

Good To Great

SCHOOL

LEADERSHIP AND VISION DOCUMENT

LEADERSHIP AND VISION

Is there a clear vision and direction which the school needs to move toward?

Do the school's leaders openly and objectively discuss not only the school's achievements but also the challenges in developing a truly 21st century education for all students?

Is there broad agreement that leadership is dispersed within schools, not only confined to formal leadership positions?

Are parents encouraged and supported to play leadership roles in the school?

Are students of all backgrounds routinely involved in some form of substantive leadership? For example as learning technology leaders or in student action teams.

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

How are the principal and leadership team, teachers, parents and students involved in shared decision-making?

Does the school's governing body add value to the school and students?

Does the school council/board reflect the school's demographics?

Does the school have a clear and coherent plan for the future that includes shared school-family-partnership?

Does the school publicly display its shared vision and goals in understandable, explicit terms to its member staff / students / parents in a variety of ways?

MANAGEMENT AND VALUES

Do key school leaders have good people management skills?

Is there genuine warmth between students and teachers? Is the school a safe, respectful place? Does the school greet visitors in a friendly and helpful way? Is the reception area comfortable? Are office staff able to handle inquiries efficiently?

Is there a well-publicised policy about values, behaviour and relationships? Does it apply to all school members? How is the success of the policy monitored - and by whom?

Are conflicts and complaints managed well? Is a proper process for handling any concerns or complaints made clear in a leaflet?

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Do school documents and the school's leaders convey a strong sense of continuous improvement and innovation in teaching and learning?

- Do school leaders draw attention to their use of educational research?
- Are teachers given time for professional development and resources to plan and work collaboratively to develop the most effective teaching and learning?
- Do families and teachers have opportunities to learn together as to how to best collaborate to improve student achievement?
- How is the school working toward culturally and socially inclusive teaching and learning? Does the school have a cultural and social inclusion policy and plan?
- How does the school assist all students to have a strong mix of both deep academic knowledge and applied/practical learning in classroom and home settings?
- Is the school developing really 'personalised learning' that is built around all learners' needs, aspirations, talents, interests and right to all-round personal development?
- Do students receive regular feedback that is timely and focused or is most of the feedback an explanation of where students 'lost marks' in an assessment?
- How are all students supported to acquire a strong capacity to speak clearly, publicly, competently and confidently?

CURRICULUM

- How is the school addressing the right of all students to curriculum breadth, depth and balance, and to high standards in all learning areas, not just some of them?
- Is there a narrow focus on literacy and numeracy creating a divided curriculum between the so called 'basics' and key learning areas such as science, the arts, history and languages?
- Does the school have a vision of quality languages education for all students? What is the practical progress towards this? What is the percentage of students who are bilingual?
- How does the curriculum support students to explore concepts in depth, and enable teachers to connect new ideas with students' personal experiences and insights?
- To what extent is the curriculum planned by the school to respond to local needs, interests and priorities?
- Is the school part of a cluster of primary and secondary schools? Do teachers have the opportunity to plan and integrate key learning areas from?
- Does the school provide clear guidelines about the curriculum and the expectations for students at each year level?

TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATION

Given that students can be inundated by online information, how are they supported to separate deeper learning and knowledge from superficial fact-gathering?

Does the school have a technology policy and plan (created, ideally, by a team involving teachers, parents and students)? This may articulate:

A shared vision, goal and objectives for

- ICT Learning, curriculum and ICT links
- Family and community partnerships
- On-line protocols and turn-around times
- Professional learning for all stakeholders

Are teachers and other staff provided with adequate time for supporting two-way communication between the school and families?

- Is there a practical plan to improve school communication over time?

PARTNERSHIPS AND SOCIETY

- Partnerships create something together that could not be developed by any one person, group or organisation.
- To what extent does the school link and align the many settings in which students learn, develop and find support? These include the home, workplaces, community organisations, and sports, arts and recreation.
- To what extent are students themselves able to draw upon, and make links between, these multiple areas of their life and learning?
- Will each student have a personal life story of mixing broadly with students from diverse social, cultural and religious backgrounds?
- Are parents informed at the beginning of each year about what will be covered in subjects and the expectations about student attendance, homework and participation and possible supporting family activities?
- When was the last time the school held a forum in which teachers, parents and students were involved in developing school values or a strategic plan or exploring key questions such as:
 - What are the challenges schools are facing?
 - What can be done to further build the school-family-social partnership?
 - What does learning of the future and what does schooling of the future look and sound like?
 - What is a great school, and what might we do to further improve our school?

JOINED-UP CHANGE

To what extent is the school developing its own broad, 'joined-up' approach to educational change?

Evidence may include:

A clear and compelling message as to why change is needed

A clear, shared vision of what is to be changed and achieved

- Ownership of change among teachers, parents and students
 - A shared policy framework that joins up all of the changes
- Is the school developing a joined-up approach involving:

The vertical 'parts' of education (e.g., school clusters, K-12 schooling) The horizontal links with the wider community (e.g., health agencies, workplaces, businesses, community organisations, and groups such as sporting clubs) Sharing resources such as sport and performing arts facilities.

Is the school an integral part of the local community? Do students take part in a variety of activities including after school community-based sports and other local community activities? Are these local community links listed on the school website? Is the school involved in local community renewal (e.g., in replanting local areas)?

How is the school's performance monitored and evaluated? How is this communicated to the school community?

Is the school adding educational value to student achievement beyond that which may be predicted given the social class for backgrounds and prior attainments of students? What is the evidence for this? Is the school supporting both the personal (e.g., individual teacher professional development) and systemic (e.g., being part of a K-12 cluster) sources of performance improvement?

A GUIDE TO SCHOOL SEEKING EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

For as many years as there has been a place called "school," we've been seeking ways to fashion the best educational experience for our children - the place that would provide students with the best possible education and send them forth fully prepared to meet life's challenges.

Every Indian generation has desired quality education for its children and in many ways the system has responded by expanding opportunities to historically under-represented students, updating curriculum, and improving teaching techniques.

Yet, for all the changes implemented in our classroom, parents and the society, in general, are ill-prepared to measure the quality of the schools that serve them. As consumers of education, parents and other taxpayers have a right to know whether or not their schools are doing a good job.

In the search for a good school, many parents have moved to new locations; many have made their children to attend a school in their neighbourhood, and many have opted for private schools.

Private schools, aware of parents' search for quality education, have explored many innovative ways of accomplishing this aim and have tried many different configurations. There are now countless numbers of schools educational centres. None of these schools, however, comes with a certificate of quality. What we do know is that quality education comes from a real partnership between parents and professionals working together.

So, how do we know what makes a good school? Fortunately, that question can be answered based upon sound research findings that make it possible to measure the quality of the education a school offers.

What makes a good school has less to do with the configuration of the school or the socioeconomic standard of the neighbourhood. There are successful schools in the rural and semi urban areas, just as there are unsuccessful ones in the country's wealthy suburbs

What makes the difference between success and failure We can identify several qualities of successful schools that set them a part. A good school has:

- Strong and professional administrators and teachers.
- A broad curriculum available to all students.
- A philosophy that says all children can learn if taught, coupled with high expectations for all students.

- A school climate that is conducive to learning. A good school is safe, clean, caring, and well -organized.
- An on going assessment system that supports good instruction.
- A high level of parent and community involvement and support.

LET'S LOOK AT EACH OF THESE QUALITIES

ADMINISTRATORS AND TEACHERS

GOOD SCHOOLS HAVE A STRONG ADMINISTRATOR WHO.

- Leads instruction at the school and knows in depth the school's curriculum and instruction provided in each grade level.
- Helps teachers develop instructional strategies and techniques and encourage teamwork.
- Makes time for in-service training and seminars for the school's entire staff.
- Marshals resources and distributes them to benefit the greatest number of students.
- Communicate with parents and provides sufficient time for such dialogues.
- Establishes goals for the school and articulates those goals with clarity, conviction, and understanding.
- Maintains a well-balanced staff with multiple skills and competencies and knows the staffs strengths and special capabilities.
- Works to maintain high morale which contributes to great stability and limited teacher turnover.
- Strives to keep class sizes appropriate for the subject and grade being taught and within guidelines.
- Develops with staff and parents a clearly defined policy on discipline, grading, attendance, testing, promotions, and retentions.
- Knows the community and is equipped to work cooperatively with teachers and parents to provide support services to students encountering problems.
- Maintains a good relationship with the district and makes wise use of district resources.

GOOD SCHOOLS HAVE STRONG PROFESSIONAL TEACHERS WHO.

Hold current certification in the classes they are teaching and have mastered the subject matter.

Maintain high expectations for student achievement, which is evident in every aspect of classroom work.

Teach students how to learn.

Provide students with ample opportunities to practice skills taught in order to grasp concepts. Create consistency in learning methods that include problem-solving, thinking, and creative activities.

Hold students responsible for completion of work assigned within established standards for quality. Set challenging classroom assignments that are appropriate to the subject, are interesting, and dearly relate to other lessons taught.

Use a wealth of materials and many different approaches to teaching difficult concepts.

Relate, as often as possible, the objectives of lessons taught to students' backgrounds, communities, and cultures.

Maintain discipline in the classroom to foster the optimal learning environment

Keep students consistently informed on how they are doing and what they will be doing next, and discuss the significance of each step and its relationship to concepts previously taught.

Keep students informed as to how well they are doing. Use testing and evaluation as a tool to measure student progress as well as to determine curriculum changes and teaching strategies in order to accommodate the needs of ethnically and culturally diverse groups of students.

GOOD SCHOOLS HAVE COUNSELLORS WHO:

- Know the school, its community, and understand the strengths, assets, and goals of each.
- Serve as a bridge between students, parents, and school personnel.
- Assist students in class selection.
- Understand the system of testing and assessment, and explain it to parents, teachers, and staff.
- Play a significant role in interpreting test results to staff, teachers, administrators, and parents and analyse test results in order to make informed recommendations when changes in testing procedures are appropriate.
- Keep themselves and their schools up to date on state testing requirements.
- Understand and use a combination of strategies to determine student progress.
- Provide information concerning college, career, and vocational options available to students.
- Provide all students with access to appropriate counselling and give students timely advice on programme planning, requirements for passion, and requirements for excellences.

GOODSCHOOLS OFTEN HAVE OR HAVE REGULAR ACCESS TO ADDITIONAL SUPPORT STAFF GEARED TO MEETING THE NEEDS OF A DIVERSE STUDENT BODY:

- A School Psychologist
- A School Doctor
- A School Nurse
- An Attendance and Adjustment Counsellor
- English language skill development specialist
- Resource lead teachers who are prepared in a wide range of subjects and who can offer assistance to new teachers.

A CURRICULUM AS BROAD AS THE STUDENTS ARE DIVERSE

A Good School recognizes the great diversity in backgrounds, needs, and aspirations of its students and develops a curriculum that meets these needs. Good Schools:

- Offer a broad curriculum within the guidelines established
- by both state and local mandates that is appropriate to the students' age and educational background.
- Place a strong emphasis on basic curriculum including Science, Math, History, Geography, English, and the Arts.
- Have a visual and performing arts curriculum.
- Value the importance of multicultural education and encourage students to experience other cultures,
- Constantly seek ways, where ever possible, to enrich the curriculum by offering more courses that supplement a strong academic program.
- Believe that all children can learn if properly taught.
- Show great flexibility in the presentation of subject matter to maintain student interest.
- Keep athletics in proper relation to academics.
- Evaluate school offerings on a continuous basis, so as to include studies appropriately related to the social and academic changes in our society.
- Review on a regular basis requirements necessary for students' entry into college or university and make sure needed courses are offered.
- Keep abreast of work-force requirements and incorporate the necessary skills in the curriculum of the school.
- Make every effort to help students develop proper interpersonal skills needed for college, work force, or everyday living.

HIGH EXPECTATIONS GO HAND-IN-HAND WITH EQUITY

In good schools, high expectations for students' achievement are observed throughout the school. The surroundings of the school give a message to all who enter that academic achievement is valued in this place. These high expectations for achievement are found on school bulletin board displays, in the hallways, in classroom displays, and in the school newsletter They are also recognized by the number and Quality of awards presented. The overall environment and outreach makes a statement that learning is valued and rewarded. In Good Schools:

Learning is promoted as the most important reason for attending school.

High standards for classwork are carefully set with students and are maintained on a consistent basis.

Each lesson offers a challenge for students, but each also is within the students' ability to attain. Class time is used as learning time and few interruptions are permitted. Homework is assigned with a

purpose, usually to reinforce a concept taught or to give additional practice. Homework is always checked, reviewed, and feedback is given.

High standards for classroom behavior are established and adhered to in order to permit classwork to proceed on an established schedule.

In keeping with the high expectations of each teacher and each class, awards for outstanding work are presented at assemblies and Parents meetings. This is done to advertise and maintain the goals established for a high-achieving student body.

Improvement in achievement is high on the list of priorities, and resources to assist teachers and students are continuously made available.

IN THE EQUITABLE CLASSROOM FAIRNESS IS THE GUIDING PRINCIPLE.

All classrooms in all locations maintain an academic environment that addresses the needs for basic learning.

All classes receive consistent and appropriate classroom instruction.

All classes are provided with adequate and updated instructional materials.

Proper emphasis is placed on the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills and the continued use of assessment systems that analyse the quality and quantity of student learning. Included in all of this is the opportunity for change in teaching strategies when warranted.

A SCHOOL CLIMATE CONDUCIVE TO LEARNING

- Learning requires time and a conducive atmosphere. Since learning is as much a social activity as it is an individual activity, much of what students learn comes from interacting with other people. Thus nature of the relationships among the people at the school will have a strong influence on students' learning. Good schools:
- Develop a social and academic climate that gives students a strong feeling of belonging; students feel proud of their school; feel they belong, feel they are wanted and nurtured the school.
- Have high morale due to the cooperation of teachers, staff, and parents who work closely together to provide the best school environment for their students.
- Offer appropriate supervision so that only those persons eligible are found on the school grounds. Students are given, on a continuous basis, instructions as to how to respond to visitors on the school grounds.
- Buildings are kept in good condition, making them safe at all times. Students know the safety drills held at the school and respond with precision when the signal is given. Good schools recognize and respond to students who come from many different home environments. In good schools, staff expect and accept some divergent responses to school rules and make appropriate preparations for effectively responding in a positive and constructive manner.
- Every effort is made to create an atmosphere in which the student feels the school offers him or her an understanding and a caring response to life's inequities.

GOOD SCHOOLS ARE WELL ORGANISED

Good Schools have libraries that are stocked with up-to-date books appropriate for the age and interest level of students; centrally located for ready access by total student body and staff; staffed, where possible, by a full time librarian on duty daily. All children are taught how to use the library.

In the school office, student work and awards are proudly displayed; secretaries and clerical personnel are courteous and knowledgeable about the school and its programme; students' needs are met promptly so as to minimize the amount of time out of their classrooms.

Halls are neat, clean, and free of debris. Traffic patterns are established for safety. Bulletin boards in halls are reflective of the educational programs being promoted at all grade levels.

Evidence of knowledge, acceptance, and understanding of the diversity of cultures in the school is reflected in art displays and the recognition of student achievement.

On the school grounds play areas for students are well-defined and well organized; games played give evidence of necessary skill having been taught; safety rules are clearly defined and assiduously followed; lunch areas are clearly defined and properly supervised; school grounds are supervised by competent personnel.

DETERMINING SUCCESS: AN ONGOING ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

Good schools are very concerned about the overall achievement of their students and make testing and assessment an integral part of their programme. Assessment measures the level of student achievement; helps schools discover the strengths and easiness of their curriculum; and suggests areas where programme need to be modified or added

- In good schools, clear goals are established as to what students are expected to learn.
- The curriculum is guided by these carefully constructed instructional goals, with texts, resource materials, and experiences orchestrated to promote success.
- Good schools use a variety of tests and assessments to meet their needs. Some of these may be developed by commercial publishers, some may be developed by state departments of education and districts, and some are constructed by teachers for use in their classrooms.

IN GOOD SCHOOLS TEACHERS PREPARE STUDENTS FOR ASSESSMENTS IN MANY WAYS.,

Give students suggestions for readying themselves for a test or assessment - for example, proper rest, be on time.

Give tests or assessments under conditions that allay fears and reduce anxiety.

Do not teach the test, but make sure concepts and skills that reflect the goals of the test or assessment are taught.

Make sure that students are exposed to and are learning the broad concepts, issues, topics, and skills that are taught at a particular grade level.

Let students know what to expect on the test or assessment.

MAKE SURE THAT STUDENTS ARE EXPOSED TO AND ARE LEARNING THE BROAD CONCEPTS, ISSUES, TOPICS, AND SKILLS THAT ARE TAUGHT AT A PARTICULAR GRADE LEVEL.

- Let students know what to expect on the test or assessment. Good teachers use assessment to.
- Hold students to high standards.
- Examine the effectiveness of their teaching strategies, to determine if they are presenting understandable materials.
- Diagnose the strengths and weaknesses of a particular demand of individual students within it.
- Determine whether the class, a group within it, or individual students are ready to go on to the next unit or next class.
- Gather a balanced picture of a student's ability and mastery; do not use the results of one particular pencil-and-paper test as the sole determinant of a student's achievement.
- Determine if they have adequately reviewed materials presented, asked questions, and shared additional materials to reinforce a given concept.
- Question if they have consistently reviewed and encouraged students to relate class experiences with some of their own personal experiences.
- Determine if the tests or assignments used mirror the textbook material used by the class.
- Determine if the tests are testing what was actually taught. In good schools, students also are encouraged to use assessment results.
- It conveys to them the level of success with which they are meeting.
- It helps them see the continuity in their learning and offers them the encouragement to apply learned skills in one field to other fields and to everyday living experiences.
- They are encouraged by an assessment system that reveals both their growth and the areas in which improvement is needed.
- It empowers them to share in the responsibility for their own learning.
- In good schools parents use assessment to observe the progress being made by their children.
- Assessment helps parents note progress or lack of progress on the part of their youngster and to determine when to seek assistance.
- Assessment helps parents understand what a given school is seeking to accomplish and whether the school's goals are in sync with the goals the parents desire.
- Good schools encourage parents to ask questions, to seek clarification of procedures used, and to determine the impact of a given test on their child's future.

Parent Involvement

One of the most prevalent and consistent findings in the research on good schools is that parent involvement makes a difference. Positive parent involvement has a significant impact on student achievement, school attendance, and the central role of the school in students' lives.

In good schools, parents:

Participate with the school in establishing its organisational goals.

Actively participate in developing the school's policy on discipline, grading, attendance, testing, promotions, and retentions. Visit teachers and administrators at the school on a regular basis.

Inquire as to what happened at school on any given day and help children clarify concerns. Inquire about homework assignments, provide place and time for students to complete their work, and offer assistance to students as needed.

Speak well of the school.

Take stock periodically to determine if they, their child, and the school are working together in their plans for the child's future.

Recognize that children spend only a portion of the day at school and that much more of their time is spent at home; therefore much can and should be done at home to increase the child's learning.

Join a school organization if at all possible. Listen to their children.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND SUPPORT

Good schools are an important part of a community. Recognised leaders of the community often share their talent and experience with a school, thereby projecting positive images and serving as role models for students.

The utilisation of office space by agencies, corporations, and businesses to display outstanding work accomplished by students (essays, art work) makes a positive display of the togetherness that exists between the school and the community.

Good schools know that they and the community are one. Failure on the part of either can bring discredit to the other.

Good schools receive broad support from their communities and identify with the community and its agencies in multiple ways and on a continuous basis.

In good schools, the social agencies are active participants in the life of the school, often providing additional counselling, tutoring services, and help the slow learners.

Members of the community visit the school regularly and participate in assemblies, often addressing some of the critical issues of the community and indicating where and how help can be obtained.

Good schools make every effort to schedule events at times and places that are convenient for parents and encourage maximum participation by the entire school community.

THE RIGHT SCHOOL IS ONLY THE BEGINNING OF A LIFETIME OF EDUCATIONAL ENJOYMENT.

A good school for your child is only the initial step. Reaping the benefits of any school requires the constant participation of all concerned the students, teachers, and parents. When your child enters a school, it represents a commitment on the part of both you and the child and gives a vote of confidence to the school that you believe it will do its best. The education of your child is above all a cooperative effort that involves the school, teachers, parents, and the community.