

Effective What? Questions and Answers

What are the effective school correlates?

The effective school correlates are the features that together characterize a successful school. In such schools, all students learn to their fullest potential. The correlates have been identified as:

- High expectations for success
- Strong instructional leadership
- Clear and focused mission
- Opportunity to learn/time on task
- Frequent monitoring of student progress
- Safe and orderly environment
- Positive home-school relations

Who defined the correlates?

Studies of actual schools that make a significant positive impact on student learning (by comparing similar populations of students in different schools) have been taking place since at least 1967. During this time, and since, the same correlates have been identified as those factors that characterize such schools. Such studies have identified that the most effective schools are characterized by all seven correlates.

What does high expectation for success really mean?

In ineffective schools, high expectations mean that we adults expect you to do your best, and we will mark you according to a standard to determine if you meet the standard. With effective schools, it means that we expect you to try your best, we will do our best, and together we will master the standard so you can be successful when we assess your learning. We will not stop at failure or limited success, but we will achieve our agreed to goals.

What is a clear and focused mission for successful schools?

In successful schools all students are provided for so they can do well no matter what it takes. Grouping students for instruction is done by ability and readiness if this is what it takes for students to be successful. If reading is the thing that is holding the student back, then reading instruction is provided first and foremost so that the student can succeed in other subjects when these are attempted. Mastery is expected and enough time is given as needed. Tutoring is provided as deemed necessary, and instruction is differentiated.

What does an opportunity to learn mean? What is time-on-task about?

An opportunity to learn does not mean that a lesson is taught and everyone had a chance to learn the same way. It means that your learning readiness is assessed, your learning needs are accounted for, and instruction is differentiated as needed. Time on task is about making sure that everything that is planned relates to learning outcomes. These outcomes are prioritized and mapped out to ensure adequate coverage of the specific learning outcomes and an in-depth understanding of the general learner outcomes as articulated in the various programs of study. Review of material covered is a key feature in providing an opportunity to learn.

What does frequent monitoring of student progress involve?

Effective schools use a range of formative and summative assessments that are shared with students and parents. Formative assessments are usually assignments and quizzes, student presentations, and other frequent checks to ensure that students are on the right track each day. Students are informed what they are to learn, what the learning outcomes are, and what mastery looks like. Some teachers use scoring guides to achieve this goal, and students are engaged in self-assessment on a regular basis. Often students help develop the scoring guides that will be used.

Summative assessments are unit tests and final examinations, provincial exams, and provincial achievement tests. Report cards are both formative and summative because they summarize the learning for the term, but they are also used to develop a plan of action for further learning.

How do safe and orderly schools deal with behavioral students?

Schools that are safe are characterized by environments where all the adults are working together to support students. There is mutual respect for adults and students alike, and the expectations and rules make up the school's culture: "This is how we do things around here." Behavioral students are those students with exceptional behavioral problems. They have individualized programs that structure their lives so that the environment remains controlled, orderly, and safe for all students. Additional supports are put in place as needed. Responses to misbehavior are clearly understood and consistent, and the focus is on restitution. The adult role in student misbehavior is examined and adjusted as needed to nurture improvement.

What do parent-school relations focus on?

The focus is on all adults working together to support student learning. The adults share similar expectations for students. Parental involvement is about parenting, clear and open communications, volunteering, support for learning at home, participation in school governance through school councils, shared decision making, and collaboration with the community. When adults support each other and work together, students succeed.