

HOW TO DESIGN A
CLASSROOM
CULTURE

WHERE STUDENTS CAN'T HELP BUT
LEARN AND **GROW**

JON HANSEN



In a 2021 report, the Centers For Disease Control And Prevention (CDC) revealed

44%

of high school students persistently felt sad or hopeless during the past year.

Another report, done by Children's Health Care Canada in 2023,
revealed up to

1.6 million

Canadian children and youth (ages 4–19) are affected by mental health disorders, including anxiety and depression.

From 2009 to 2018, the Quaglia Institute polled more than **450,000 students**, in 820 schools, and found that when students have voice in school they are ...

3x more likely to experience **self-worth.**

5x more likely to be **engaged.**

more likely to have a sense of **purpose.**

We will never
outperform
our own
SELF-IMAGE.

THE MISTAKE I KEPT MAKING

My classroom routines always **chased behaviour first**.

It always seemed to work okay at first, **but it never lasted**.

So, I created a framework that empowered students to **build self-image first**, with the hope that behaviour and learning would follow.

What labels do your
hardest students
believe about
themselves?



What labels do your
top students
believe about
themselves?



Big Idea

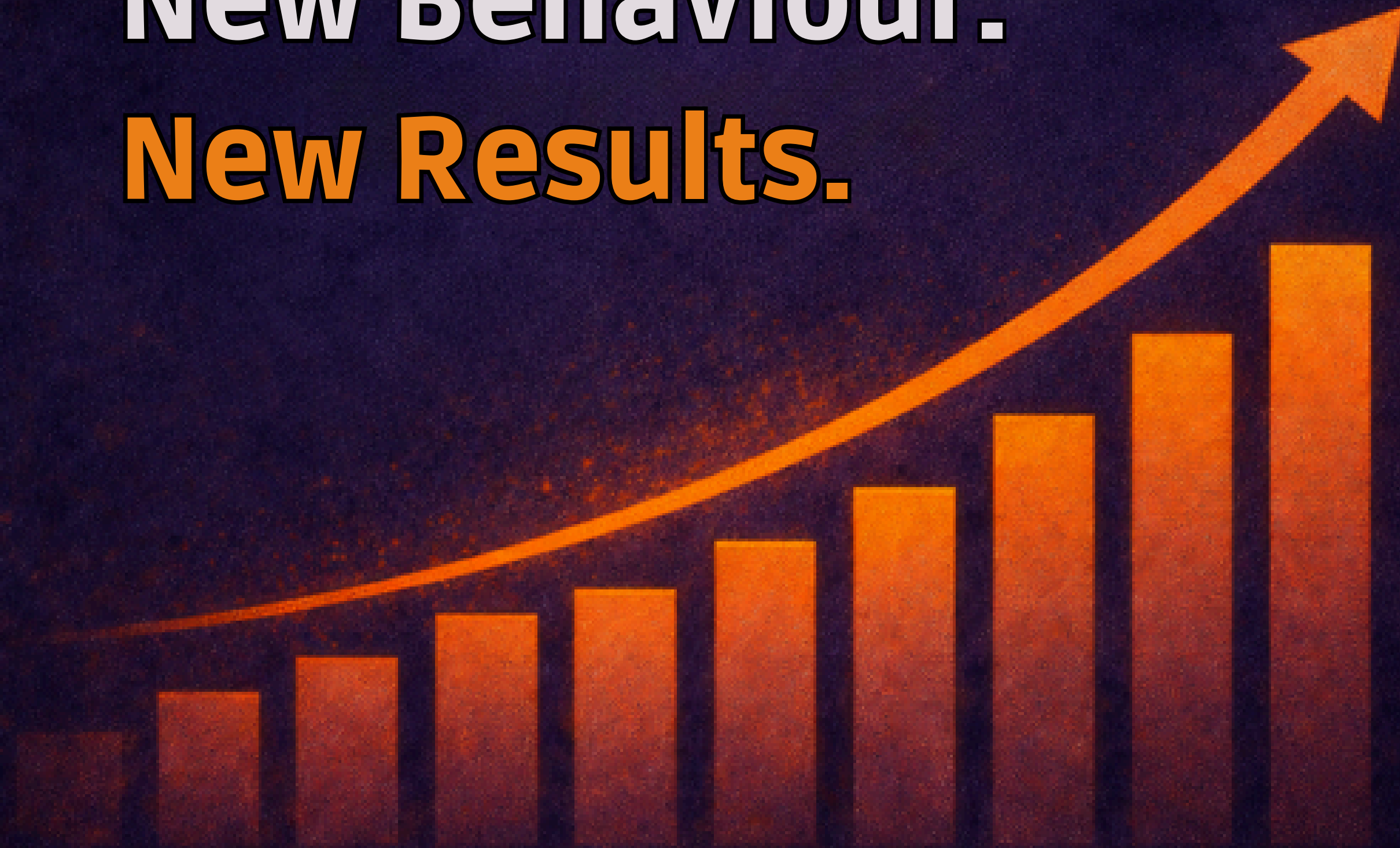


New label.

New behaviour.



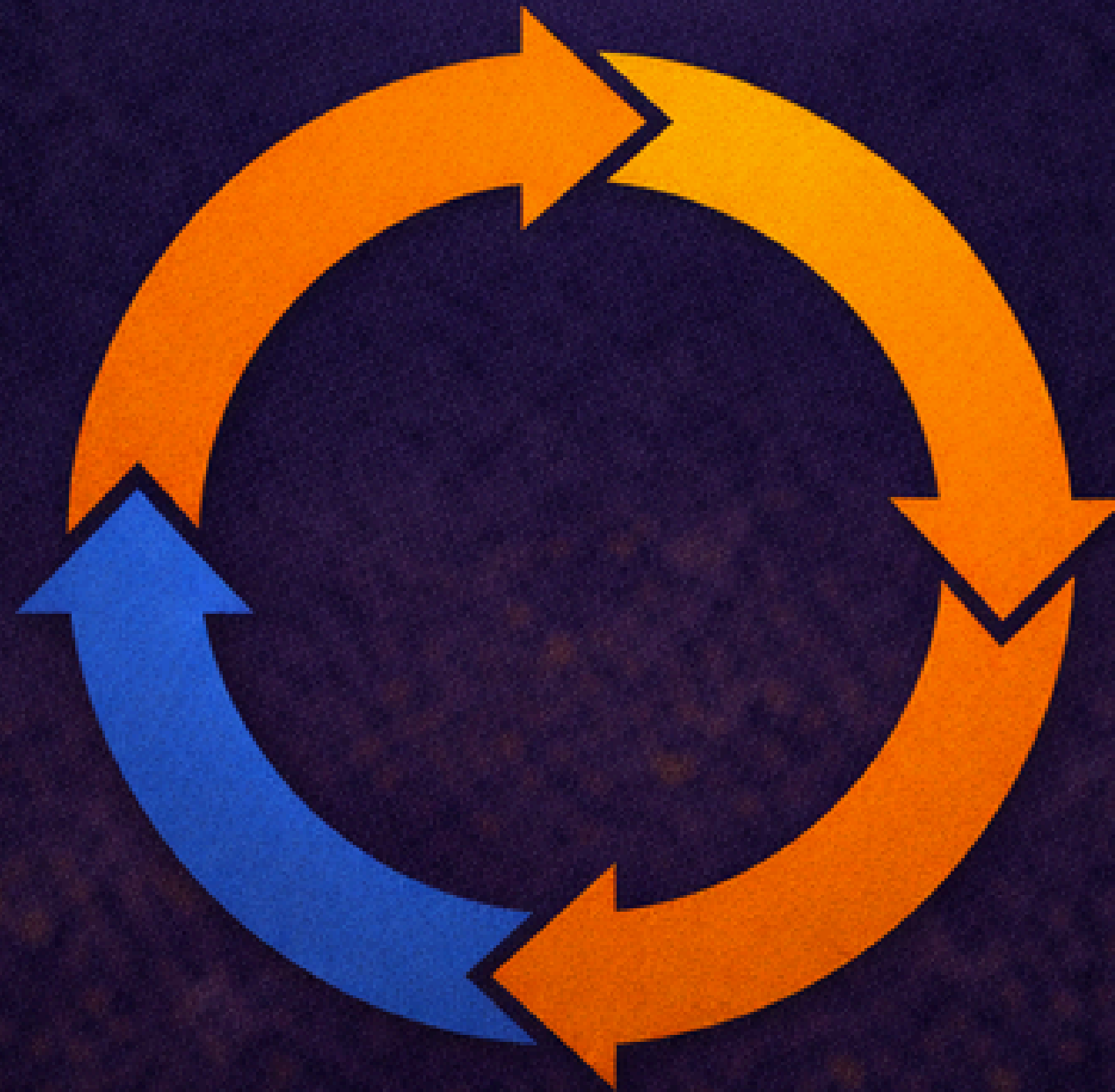
New Behaviour.
New Results.





**New Results Reinforce
The **New Label.****

and so the **cycle goes**

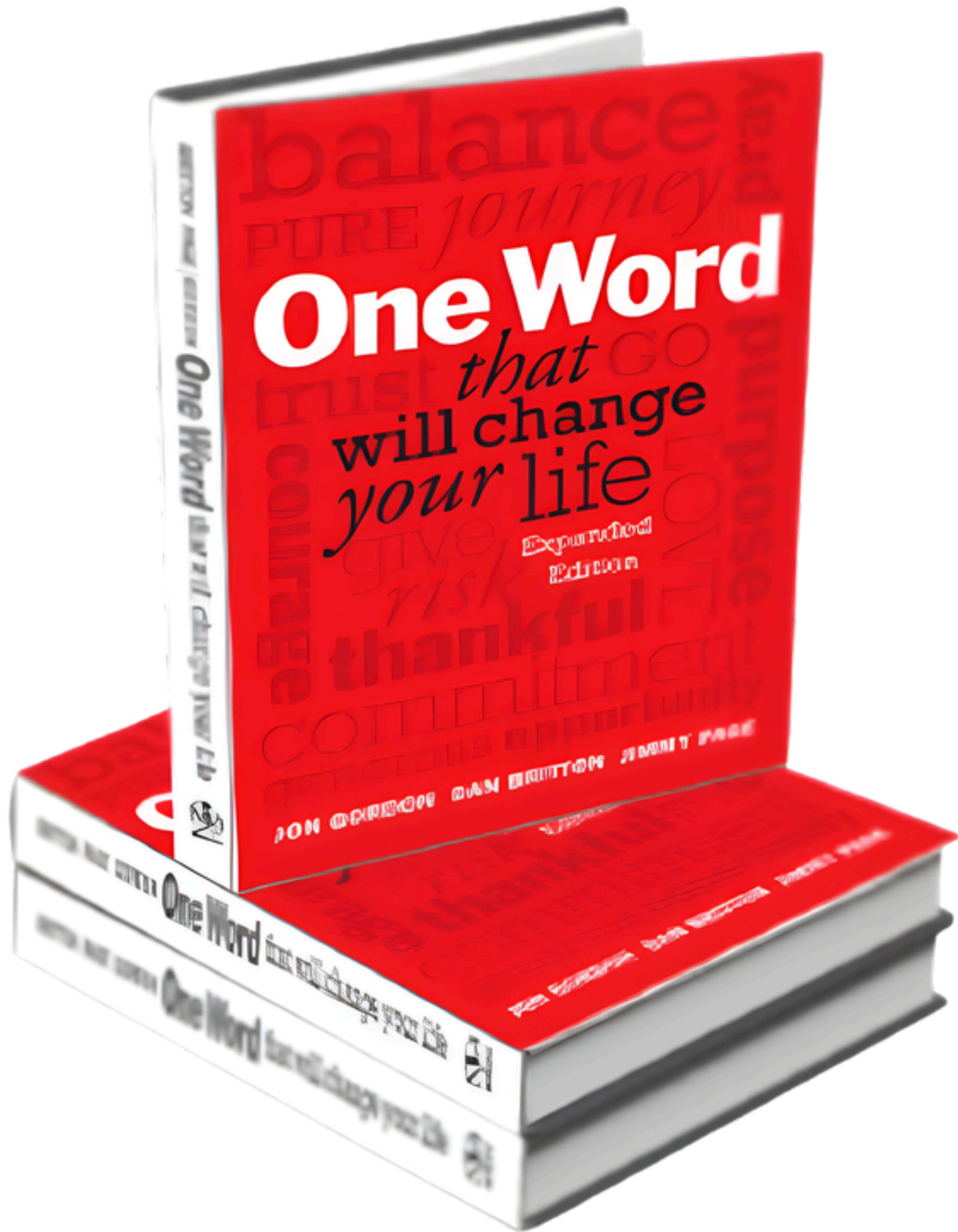


— IDEA FOR TODAY —

Our students **don't become** what we tell them. They become what they believe the most about themselves by slowly stacking **undeniable proof** that they are who they think they are.



 **THINK GREATNESS.**
LIVE GREATNESS. 
FRAMEWORK

By: Jon Gordon

STEP:

1

The Anchor Word

Ask your students who they want to be known as.

This single question built deeper **relationships and connections** with my students than anything else I've tried.

Level 1 Versus Level 2 Words





KNOW WHO YOU ARE,

**OR THE WORLD WILL
TELL YOU.**

What Many Students Learn By **Default** Instead

- Keep expectations **low/safe**
- Believe **false** stories about themselves
- **Blending in** is better than standing out

ACCOUNTABLE



STEP:

2

Flip the
switch.



**WE TEND TO BECOME WHAT
WE THINK ABOUT
THE MOST.**

BEST 	Confidence 	Confidence 	Healthy 	Respectful 	Self-control 	Electric 	Commitment 	COMMITMENT 	Improve 	Perseverance 
DETERMINED 	SURPASS 	POSITIVE 	HAPPY 	MOTIVATED 	SMART 	WORK 	FREEDOM 	INTEGRITY 	POSITIVE 	HUMBLE 
INTEGRITY 	Excelsior 	help 	RESPECT 	BELIEVE 	TRY 	GROW 	CONFIDENCE 	BELIEVE 	HANSEN 	IMPROVE 
POSITIVE 	ENDURANCE 	PEACE 	EXCEL 	DETERMINED 	BALANCE 	SELF-CONTROL 	Trust 	FOCUS 	FEARLESS 	MOTIVATED 

Why **Flipping the Switch** Works

1 Action strengthens memory

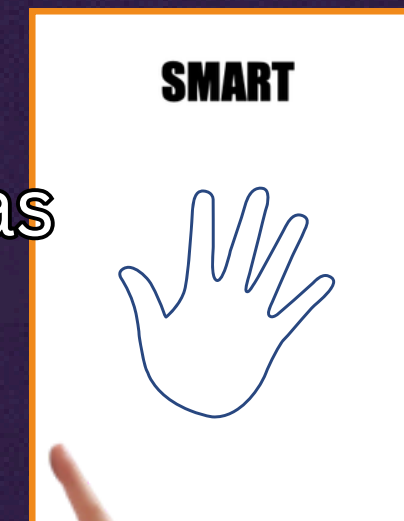
When people physically act on a thought, it's remembered more clearly than when it's only read or heard.

2 The body supports belief

Physical interaction helps the brain treat abstract ideas as real and meaningful.

3 Environment drives follow-through

Repeated cues in a shared space increase the likelihood of consistent behaviour.



**ACTION + REPETITION +
VISIBILITY**

MAKES THE WORD

**IMPOSSIBLE
TO IGNORE!**

BRAVE



FOCUS



KIND



INSPIRE



DEDICATED



RESILIENT



CREATIVE



Why This Matters In Your Classroom

You are not telling students your expectations of them exclusively (**external motivation**).

Instead, they are setting their own standard on which to be (**internal motivation**).

You are simply creating a culture where it happens **automatically**.

STEP: **3**

Daily actions.



Identity needs proof
or it's just **delusion.**

Identity needs proof
or it's just **delusion.**

Every day, students choose **one action** that proves their word to be true.

— IDEA FOR TODAY —

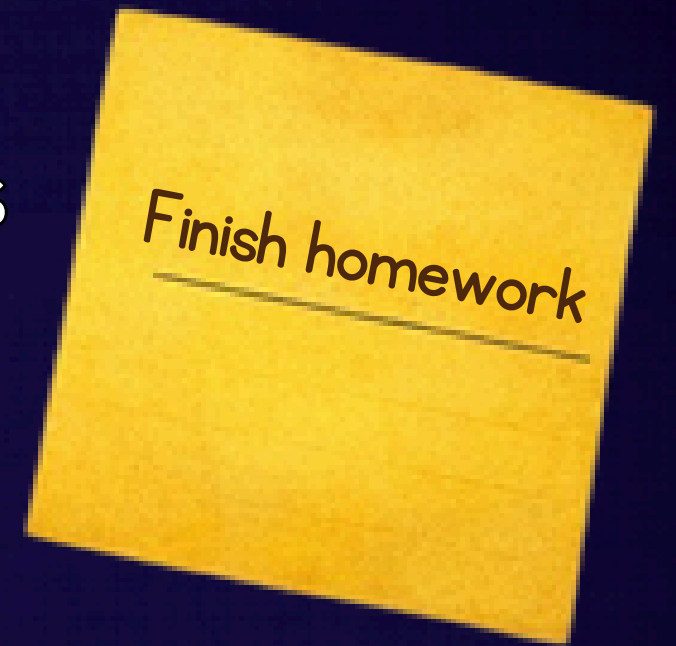
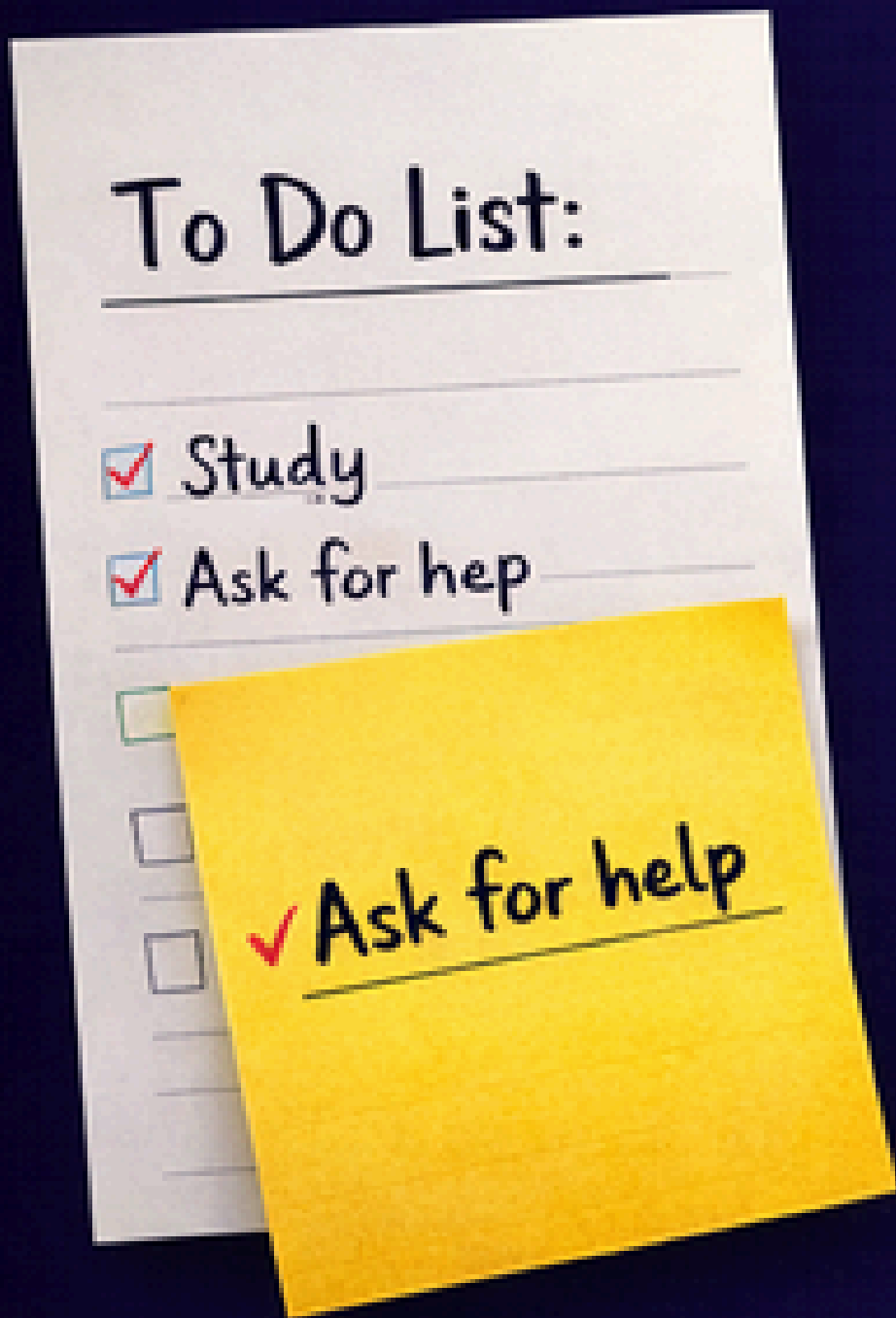
Our students **don't become** what we tell them. They become what they believe the most about themselves by slowly stacking **undeniable proof** that they are who they think they are.



How It Works

1. Students choose a daily goal that matches their anchor word.
2. Students write their daily goal on a sticky note.
3. Students keep the sticky note on their desk as a reminder until it's completed.
4. When the goal is completed, they post it on their hand print.

== Undeniable proof that they are becoming who they think they are!





I will complete every assignment during class time and use time effectively

Speak clearly so the person in the back can hear all day.

Tell your teacher if you forgot your homework instead of making excuses.

techgear®
I will stay focused and keep working for the full period even if my friends aren't working

the entire class
I will leave a positive, anonymous sticky note on a peer's locker.
Talk c
Confid
when c
talk o
Thank
aft

Honesty

give somebody credit
if they help me.

Return a borrowed
Pencil

Tell the truth
why i am late.

Keep Phones in
backPack

Correct my name
if it is written
on somebody's
eles' work.

Tell the teacher
if i saw quiz
answers early

5/5

Admit outloud
when i made a
mistake outloud.

Write for an
answers on a assignme
nt without copying

Tell your teacher
if you forgot
your homework
instead of making
excuses.

ASK before using
someone else's supplies.

Turn in my original
work to the
Teacher

I w
pers
or t
en
ging

Incl
Scud
discos
asking

finish speaking without cutting them off.

I will think for understanding before writing on.

ALL

I will not expect perfect work from my students.

I will not expect perfect work from my students.

I will address off-task behavior immediately and consistently.

I will publicly recognize students who show positive behavior.

I will address off-task behavior immediately and consistently.

Stick to the schedule even if I feel behind.

Don't let a student's behavior affect the rest of the class.

I will not change the standard because of a student's behavior.

I will not change the standard because of a student's behavior.

Don't make a mistake when I make one.

I will not change the standard because of a student's behavior.

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February

1. I will publicly recognize effort that aligns with our class values.
2. I will not ignore low-level disruptions that slowly hurt the learning environment.
3. I will name one thing I need to improve tomorrow.
4. I will give specific feedback to at least 5 students.
5. I will not talk over students to regain control.
6. I will ask the class if my instructions were clear on more than one occasion.
7. I will be more direct with one expectation I have been inconsistent with.
8. I will restate questions once instead of repeating them multiple times.
9. I will wait silently until the room meets the standard.
10. I will reflect in writing on one decision I'd change tomorrow, then share it with the class.
11. I will model focus during independent work time.
12. I will not allow my mood to change the standard.
13. I will admit a mistake to my class and correct it without excuses.
14. I will model listening by letting students finish speaking without cutting them off.

STEP:

4

Accountability.

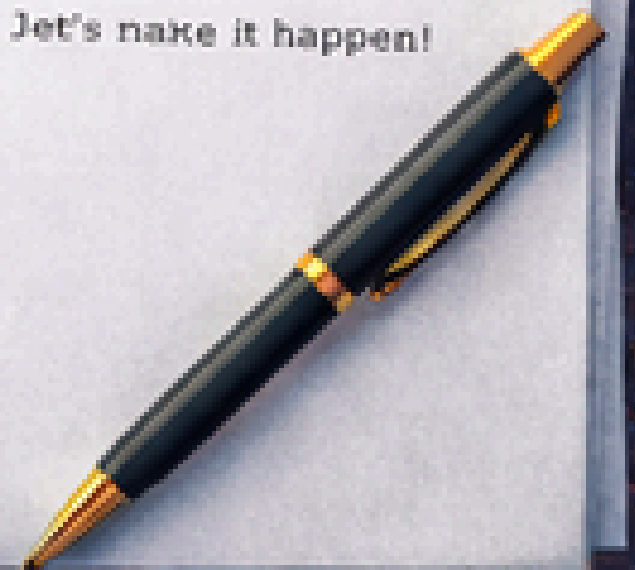
SCRIPT:

PERSON 1

Are you ready for the next step?

PERSON 2

I'm ready. Let's make it happen!

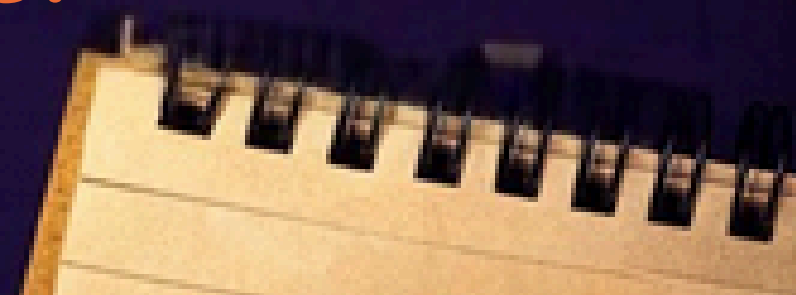


EXAMPLE:

Yesterday I committed to *raising my hand to answer a question even if I was unsure.*

I did this *in math class when we were learning about divisibility rules.*

Today I commit to *making eye contact instead of looking down during conversations.*



WHY PUBLIC COMMITMENT WORKS

Goals die in private. Shine in the light.

- ✓ Accountability
- ✓ Positive peer pressure
- ✓ Follow-through
- ✓ Dopamine hit when you go up there and share your accomplishment!



SHORT ON TIME?

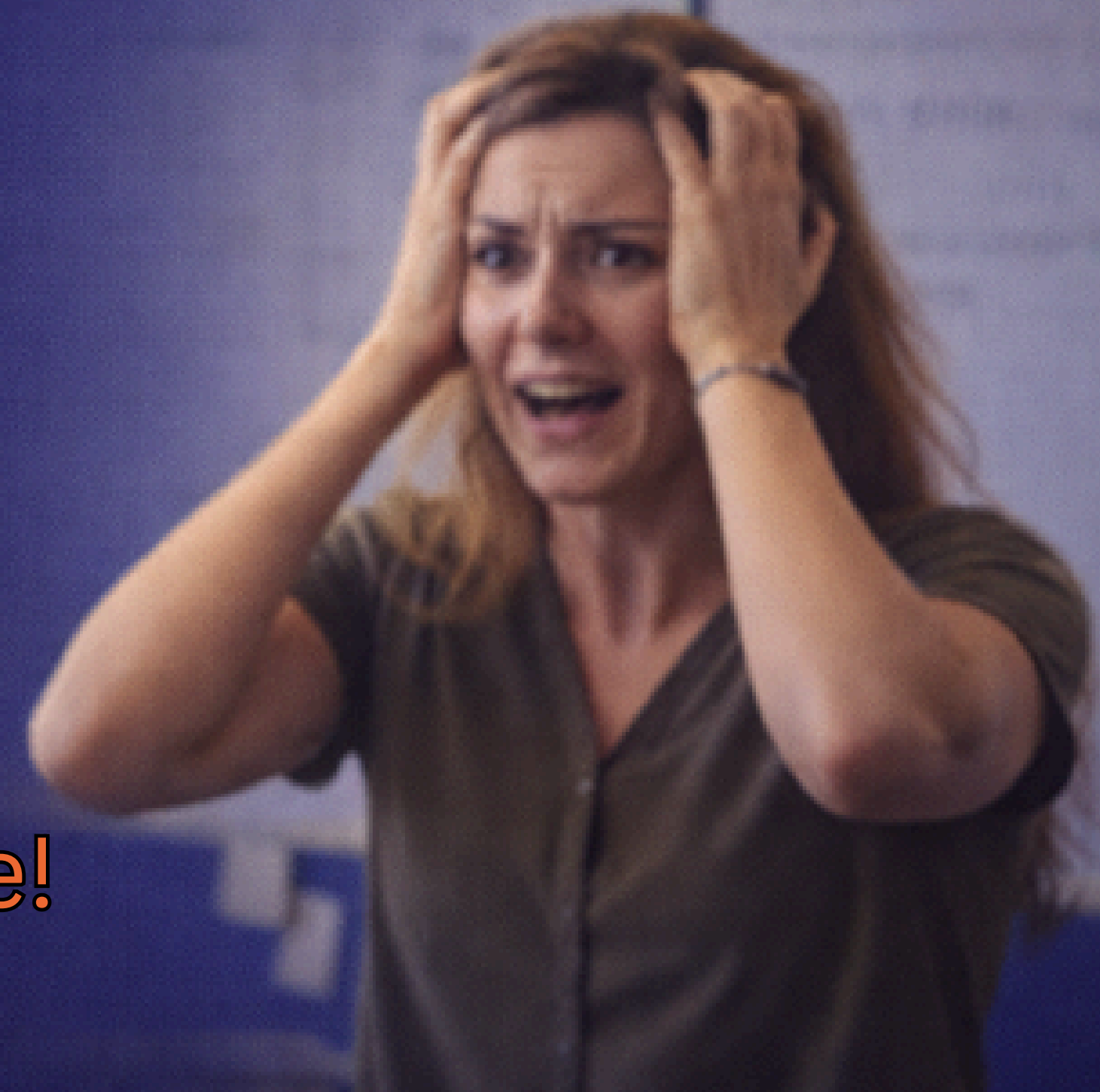
Students Can:

- ✔ Share with a partner
- ✔ Share in table groups

You can:

- ✔ Rotate speakers

The framework is super flexible!



Weekly **Reset**



1. Remove sticky notes
2. Place them on a dedicated “growth” wall
3. Start fresh

Growth stays visible. And undeniable.

COMMON OBJECTIONS

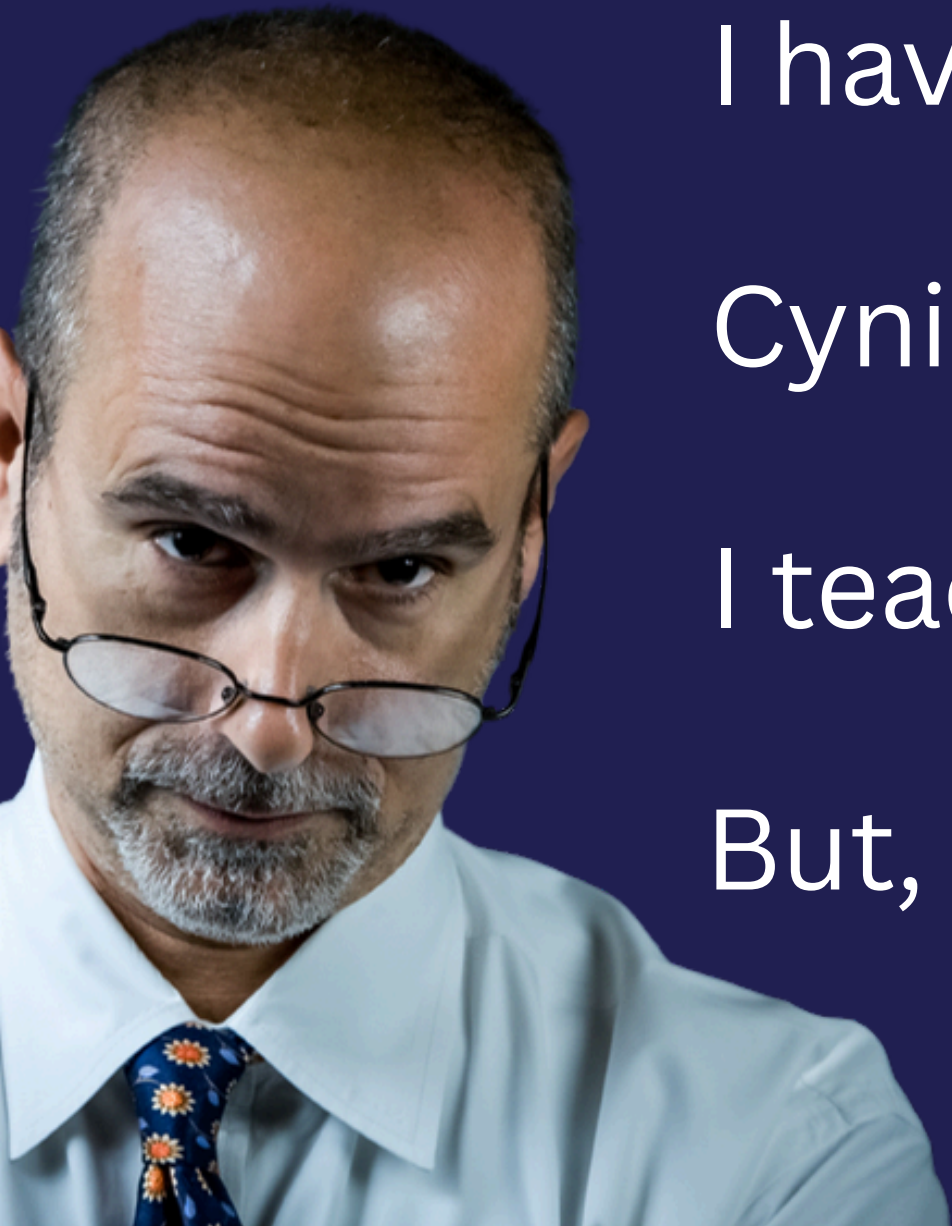
Time. *This takes too long!*

I have *extreme behaviours* in my class!

Cynicism - Ha! *This won't work!*

I teach grade 1. *This won't work with really young kids!*

But, that's *a lot* of sticky notes!



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How long does it typically take to see buy-in?

Do students resist?

What has surprised you?

Best way to start this tomorrow?

Biggest challenge with running it?





WARNING!

**If it's too complicated to run on
your worst day, it won't last.**

Simple wins.

Start small. Then add.



Your classroom will never outperform

the identity

you help your students build.

