



**The
Cage-BUSTING
Teacher**

NNSTOY Conference

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Cages To Be Busted



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Peggy Stewart taught high school social studies in Vernon Township, New Jersey, and was named the state's teacher of the year in 2005.

She launched a schoolwide United Nations program with grants funding student travel to Pakistan and China.

My principal left me alone. He would joke, 'I don't care what you do, Stewart, just don't interfere with my golf game.'"

Then the superintendent left "and the new administration did not welcome any of this. The programs that we had started were disbanded. Teachers were relocated to other buildings." Her principal told her, "Sorry, but I can't help you. I'm taking flak."

After a year, Stewart left the district. Two years later, so did the superintendent.

Madaline Edison, former first grade teacher and founder of Educators 4 Excellence Minnesota, found that despite her hard work, her students “were sort of doomed to fail because the system was set up to fail them.”

In her third year teaching, she started talking to some veteran colleagues and saying, “We’re a small charter school. We can change things up. How do we do this?”

“But, basically, what they told me was, ‘Get used to it, kid. That's not within our purview. Stay in your lane. It’s going to drive you crazy if you try to work on all of these things that are outside your classroom.’

These veteran teachers were amazing, they were doing great things with their kids every day in their classes, but they felt helpless to change these bigger systems—even at our small charter school.”

Alex Lopes was Florida's teacher of the year in 2013.

The state's new teacher evaluation system mandates that 50 percent of a teacher's evaluation be based upon student achievement, with teachers in non-tested grades scored using schoolwide achievement.

As a preschool autism teacher, Lopes had no tested students. He was judged using schoolwide results from his high-poverty, low-performing school. His score was predictably poor - he was deemed ineffective and rendered ineligible for teacher leadership roles.

In the midst of this, Lopes mused to colleagues that if he taught at a more successful school, he'd be classified as an effective teacher and free to serve as a mentor, coach, or teacher leader.

The Potential Sources of Teacher Authority...

- The authority of expertise
- A professional's moral authority

Key Elements of Cage-Busting...

- Identify problems
- Offer solutions
- Empathize and ask
- Find strength in numbers

Jacob Pactor, a high school English teacher at Speedway High School in Indianapolis, Indiana, wanted to improve support for failing students. His plan involved having teachers report student data monthly, rather than waiting for quarterly intervals.

Teachers were on board but, after a while, says Pactor, “The principal didn’t like seeing all of the Fs. He wasn’t willing to let us follow through on any of our proposed consequences. So he cut the practice off.”

Pactor explored his options. He asked the school secretary if there was a way to update the online gradebook in real time. She said it was just an easy technological change – where teachers could get updates every day, instead of every nine weeks. Pactor went to the principal with the idea, and the principal told him, “Sure.”

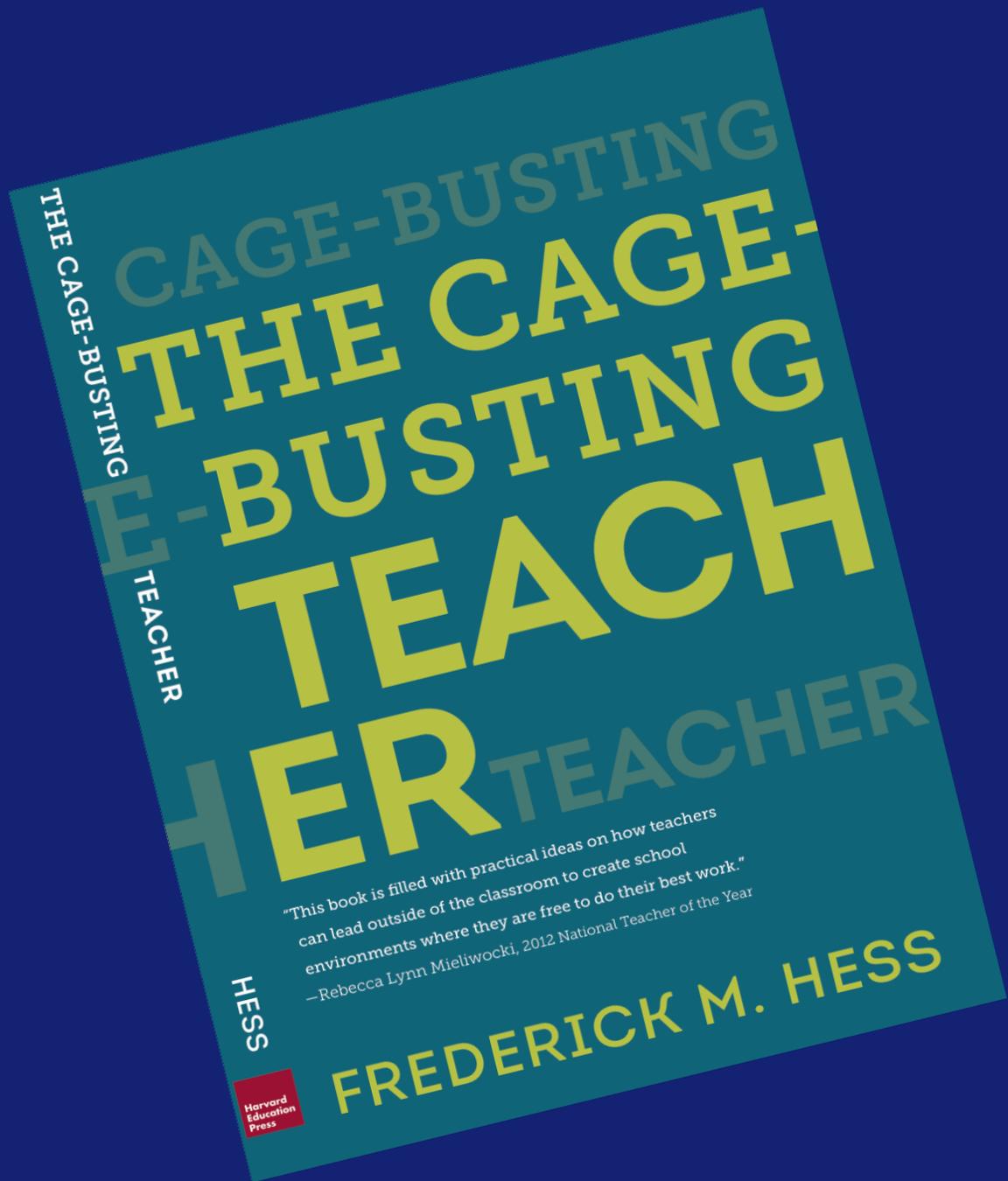
“Without having to institute a formal policy, teachers now knew how students were doing in each other’s classes. They could plan interventions accordingly.”

Jeffrey Charbonneau, a science teacher at Zillah High School in Washington state and the 2013 national teacher of the year, wanted students at his small, rural high school to receive dual-enrollment credit for his science courses.

“I talked to the chair of the department and got a no. I spoke to the dean. I continued up the chain and just kept asking. I had three different meetings at the university.”

“Their accreditor is looking at the degrees that faculty have. I didn’t realize that, but it helped me see why they were saying no. I went out and got National Board certification to help demonstrate that I’m teaching to a high level.” Charbonneau took care to think about what was in it for the colleges.

Of 100 eleventh graders, 60 took chemistry for college credit in 2013. The partnership now includes not just Eastern Washington, but also Central Washington University and Yakima Valley Community College.



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