value of *Progress* can serve as an antidote to the nostalgic, It *Worked for Me* pattern of public thinking.

- It's important to use the Explanatory Metaphor *Pollination Points* to show how more time can be a positive influence on learning, as otherwise, the public is likely to assume that more time in school simply drains children's *Attention Batteries*.

- Closes with the Explanatory Metaphor *Remodeling*, which frames reform as substantial, but not scary.

STRUCTURES OF EDUCATION

"Given how poorly our public schools educate our children, why shouldn't we turn to other options that give parents more choices and offer more students a chance to get a great education?"

ANSWER

The False Start Answer

First, with all due respect, allow me to disagree with the premise of your question. While the overall rankings of the US versus other developed nations gets a lot of media attention, and it probably sells a lot of papers to say we're 47th in the world, the averages are misleading. If you were to look only at US public schools that have very low rates of poverty, we would rank 1st in science literacy, 1st in reading, and 5th in math. That tells me that we have a great system for some of our children – and a deeply inadequate system for low-income children. It also tells me that test scores tell you a lot more about a child's socioeconomic status than it does about the quality of their schooling per se.

The "misleading statistics" issue also comes into play when we think about charter schools. It's true that a few stellar performers have found unique ways to drive high levels of student achievement, but researchers have found that on average, charter schools do no better than traditional public schools, and many fare even worse. So rather than chasing unproven alternatives, which privatize our system - and in many cases, are just cash cows for big business types - I think we should reinvest in the school system that made this country great in the first place.

The Reframed Answer

In tackling the challenges that we face in creating an education system that meets our nation's needs, our first and most important goal has to be to ensure opportunity for all. The question then becomes – what's the most practical and feasible way to do that?

I think the most common sense approach is to focus on improving our system of neighborhood schools. Let me give you an analogy. Our education system is like a valuable house that's in need of some updates. When you remodel a house, you do more than just repaint it: you make substantial changes, keeping the previous shape of the house, but updating old parts, and making the house more modern, and efficient.

In any remodeling job, you set priorities. One of the things that should be at the top of the list is making sure that we target our resources to the places that need the most help – school districts that are struggling – so that all American families, no matter where they live, have access to a strong public education. To make sure that our education system enables our society to thrive in today's world, we all need to roll up our sleeves, take a general contractor's mindset, and turn to remodeling our educational system.

ANALYSIS

The False Start Answer

- By failing to specify *how* socioeconomic status influences educational outcomes, this response leaves the public to "fill in the blanks." People are likely to arrive at deficit-laden assumptions about the poor.

- Questioning the motivations of other reformers sends the message that this interaction is just "politics as usual." This is likely to further entrench people in their existing views, rather than opening up the possibility of incorporating new information.

- Harkening to the past can cue the public's sense of *Nostalgia*, which quickly leads to *Back to Basics* thinking and limits consideration of meaningful reforms.

The Reframed Answer

- Affirms one of the Values implicit in the speaker's question – *Opportunity for All* – but then pivots away from a "choice" frame and toward a "reinvestment" frame through the use of the Explanatory Metaphor *Remodeling*.

- Cues for *Pragmatism* ("practical and feasible") reinforce the sense that this is civic dialogue rather than an ideological debate.

What are the Common Core State Standards? Why do we need them?

The False Start Answer

According to the Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce, 62% of new jobs available in 2018 will require some postsecondary education. But our kids are not graduating high school with the skills they need to succeed in college and without a dramatic change of course, U.S. employers will be unable to fill 3 million of these positions. This has huge implications for our ability to remain competitive in the global market. Those jobs aren't going to stay empty. They're going to go overseas.

In order to ensure American kids are graduating college and career ready – we need to raise the bar substantially. The Common Core State Standards set higher expectations, but they also focus in on what really matters. These standards are fewer, higher, and deeper than what we had before. They spell out the foundational knowledge and skills for students in each grade, in the fundamentals: reading and math.

The fact that over 40 states have adopted them means we now have the same standards across the country, for the very first time. One of the travesties of No Child Left Behind was seeing some states water down their standards so that they wouldn't look bad on the tests. With shared standards, we'll be better able to see how schools are stacking up.

The Reframed Answer

Preparing our society for the world of tomorrow means equipping the next generation with the knowledge and skills today that are needed in the modern workforce. To do that, we need to update our goals for learning – and that's really all Common Core Standards are. They are a set of learning goals that work step-by-step, grade-by-grade, toward what modern careers and colleges expect, so that when students graduate, they are ready for college, ready for work – ready for life.

So what does it mean to be "ready?" In our fast-changing world, readiness involves having a very flexible kind of skill set – like a rope that can be used in many contexts. We need workers who can adapt to new situations and apply what they know to unforeseen problems. By making it a priority that students are able to weave together knowledge from different content areas, and problem-solving skills, and the ability to communicate and work in teams, we're asking educators to shift their approach to teaching. We will be putting more emphasis on giving students chances to integrate what they learn in various subjects. I'm excited to see this kind of excellent teaching become more and more common – I think that this approach is going to build the next generation of American innovation.

The False Start Answer

- The vivid critique of the existing state of affairs invokes a Crisis frame, which contributes to the public perception that the education system is "broken beyond repair." This frame can sap public will for meaningful change.

- Phrases such as "raise the bar" and "higher expectations" cue the thinking that success in education is a matter of individual willpower – which makes it harder for the public to appreciate the need for systemic investments and reform.

- Talk of "foundational knowledge" and un-framed emphasis on reading and math is likely to trigger "back to basics" thinking – which leads quickly to a backwards-facing view of education reform at odds with policies that support more effective teaching and learning.

- Pointing to failures of the past feeds public skepticism that change is possible now; questioning the motivations of "the other side" cues "politics as usual" thinking, depressing public engagement.

The Reframed Answer

- Starts the case with an appeal to *Workforce Preparation*, which establishes the common good and builds measurable support for reform without the unproductive, us-vs.-them frame effects of *Global Competition*.

- Cues for *Progress*, such as "modern" and "updated" help to build a forward-facing perspective – warding off "back to basics" thinking.

- The definition of CCSS is clear, aspirational, and free of expert jargon, while maintaining the intent of the phrase "college and career ready."

- Uses the Explanatory Metaphor *Weaving Skills Ropes* to describe the instructional shifts required by CCSS, rather than focusing on "reading and math." This metaphor provides a powerful antidote to "back to basics" thinking.

- Ends on a positive note – cueing the value of *Ingenuity* to tap into a shared cultural ideal that has been tested as a reliable frame for education issues.