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Where We Have Been

In *Harbors of Hope: The Planning for School and Student Success Process* (Hulley & Dier, 2005), we shared what we believe to be true about schools that make a difference for all students. We called these schools “Harbors of Hope.” Our thinking for the book was framed within a lexicon of hope. In our view, hope is a form of optimism that may seem unwarranted in the face of incredible odds. It is the thing that keeps people keeping on instead of giving up. Hope is not a naïve view of the world that is characterized by a blind belief that somehow everything will turn out all right. Rather, it is a realistic acknowledgment of existing challenges coupled with profound commitment to finding the means and resources to deal with them. It is a powerful emotion that fuels all activity in schools that are Harbors of Hope. We believe that schools become Harbors of Hope when staffs commit themselves to identifying and addressing anything that interferes with school and student success.

Effective schools research, which has been conducted for over 30 years, provided the foundation for our work in *Harbors of Hope*. Its power resides in the fact that the seven correlates of effective schools that were identified so long ago set the standard for effective schools and have withstood the test of time. While the educational context has changed dramatically over 3 decades, the correlates remain as relevant as ever. What has changed, however, is how they are manifested in schools. A second generation of the correlates has evolved over the years in response to the changing climate and demands in education. Student achievement, attendance, attitude, and behavior remain the key indicators of school effectiveness, and collaboration is the vehicle for change.

Our observation is that schools that are Harbors of Hope exhibit all of the correlates within a framework of *character* and *competence*. They demonstrate moral and ethical excellence (character) along with the knowledge and capacity (competence) to help all students learn. Figure 1-1 (page 4) illustrates the correlates within the character/competence framework. It also shows the key indicators of school effectiveness.

- ### Seven Correlates of Effective Schools
1. Clear and focused mission
 2. Safe and orderly environment
 3. Positive home/school relations
 4. Climate of high expectations for success
 5. Frequent monitoring of student progress
 6. Opportunity to learn and time on task
 7. Instructional leadership

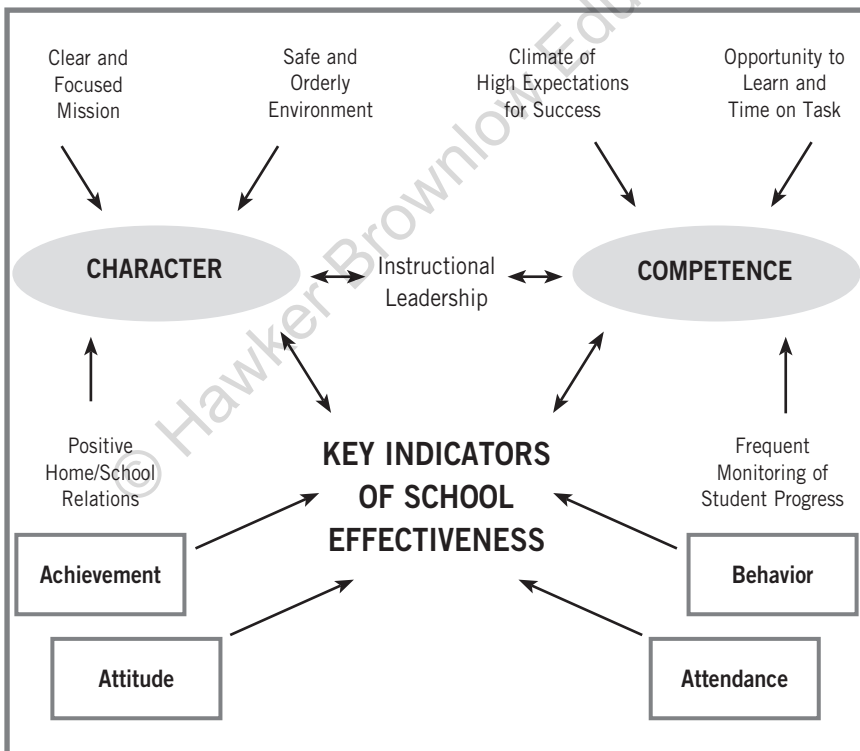


Figure 1-1: Seven correlates of effective schools linked to character, competence, and the key indicators of school effectiveness

The Link to Effective Schools Research

The prominent correlate for this lesson is “instructional leadership,” with the focus at the school level. In effective schools, the principal sets the precedent of identifying shared values and priorities. Once they have been articulated, the principal’s primary goal is to keep them at the forefront as reminders of the standards that have been chosen to guide the work of staff, parents, and students. Note that in the second generation of this correlate, teachers are central to attainment of the values and priorities that have been identified. Because of this, they must also be recognized as instructional leaders in the school. Administrators must shift to being leaders of leaders intent on guiding, supporting, and empowering teachers. Teachers must come to the fore as leaders in pursuit of the mission of learning for all.

Lezotte and McKee (2002) told us that principals need to be proactive, interactive, and reactive. They must proactively “seize on every chance that comes along to remind teachers, parents, support staff and students themselves of the school’s mission” (p. 164). While working with and supporting teachers as they strive to ensure student mastery of essential outcomes, principals must “invest as much time and energy as is realistically possible in the place where the mission of learning meets the road—the classroom” (p. 164). Reactively speaking, they must “focus as much of the organizational energy as is feasible on the data that indicate the extent to which the school is achieving its mission” (p. 164).

- ▶ In schools that are Harbors of Hope, learning by all is a reality. In these schools, the correlates work in concert and are interdependent. All seven are consistently present and powerfully demonstrated.

What We Have Learned About the Lesson

According to Marzano (2003), leadership is the single most important aspect of effective school reform. Fullan (2005) supported this position and went further to tell us that “leadership is to this decade what standards-based reform was to the 1990s” (p. xi). He encouraged us to think in terms of *leadership*, as opposed to *leaders*. He suggested that the “main mark of an effective principal is not just his or her impact on the bottom line of student achievement, but also on how many good leaders he or she leaves behind who can go even further” (p. 35). To leave a truly lasting legacy, administrators must ensure that teacher leadership dispositions and skills are developed, honed,

Grid for Class Profiles	
Name	_____
Individualized Education Plan	_____
Accommodations	_____
Modifications	_____
Learning Style Preference	_____
Multiple Intelligence Strengths	_____
Reading Level	_____
CASI Strengths/Needs	_____
Interests	_____

developed. A gap analysis staff survey provides important information for planning professional development activities at the school. The survey identifies areas of required collective growth and asks teachers to reflect on their individual level of comfort with each. To support teachers in their professional growth, creative timetabling allows teachers to be released during the school day for 40 minutes once a week. Additionally, 30 minutes of staff meeting time are devoted to sharing information obtained at workshops and PLC meetings. The introduction to the survey reads as follows:

Please fill out the attached survey so that we can plan for professional development and provide support where needed for next year. Please indicate your **comfort level** with each initiative and how you would like to learn about it so it becomes a “habit” in your classroom.

Cushy Chair = High level of understanding, using in classroom on a frequent and regular basis

Wooden Bench = Familiar with concept, only dabbling, haven’t put it into practice regularly

Bed of Nails = Sounds familiar, not sure what it means or looks like, not doing it, haven’t read it

If at First You Don't Succeed . . . Do Whatever It Takes

Uncertainty is inherent in teaching. Today's classrooms are filled with students with multiple needs, and schools are being challenged to ensure that all students succeed. The issues that educators must grapple with are adaptive challenges for which the solutions lie outside the current way of operating. Theories abound that suggest how these dilemmas might be addressed, but while they provide us with direction, they may not translate into practice as easily as we would like. Local conditions, organizational culture, leadership, community expectations, and other factors can interfere with even the most carefully crafted plans. Teachers working together with an attitude of doing whatever it takes to achieve learning by all are the key to success. Working with this mindset, teachers can hold high expectations for students as well as themselves—knowing that they will persist until they find a way to make success possible.

The notion of collaboration has become embedded in current educational thinking, and the power of collaborative school cultures in addressing today's educational challenges is widely recognized. We should not, however, consider an understanding of the concept of collaboration and teacher willingness to engage a foregone conclusion. For many years, teachers have been accustomed to working in isolation. They have enjoyed a lot of autonomy. Congeniality has been prized over collegiality. Experience tells us that authentic collaboration requires that teacher paradigms about the work that needs to be done and the means of doing it effectively must shift. True collaboration requires that teachers create knowledge together through examining current data about student achievement and engaging in joint planning to address identified gaps. Cultures built on collaboration are characterized by job-embedded professional growth, continuous learning, and collective responsibility for accountability. The skills of working

Academics Are the Focus . . . But Other Things Matter, Too

Academics must be a priority for schools; however, to genuinely address the whole child, learning must go beyond the formal curricula that are among the tools of our profession. When we consider the rate at which the world is changing and becoming smaller through advances in science and technology, we must acknowledge that the world into which today's children and youth will graduate is vastly different than it was even 10 years ago. Globalization of economies is resulting in increased international trade. It is imperative that cultural differences be respected and language barriers overcome to respond to the changes we are dealing with today and the challenges we are likely to face in the future. Health and security issues are pressing and must be dealt with on an international level if successful solutions are to be found.

Changing demographics are having an enormous impact on schools. According to the 2006 census done by Statistics Canada, more than half of all Aboriginal people in Canada are under the age of 25 (Statistics Canada, 2008). In addition, an increasing number of new immigrants creates a diversity in schools that mimics the diversity of the world. As a society and as educators, we must respond to the unique needs of all students by identifying and actively teaching the skills and attitudes they will need in the future.

Our educational mandate must shift toward preparing students to become citizens of the world. To do this will require a concerted effort on the part of all educational stakeholders as well as parents and the broader community. School personnel must make it a goal to forge positive relationships with the parents and caregivers wherever possible. It is also important to establish productive relationships with members of the community at large. Through collaborative working relationships with parents and the community, schools can enhance their ability to help students prepare for life in the adult world.