week instead of every afternoon, with the other two sessions devoted to work on strategies to address the academic breakdowns.

This approach also requires that a school define new notions of student accountability. Learning profile weaknesses are never an excuse to avoid expectations. Understanding the complete profile of strengths and weaknesses permits schools to enact a "payback" policy. If students are allowed to do less of something at which they are weak, they have increased accountability to perform and contribute in areas in which they are strong. This balance needs to be an explicit part of learning plans for struggling learners receiving accommodations and interventions. In the long run, this can prevent students from feeling like second-class citizens in school and life. Schools can have a goal that all students are highly productive, but they do not all need to be turning out the same products.[16] Among the educational practices and policies that merit examination are labeling of students with dysfunctions, testing and assessments, grade retention, timing and pacing of learning (from the amount of time allocated to learning through course scheduling to the required time to graduate) and the demeaning way alternatives to college preparation tracks are often used with struggling students—most notably the persistent use of tracking "ability"-based students. Such policies need to be examined against what we know about how learning unfolds in all its variations, because researchers are now providing emerging evidence concerning their unintended, yet harmful effects.

Second, support success above all else.

Some school policies have been shown to boost achievement and the likelihood of adult success. One example is to establish a practice that every student becomes an expert in one domain. This is where early identification of affinities is essential and can become the basis of a one-page learning plan that is reviewed and refined annually by the student, parents, and teachers. Such expertise, kindled in the elementary years, forms the foundation of intellectual work that becomes scholarship. For example, an elementary student with an interest in sharks could be expected to

- Read all the relevant articles in the school library
- Learn how to find and sort through pertinent information about sharks on the internet
- Complete two science projects (one of which might involve developing a Web site) that convey key characteristics of sharks
- Write a fictional story about a shark for younger children
- Communicate with professionals at SeaWorld or other aquariums about jobs that involve working with sharks
- Engage in an online mentor relationship with a graduate student in marine biology about current research on sharks
- Write a blog linked to Discovery Channel's annual television production about sharks

The point of leveraging a student's interest in sharks is to expand the affinity to the wide world of scholarship, allowing the student to develop skills of inquiry that will serve the next great passion he discovers in his life. This kind of expertise kindles intellectual self-esteem: it helps us all feel smart, which is a critical strategy for those struggling students whose experiences with learning and school have led them to believe otherwise.

Learning leaders need to reexamine the definition of school success that dictates that "every student graduate college ready." We've all met plenty of successful adults who never attended college, particularly those in performing arts, culinary arts, technology innovation, carpentry, and other work that requires manual expertise. However, these successful adults were diligent in becoming their own kind of scholars of their work, spending dedicated time to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in their endeavors. These paths often involve both formal and informal postsecondary learning with apprenticeships with masters in the field, specific course learning, and on-the-job training. Anne Lewis, former editor for the *Kappan,* writes on national issues in education policy. She notes that there's a message many disengaged students and those who try to educate them aren't hearing from our policymakers—a message that they need to hear: "There is a good economic life for those who graduate from