

SPRING 2025

LEGACY

TRANSFORMATION IN ACTION

Dr. Marlene Lawrence-Grant



**Shared Accountability in Education:
Moving Beyond Blame**



The Worthy Educator

theworthyeducator.com

SPRING 2025

LEGACY

TRANSFORMATION IN ACTION



Shared Accountability in Education: Moving Beyond Blame

Marlene Lawrence-Grant, Ed.D., Researcher and Head of Practicum, The Mico University College, Teacher, Jamaica Ministry of Education, Kingston, Jamaica

Report card day often brings a predictable routine: parents hear about what their child is not doing, missed assignments, low participation, or lackluster grades. However, what's missing from these conversations is a reflection on the role of the teacher in the student's progress. Education is not a one-way street, and shared accountability among teachers, students, and parents is critical for meaningful learning outcomes. Without acknowledging this, the cycle of blame risks undermining the very partnership necessary for success.

A Narrow Lens on Student Performance

While the dominant narrative during parent-teacher conferences tends to focus on student deficiencies, and identifying areas for improvement is essential, this one-sided perspective can lead to frustration for parents and disengagement for students. Research shows that when students feel supported by both teachers and parents, they are more likely to succeed academically (Epstein, 2011).

Instead of merely pointing it out when students are not fulfilling their potential, educators must also reflect on their own practices. Questions such as, what teaching methods have been employed to reach the student, how has the teacher adapted to the student's unique needs, and what additional resources have been offered should be part of the conversation.

Teachers' Responsibility in Accountability

The role of the teacher goes far beyond delivering content. Teachers shape the learning environment, motivate students, and serve as facilitators of growth. Here are critical areas where educators can demonstrate accountability:

1. Differentiated Instruction

Every student learns differently, yet traditional teaching methods often fail to accommodate diverse pathways to learning. Research by Tomlinson (2001) underscores the importance of differentiated instruction, which tailors teaching strategies to unique individual orientations to learning. Teachers who adapt their methods can better engage students with whom they might otherwise not connect.

2. Early Intervention

Teachers should proactively identify when a student is struggling and provide timely support. According to a study in the Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (Fuchs et al., 2010), early intervention significantly improves outcomes for at-risk students. Waiting until report card day to address issues often leaves little room for meaningful improvement.



3. Regular Communication

Consistent and constructive feedback is vital. Parents should not only hear about their child's progress during scheduled conferences but through ongoing formative updates. This builds trust and ensures that challenges have the opportunity to be addressed collaboratively before they escalate.

4. Professional Growth

Just as students need to grow, teachers must be provided continuous professional learning opportunities. Effective teachers keep up on new strategies, tools, and approaches to instruction. Without current skillsets and practices, teachers are prone to be less successful in today's classroom.

5. Building Relationships

Teachers who take the time to build meaningful relationships with their students create better instructional engagement which leads to optimal academic results. Roorda et al. (2011) found that positive teacher-student relationships significantly boost student motivation and learning.

The Importance of Shared Accountability

Effective education requires a team effort. Teachers, parents, and students must all take ownership of their roles to ensure success. Here are three components of shared accountability in practice:

✓ Collaborative Problem-Solving

During report card day, the focus should shift from assigning blame planning for solutions. For example, if a student is underperforming in math, the collaborative plan might involve extra tutoring, changes to teaching techniques, and parental support for homework completion.

✓ Clear and Transparent Goals

Teachers must establish clear expectations and communicate them early in the academic year. Likewise, parents and students should be encouraged to provide feedback, asking for supports and ensuring that goals are realistic and understood by everyone involved.

✓ Action-Oriented Meetings

Rather than rehashing problems, report card day should focus on actionable steps. What will the teacher do differently? How can parents assist at home? What commitment will the student make? Defining roles and responsibilities ensures accountability and success for everyone involved.



Parents' and Students' Roles in Accountability

While teachers play a significant role, parents and students are equally responsible for success:

- ✓ Research from the Harvard Family Research Project (2014) highlights that parental involvement is one of the strongest predictors of student success.
- ✓ Parents must actively engage in their child's education. This includes checking progress regularly, reinforcing study habits at home, and maintaining open communication with teachers.
- ✓ While supports are critical, students need to take ownership of their learning, developing self-discipline, staying committed to their goals, and asking for help when needed.

Challenges of the Blame Culture

One of the greatest obstacles to shared accountability is the tendency to assign blame. A blame culture creates tension between parents, teachers, and schools, undermining the focus on the student. Social media can amplify the issue, providing a public platform for grievances, escalating conflicts instead of seeking solutions.

When schools and teachers are publicly criticized, it weakens their authority. Teachers feel unsupported and students receive mixed messages about being accountable. A constructive mindset emphasizes partnership over creating division, understanding that everyone wants what's best for students.

A Path Forward

To rebuild trust and promote shared accountability, schools must:

- ✓ **Train Teachers in Communication Skills:** Educators need tools to facilitate constructive conversations with parents, ensuring that report card day is one of many opportunities to share and collaborate.
- ✓ **Foster a Culture of Mutual Respect:** Create ongoing opportunities for teachers, parents, and students to interact, be heard, and feel valued.
- ✓ **Provide Spaces for Collaboration:** Possibilities include online portals sharing progress, digital messaging tools, regular check-ins, and parent workshops to strengthen the home-school connection.
- ✓ **Celebrate Successes:** Acknowledge not only where students are struggling but also where they are shining, recognizing growth, reinforcing positive behavior, and building confidence.

Conclusion: Reframing Accountability in Education

By fostering a culture of shared accountability, we can ensure that education remains a pathway to growth, not a battleground of blame. Together, we can create environments where every student has the support they need to thrive.

Education is not a solo journey; it is a partnership built on trust, communication, and shared responsibility. Report card days should move beyond fault-finding to become opportunities for meaningful collaboration. Teachers, parents, and students each play a vital role in shaping success, and through a unified effort real progress can be achieved.



References

Epstein, J.L. (2011). [School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools](#). Routledge.

Fuchs, D., Fuchs, L.S., & Compton, D.L. (2010). The importance of early intervention for at-risk learners. [Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk](#), 15(1), 25-35.

[Harvard Family Research Project](#). (2025). Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Roorda, D.L., Koomen, H.M., Spilt, J.L., & Oort, F.J. (2011). [The influence of affective teacher-student relationships on students' engagement and achievement](#). [Review of Educational Research](#), 81(4), 493-529.

Tomlinson, C.A. (2017). [How to differentiate instruction in mixed-ability classrooms, 3rd edition](#). ASCD.



Dr. Marlene Lawrence-Grant is a distinguished educator, academic strategist, and thought leader in higher education. With a career spanning over 15 years, she has made significant contributions to curriculum development, instructional design, and teacher training. She currently serves as the University College Practicum Coordinator, Head of Practicum, and Chairman of the Practicum Board at The Mico University College, where she has led transformative initiatives to enhance practicum programs and bridge the gap between academia and industry.



Legacy is the official journal of The Worthy Educator, elevating the good work being done by leaders in education who are working to change the narrative on the profession and actively plan for impact that transforms its future to serve the needs of a diverse, decentralized, global society that is inclusive, equitable and open to all people as next generations adapt, evolve and contribute by solving problems and creating solutions that meet the needs of a world we have yet to envision.

Submissions are accepted on a rolling basis from educators who are implementing new and innovative approaches in the classroom and at the building and district levels. Information on specifications and instructions to submit can be found online at theworthyeducator.com/journal