

Effective Schools Checklist

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Don't blame the parents. Don't blame the kids. Don't blame the neighborhood.

If we want effective schools let's look at the schools.

Ron Edmonds of Harvard who put the term "Effective Schools" on the map with his speech "Some Schools Work and more Can" in 1978 said

"We can whenever, and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need, in order to do this. Whether we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far."

It's a scandal! 30 years later most school people don't have an inkling about these findings, or if they do are more prone to debate or ignore the research than implement it.

Of course, this is typical because there is little up-take within a system when there is no motivation to improve (or worse still, a feeling that improvements aren't necessary – the problems will go away).

What we need is to open up the discussions – let parents in on the scene to **ensure effective schools**. You can be sure, parents won't let the matter die or gather dust for another 30 years! Resolve, commitment, the will to do things comes when there is a "dynamic" going on – when parents and educators CARE together.

We can't let another two generations of school children slip through. This checklist is from the 1983 archives of Education Advisory, a consumer service for parents in the 70' & 80's.

EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS CHECKLIST

(from the original work of Ron Edmonds, Harvard, 1978)

- 1. Instructional Leadership** Principal is an effective communicator (with staff, parents, students, school boards), an effective supervisor, & the instructional leader in the school
- 2. Focused School Mission** General consensus by the school community (staff, parents, students) on goals, priorities, assessment, accountability. The mission statement is specified and reviewed periodically.
- 3. Orderly Environment** Purposeful atmosphere, not oppressive, and is conducive to teaching and learning.
- 4. High Expectations** Demonstrated high expectations not only for all students but for staff as well. The belief is that students are capable and able to achieve, that teachers are capable and not powerless to make a difference.
- 5. Mastery of Basic Skills** In particular, basic reading, writing and math skills are emphasized with back-up alternatives available for students with special learning needs.
- 6. Frequent Monitoring of Results** Means exist to monitor student progress in relationship to instructional objectives (and results can be easily conveyed to parents).
 Means to monitor teacher effectiveness
 A system of monitoring school goals
- 7. Meaningful Parent Involvement** Parents are kept well-informed re: programs, goals, etc. There is ample opportunity for them to keep in touch with their child's progress. They are consulted for feedback about the school and when changes are foreseen Parent-initiated contact with the school is encouraged.
- * **8. Avoidance of Pitfalls** Up-to-date awareness of good educational practice plus retaining currency in the field concerning promising and discredited practices.

*Most "effective schools studies" repeat the first 7 points. But, Edmonds' original work stressed "one of the cardinal characteristics of effective schools is that they are as anxious to avoid things that don't work as they are committed to implement things that do."