

# 4.

## Effective Schools:

### What Research Says

Pick a school you know and ask these questions about its climate:

- Does the school have an orderly environment?
- Does the school promote an academic emphasis?
- Are there expectations for success?

Then ask three more questions about its leadership:

- Are models of appropriate behavior, attitudes, and beliefs encouraged by the school's climate?
- Has a consensus developed around patterns of acceptable behavior and around the academic emphasis of the school?
- Does feedback to school participants provide a large number of rewards distributed over most of the population, as well as punishments that are consistent?

These questions have been synthesized from the research literature on effective schools (Squires, 1980). The school's climate and leadership are necessary ingredients in supporting the teacher behaviors of planning, classroom management, and instruction that, in turn, foster student success, involvement, and coverage of appropriate content. As the model in Chapter 1 shows, improved student achievement is the likely outcome.

Three areas appear important in creating a positive school climate: an academic emphasis, an orderly environment, and expectations for success. Three leadership processes that build and maintain this climate are modeling, consensus building, and feedback. These, at least, are our conclusions after reviewing the research on effective schools (Squires, Huitt, and Segars, 1981).

Different types of studies are included in this review: (1) studies that concentrate on quantifiable input-output relationships, (2) studies that look at the correlates of safe schools, (3) studies that compare high- and low-achieving schools, (4) a longitudinal study of urban schools succeeding above expectations, (5) studies of successfully desegregated schools, and (6) descriptions by journalists of schools with reputations for effectiveness. The studies were chosen because they used a wide variety of methodologies, were relatively well known and accessible, and attempted to associate a wide variety of variables with schooling outcomes. While the review covers a large number of studies, it is not intended to be comprehensive.

We have chosen to summarize the results by turning the conclusions into questions that teachers, administrators, superintendents, and school board members can ask to determine the effectiveness of a school. For example:

Finding	Question
Student reports of strict enforcement of school rules and strict control of classroom behavior are associated with low levels of school property loss (NIE Safe School Study, 1978).	Do students perceive congruence among the faculty in enforcing school rules and strictly controlling classroom behavior?

In the following chapter, we group the questions to illustrate how the themes of school climate and leadership emerged for us.

We would like to stress that the results reported here are based either on correlational studies or on descriptive case studies, and it is therefore risky to infer causation. Still, the consistency across studies using various methodologies is strong enough for this line of research to merit a closer look, particularly as it provides a potential body of knowledge for those who make school policy and desire school improvement.

Our discussion is organized around input, process, and outcome. Examples of these terms include the following:

- Input:** students' socioeconomic status; students' IQ; school size
- Process:** courses are planned jointly by teachers; high proportion of students hold leadership positions; administration checks that teachers assign homework
- Outcome:** standardized test scores; student behavior; attendance, delinquency, violence, and vandalism.

We begin by summarizing studies that ask, "What inputs generally affect a school's outcomes?" Then we review research suggesting that a

school's processes are related to its outcomes. In the third part of the chapter, we summarize a longitudinal study that confirms this relationship between processes and outcomes. Next, studies of effective desegregated schools are summarized. Finally, journalists' descriptions of effective schools test some conclusions of the more rigorous research. Throughout, we highlight questions derived from the research to stimulate thought on characteristics of effective schools. Then, in Chapter 5, we cluster these questions into groups and discuss their implications.

## The Search for Input-Output Relationships

During the 1950s and 60s, educational research focused on relationships between a school system's inputs and outcomes. These studies were generally on a large scale and tended to concentrate on areas that could be easily quantified. (Averch, 1974, reviews a substantial amount of this research. Bridge, Judd, and Mook, 1979, and Sweeney, 1982, review research done more recently.)

The input conditions in these studies generally included such factors as the number of books in the library, amount of leader experience and/or college preparation of school staff, availability of instructional materials, dollars spent on instruction and administration, and socioeconomic level of students. On the output side were such things as grades, entrance into college, dropout rates, Scholastic Aptitude Test scores, and achievement test results. If research found a significant association between input measures (such as dollars spent on instruction) and outcomes (such as student grades or college acceptance rates), the results could become the basis for recommending that more money or more emphasis be placed on those aspects of schooling.

James Coleman (1966) conducted perhaps the best-known study in this area. With the exception of socioeconomic status (SES), which did tend to show a high correlation with pupil performance, Coleman found no significant relationship between the inputs and outcomes he examined: "Only a small part of variation in achievement is due to school factors. More variation is associated with the individual's background than with any other measure" (p. 7). The input conditions of a school's physical plant, its services, its extracurricular activities, and the characteristics of teachers and principals did not appear to be associated with student achievement.

There are three common interpretations of Coleman's findings:

1. Despite all the resources put into schools, they are not able to

affect student achievement. Therefore, schools should receive fewer resources.

2. If SES is what makes a difference, then putting more resources into schools serving poor students is likely to affect their achievement. (Title I/Chapter I legislation resulted from this line of thinking.)

3. With the exception of SES, what was studied did not appear to make much difference. Therefore, other aspects of schools should be examined.

By now the furor and debate has subsided, and most educators and researchers have embraced the third option. The search now focuses on other school characteristics.

We would like to add a footnote to this brief review of the Coleman Report, however. Coleman also found that, in addition to SES, student attitudes showed the strongest relationship to achievement. Student attitudes were divided into three components: interest in learning and reading, self-concept, and environmental control. Of these three components, Coleman concluded that "the child's sense of control of environment is most strongly related to achievement" (p. 320). Thus, students who feel that luck is more important than hard work, and that something or somebody is stopping them when they try to get ahead, are less likely to succeed in school than are those who believe otherwise. Two questions arise from these findings:

- Do students believe that luck is more important than hard work?
- Do students believe that they can get ahead without something or someone stopping them?

## The Search for Process-Outcome Relationships

The Coleman Report indicates that the most easily measured characteristics of school context, with the exceptions of SES and student attitude, are not associated with student outcomes. This suggests that something in the school environment influences those attitudes. The review of studies in this section attempts to track down those influences.

### Processes That Lead to an Orderly Environment

The studies in *Violent Schools—Safe Schools: The Safe School Study Report to the Congress* (1978) sought process factors associated with school violence and vandalism and a safe and orderly environment. Our review here links school effectiveness with low amounts of violence and vandalism.

From a random sample of urban, suburban, and rural schools across the United States, 15 factors were associated with the extent of crime in a given school. The authors organized these factors into five closely

related themes and concluded that, "taken together, they suggest a set of overall process goals that schools should work to achieve" (p. 132). These themes provide the basis for our questions, which, when answered, point the way to effective schools. Most of the themes involve a school's processes, rather than community influence or socioeconomic factors. The study's findings are shown, according to our paradigm, in Figure 1.

One theme arising from these factors is that the size and impersonality of a school are related to school crime:

Large schools have greater property loss through burglary, theft, and vandalism; they also have slightly more violence.

The more students each teacher teaches, the greater the amount of school violence.

The less students value teachers' opinions of them, the greater the property loss (p. 132).

In larger schools, especially when classes themselves are also large, it is more likely that students can "slip through the cracks" and go unnoticed. In addition, in an impersonal school where there is little contact between teachers and students, students are less likely to be affected by teachers' opinions. We will return to the effect of teachers' opinions and expectations later; for now, one question arises:

- Do teachers have extensive contact with a limited number of students in several aspects of their education?

Three factors suggested the Safe School Study's second theme—systematic school discipline:

Student reports of strict enforcement of school rules and strict control of classroom behavior are associated with low levels of school property loss.

Student perceptions of tight classroom control, strictly enforced rules, and

**Figure 1. Findings of the 1978 Safe School Study.**

Input	Process	Outcome
Rural	Size and impersonality	Violence
Suburban	Systematic school discipline	Vandalism
Urban	Arbitrariness and student frustration	
	Reward structure	
	Alienation	

principal's firmness are associated with low levels of student violence.

Reports by the teachers of strong coordination between faculty and administration are associated with a lower level of property loss (p. 133).

Perceptions of coordinated discipline and tight classroom control may indicate that there is enough social interaction among school participants for a consistent disciplinary policy to be developed and carried out. Also, students are likely to perceive this consistency in the principal's firmness and teachers' tight classroom control. These findings suggest the following questions:

- Has the principal built shared expectations and strong coordination about school rules?
- Do students perceive congruence among the faculty in enforcing school rules and strictly controlling classroom behavior?

The third theme—arbitrariness and student frustration—suggests that student crime results when students perceive rules to be arbitrarily enforced by an unnecessarily punitive staff. As the study points out:

Schools where students complain that discipline is unfairly administered have higher rates of violence.

Schools where teachers express authoritarian and punitive attitudes about students have greater amounts of property loss (p. 134).

These two factors tend to exist in schools that have a weak or lax disciplinary policy. Such a policy may make students feel unfairly singled out for punishment, which, in turn, tends to increase crime. Because they see students as unruly, teachers begin to develop unfavorable attitudes toward them. The cycle of frustration escalates and ends up in violence and property loss. This suggests the following questions:

- Do students perceive that discipline is unfairly administered?
- Does the faculty express punitive or authoritarian attitudes toward students?

The fourth theme emphasizes the importance of a school's reward structure. Four factors appear related to violence and property loss:

Schools where students express a strong desire to succeed by getting good grades have less violence.

Schools where students express a strong desire to succeed by getting good grades have more property loss.

Schools where students have a strong desire to be school leaders have greater property losses.

Schools where teachers say they lower students' grades as a disciplinary measure have greater property losses (p. 135).

The last three factors indicate that an emphasis on getting good

grades decreases violence but increases vandalism. The study describes this syndrome as "a situation in which the competition for rewards is intense, the availability of rewards is limited and the unfair distribution of rewards is prevalent. These students care about the rewards of the school but see the rewards being unfairly distributed; they react by attacking the school" (p. 135). This raises the following question:

- Are rewards earned fairly by a large number of students?

Rewards here can go beyond the academic rewards of grades. For example, being on a football team or in the band provides explicit recognition of special talent and a possible reward for that talent.

The fifth theme, alienation, appears to encompass many of the other themes that went before. The study defines alienation as "the breakdown of the social bond that ties each individual to society" (p. 136). One of the study's major findings touches on this concept directly: Student violence is higher in schools where more students say that they cannot influence what will happen to them—that their future is dependent upon the actions of others or on luck, rather than on their own efforts (p. 136).

As we reported previously, Coleman also found that a sense of efficacy, of having control over one's destiny in the world, was strongly related to academic achievement. We believe that this sense of being connected to the larger society (and for children this means being a "part" of a school) is the most significant finding of these large-scale studies.

The importance of this finding is, in a sense, unexpected, considering the thousands of variables that were studied. Nevertheless, its implications for the school as a social institution appear to signal a need to weave students, faculty, and administration together into the fabric of the school and to let personal interactions demonstrate to students their ability to affect the environment. The following two questions emerge:

- Do students, faculty, administration, and the community feel that their own efforts govern their future?
- Does the social structure of the school teach those who live there that their actions have some effect?

### Processes That Lead to Improved Student Achievement

The second group of studies in this section examines school processes while controlling SES variables in order to discover which of those processes are associated with higher student achievement. Researchers first aggregated outcome data by schools, then grouped the schools into categories according to students' SES, and finally examined processes in high- and low-achieving schools within SES categories that may account

for achievement differences. The research concentrated on school-level variables. This strategy may be summarized as follows:

**Input:** control SES

**Process:** what processes make the difference?

**Outcome:** high-achieving or low-achieving school?

Interestingly, a number of these studies were conducted at the state's own initiative—in Maryland, New York, Michigan, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and California, for instance.

The findings did show differences among schools with students from the same SES levels. The following passage from Bookover et al. (1979) gives some results of these comparisons between high- and low-achieving schools:

Our data indicate that high achieving schools are most likely to be characterized by the students' feeling that they have control, or mastery of their academic work and the school system is not stacked against them. This is expressed in their feelings that what they do may make a difference in their success and that teachers care about their academic performance. Teachers and principals in higher achieving schools express the belief that students can master their academic work, and that they expect them to do so, and they are committed to seeing that their students learn to read, and to do mathematics, and other academic work. These teacher and principal expectations are expressed in such a way that the students perceive that they are expected to learn and the school academic norms are recognized as setting a standard of high achievement. These norms and the teachers' commitment are expressed in the instructional activities which absorb most of the school day. There is little differentiation among students or the instructional programs provided for them. Teachers consistently reward students for their demonstrated achievement in the academic subjects and do not indiscriminately reward students for responding regardless of the correctness of their response.

In contrast, the schools that are achieving at lower levels are characterized by the students' feelings of futility in regard to their academic performance. This futility is expressed in their belief that the system functions in such a way that they cannot achieve, that teachers are not committed to their high achievement, and that other students will make fun of them if they actually try to achieve. These feelings of futility are associated with lower teacher evaluations of their ability and low expectations on the part of teachers and principals. The norms of achievement as perceived by the students and the teachers are low. Since little is expected and teachers and principals believe that students are not likely to learn at a high level, they devote less time to instructional activity, write off a large proportion of students as unable to learn, differentiate extensively among them, and are likely to praise students for poor achievement (p. 143–144).

Our questions, taken from Brookover's description, ask those who are concerned with effective schools to look at how the schools reinforce positive expectations:

- Do students master their academic work?
- Do students feel the school helps them to master their academic work?
- Do principals and teachers believe and expect that students can master their academic work?
- Do teachers and principals support the academic focus of the school by spending most of the school day on instructional activities?
- Do teachers provide rewards for actual achievement?
- Is there little differentiation among students or in the instructional program provided for them?

In Brookover's descriptions there is a shift in perspective from the material aspects of the school—dollars spent, years of training, curriculum materials—to a cluster of attitudes and perceptions. For example, students believe that what they do will make a difference; teachers and principals expect students to succeed; the role of the principal emerges, as it did in the Safe School Study, as an important factor in effective schools.

In summarizing studies of high- and low-achieving schools, Austin (1979) found the principal's role to be important in supporting the belief systems held by teachers and students:

Strong principal leadership (for example, schools "being run for a purpose rather than running from force of habit").

Strong principal participation in the classroom instructional program and in actual teachings.

Principals felt they had more control over the functioning of the school, the curriculum, and program staff (p. 13).

Wellish et al. (1978) found that administrators in schools where achievement was improving were more concerned with instruction, communicated their views about instruction, took responsibility for decisions relating to instruction, coordinated instructional programs through regularly discussing and reviewing teaching performance, and emphasized academic standards.

Weber (1971), in examining four inner-city schools that were successful in teaching children to read, found eight factors that affected reading achievement: strong leadership, high expectations, good atmosphere, strong emphasis on reading, additional reading personnel, use of plans, individualization, and careful evaluation of student progress. All of these factors are usually under the direct control of the principal.

Certainly, there are other studies that support the need for strong leadership: Edmonds (1978), Felsenthal (1978), Irvine (1979), and McLaughlin and Marsh (1978) are a few. In addition, the Safe School Study also reported that:

the data point to the principal and the school administration as the key element. An effective principal who has developed a systematic policy of discipline helps each individual teacher to maintain discipline by providing a reliable system of support, appropriate inservice training for teachers, and opportunities for teachers to coordinate their actions (p. 137).

A number of questions emerge from these findings:

- Does the principal have a purpose in mind when running the school?
- Does the principal emphasize academic standards?
- Does the principal provide a reliable system of support, appropriate inservice training for staff, and opportunities for staff to coordinate their actions in the areas of instruction and discipline?
- Does the principal regularly observe classrooms and confer with teachers on instructional matters?

## A Longitudinal Study

The next study, *Fifteen Thousand Hours*, by Rutter et al. (1979), is more sophisticated than the previous ones reviewed in that it tracked the performance of 12 inner-city London schools over a period of five years. The study controlled for SES and examined four outcomes: achievement, attendance, student behavior, and delinquency. Again, it concluded that school processes—the characteristics of a school as a social organization—influence the school's effectiveness. The study's components are categorized according to our paradigm in Figure 2.

Rutter and his colleagues suggest that the formation and maintenance of a social group, with norms and values that support the purpose of the school, may be the most important resource a school possesses. In addition, they suggest ways in which classrooms and teachers affect a

Figure 2. Components of Rutter's Study, *Fifteen Thousand Hours*.

Input	Process	Outcome
Control for SES	Academic emphasis	Achievement
	Skills of teachers	Attendance
	Teachers' actions in lessons	Student behavior
	Rewards and punishments	Delinquency
	Pupil conditions	
	Responsibility and participation	
	Staff organization	

school's climate. Because this study is powerful in its implications and conceptually elegant in its design, we have chosen to discuss its conclusions in more depth.

All 12 schools that Rutter studied had relatively similar students (input variables), but produced very different outcomes in terms of (1) academic attainment on exams, (2) student behavior in school, (3) attendance, and (4) delinquency.

For example, controlling for parents' occupation and students' verbal reasoning ability (two variables correlated with delinquency), Rutter found that for comparable groups of boys who happened to attend different schools, those in one school were three times as likely to be delinquent as were those in another school. Indeed, delinquency rates for boys varied from a low of 16 percent in one school up to 40 percent in another. The significant difference in these groups of students appeared to be simply that they attended different schools.

Upon finding that schools differed in outcomes, Rutter hypothesized that certain school processes influenced these differences and, further, that those processes were, for the most part, under the control of teachers and administrators. (Note how far we've come from the Coleman findings reviewed above.) For our purposes, Rutter's general findings can be summarized as follows:

1. Variations were partially related to student intake; namely, where there was a substantial nucleus of children of at least average intellectual ability, students generally scored higher on the tests. Delinquency rates were higher in those schools with a heavy preponderance of the least able. However, the differences in intake, while affecting outcomes, did not affect school processes.

2. The variations between schools were stable for five years and were not related to physical factors.

3. Better-than-average schools tended to perform at higher levels on all outcome measures.

The differences between the schools were systematically related to their characteristics as social institutions. These characteristics, the most significant of which are listed below, can be modified by teachers and administrators:

- Academic emphasis
- Skills of teachers
- Teachers' actions in lessons
- Rewards and punishments
- Pupil conditions
- Responsibility and participation
- Staff organization.

Measurement of these seven characteristics of effective schools provides further insight into what Rutter means by school processes. In Figure 3, each measure that is significantly associated with one or more outcome area has been changed to a question. As you review the chart, try out the questions on a school you know.

But this is not the end of the story, for Rutter also introduced the

**Figure 3. Processes and Measures Associated with School Outcomes.**

School Processes	Measures
Academic Emphasis	<p>Is homework frequently assigned?</p> <p>Do administrators check that teachers assign homework?</p> <p>Do teachers expect students to pass national exams?</p> <p>Is work displayed on classroom walls?</p> <p>Is a large proportion of the school week devoted to teaching?</p> <p>Do a large proportion of students report library use?</p> <p>Is course planning done by groups of teachers?</p>
Skills of Teachers	<p>Do teachers spend a large proportion of their instruction with students involved?</p> <p>Do inexperienced teachers consult with experienced teachers about classroom management?</p>
Teachers' Actions in Lessons	<p>Do teachers spend a large proportion of time on the lesson topic?</p> <p>Do teachers spend less time with equipment, discipline, and handing out papers?</p> <p>Do most teachers interact with the class as a whole?</p> <p>Do teachers provide time for periods of quiet work?</p> <p>Do teachers end lessons on time?</p>
Rewards and Punishments	
Punishment	<p>Are there generally recognized and accepted standards of discipline uniformly enforced by leaders?</p>
Rewards	<p>Do teachers praise students' work in class?</p> <p>Is there public praise of pupils at assemblies?</p> <p>Is students' work displayed on walls?</p>

**School Processes****Pupil Conditions****Measures**

- Is there access to telephone and provisions for hot drinks?
- Is care in decoration of the classroom evident?
- Is there provision for school outings?
- Do students approach staff members about personal problems?
- Do teachers see students at any time?

**Responsibility and Participation**

- Do a large proportion of students hold leadership positions?
- Do students participate in assemblies?
- Do students participate in charities organized by the school?
- Do students bring books and pencils to class?

**Staff Organization**

- Do teachers plan courses together?
- Do teachers report adequate clerical help?
- Does the principal check to see that teachers give homework?
- Is administration aware of staff punctuality?
- Do teachers feel their views are represented in decision making?

concept of "ethos" or "climate"—the style and quality of school life—which he attributed to the norms and values of the school as a social organization. In explaining the concept of ethos, Rutter took a second look at the measures that correlate with outcomes and reorganized them into four areas: (1) group management in the classroom, (2) school values and norms of behavior, (3) consistency of school values, and (4) pupil acceptance of norms. We will discuss each category and then offer a series of questions based on Rutter's analysis.

**Group Management in the Classroom**

Rutter's findings about group management in the classroom are included here for two reasons. First, this study examines significant aspects of both the classroom and the school as a whole, and Rutter contends that the social structure of a classroom in an effective school reinforces and supports the norms and values—the climate—of the whole school. Second, the Rutter study reinforces the importance of students' engagement and success and of teachers' planning and managing instruction.

Rutter found that children's classroom behavior was much better when the teacher had prepared the lesson in advance, when the teacher arrived on time, when little time was wasted at the beginning in setting

up, and when the teacher mainly directed his or her attention to the class as a whole. These findings suggest a structured classroom in which lessons begin and end on time and students' attention to the lesson is high. Our questions, then, are:

- Do teachers plan lessons in advance?
- Do teachers start lessons on time and continue without interruption?
- Is whole-group instruction used?

**School Values and Norms of Behavior**

Rutter suggests that values and norms are communicated and reinforced through three social mechanisms: (1) teachers' expectations about children's work and behavior; (2) models provided by teachers' conduct and by the behavior of other pupils; and (3) feedback children receive on what is acceptable performance at school. We will discuss each of these mechanisms in order.

**Teachers' expectations and standards.** The Brookover et al. (1979) study touched on teacher expectations as a potent indicator of effective schools. Rutter suggests that these expectations can be communicated to students by regularly assigning and marking homework, giving students responsibility for bringing books and pencils to class, and providing students with numerous opportunities to exercise leadership. Questions arising from these findings are:

- Do teachers expect students to succeed?
- Do teachers regularly give and mark homework?
- Do students bring books and pencils to class?
- Does the social structure of the school and classroom provide opportunities for students to practice leadership?

**Models provided by teachers.** Standards of behavior as modeled by the school's staff also reinforce a school's climate. Positive models convey the message that the school is valued because staff members attempt to keep it clean and attractively decorated, to begin lessons on time, to be sensitive to the needs of children, and to give their own time to assist students. Negative models show that teachers do not value the school, do not start classes on time, do not spend class time on the lesson, and do not discipline students in ways sanctioned by the school. Two questions arise from these findings:

- Are positive models of behavior provided by teachers?
- Does teacher behavior, such as helping students on the teacher's own time, indicate that the school's children and the profession of teaching are valued?



**Feedback.** Feedback to students can also support the norms, values, and climate of the school. According to Rutter, "Feedback that a child receives about what is and what is not acceptable at school will constitute a powerful influence on his behavior" (p. 189). Rutter found that praise during lessons happened on the average of three or four times a lesson; surprisingly, there were three times as many negative reinforcers. The amount of punishment showed only weak, insignificant associations with outcome, however, while the amount of rewards and praise, particularly during lessons, was associated with better student behavior. Rutter cautions that when giving praise, the currency should be real; the children should have actually performed in a commendable fashion. As we have seen in Brookover et al. (1979), students' success is important not only for its probable effect on self-concept but also to support the norms and values of the school. More rewards than punishments, then, may be another indication that the social and task structure of the school promotes student success. Rutter also points out that when punishments are necessary, they should be given in a way that indicates firm disapproval without humiliating the student or modeling violence. Questions for assessing schools according to these findings are:

- Does the feedback students receive in terms of rewards or praise outnumber the punishments?
- Do teachers praise students for work well done?
- Do teachers structure the classroom environment to permit students to succeed?
- Are punishments delivered in a way that indicates firm disapproval of misbehavior while avoiding humiliation and avoiding modeling violence?

### Consistency of School Values

Rutter describes a school's social organization by the degree of consensus held across the school's population: "The 'atmosphere' of any particular school will be greatly influenced by the degree to which it functions as a coherent whole, with agreed upon ways of doing things which are consistent throughout the school and which have the general support of all the staff" (p. 192).

For example, Rutter found better student outcomes in schools where teachers planned courses jointly; where expectations for behavior and discipline were set by the staff as a group; where administrators were aware of staff punctuality and homework assignments; and where decisions were centralized and staff members perceived that their interests were represented in those decisions. Rutter's suggestion that a

school's staff take its cues from administrative behavior and values reinforces studies that suggest the principal's role is to help set the norms and values of an institution. Together, the staff and the administration appear to be most influential in developing and maintaining a school's climate through consensus and consistency of norms and values.

For those who want to confirm a school's effectiveness, the following questions may be appropriate:

- Have teachers and administrators come to a working consensus on patterns of acceptable behavior for staff, students, and administration?
- Does there appear to be a working consensus on how school life is organized?
- Are there structured opportunities for staff and administration to develop and reinforce consensus?
- Do teachers feel their interests are represented by those making decisions?

### Pupil Acceptance of School Norms

Students must accept the school's norms if the school is to be effective. Rutter suggests three crucial influences in determining this acceptance. The first, general conditions for pupils and staff attitudes toward pupils, leads to the following questions:

- Is the building maintained and decorated to provide pleasant working conditions for students?
- Are staff members willing and available for consultation by children about problems?
- Does the staff expect students to succeed and achieve?

Shared activities between staff and pupils, such as away-from-school outings, also contributed to better student outcomes. Rutter hypothesizes that these shared activities may increase effectiveness if they are directed toward a common goal or purpose, such as a schoolwide charity. A question that reflects this point is:

- Are there out-of-class activities that bring students and teachers together to build toward a common goal?

Pupil behavior and success on exams were also influenced positively when a high proportion of students held positions of responsibility. Rutter hypothesizes that students who hold positions of responsibility are more likely to identify with the educational values of the school and to provide models of mature behavior for others. The following question might be posed:



- Do high proportions of students hold positions of responsibility?

To summarize, the Rutter study shows that differences in school outcomes in such areas as academics, attendance, student behavior, and delinquency not only reflect a school's intake patterns but are, to a significant degree, determined by school processes and characteristics.

## Studies of Effective Desegregated Schools

Delving into the research literature on desegregation, we found similar school processes operating in effectively desegregated schools. These processes are outlined in Figure 4. (See Henderson, et al., 1981, for a concise review.)

From a student's point of view, equal access and participation in the academic and cocurricular activities of the school was an important dimension associated with successful desegregation. Thus, rigid tracking tends to teach children that only a few will succeed (Pettigrew, 1975; Crain, 1978; Jones, et al., 1972; Porwoll, 1978). Similarly, equal and fair access to social positions and cocurricular activities are important (Rist, 1978, 1979; Schofield, 1978). Even school symbols, like team colors and mascots, can be a powerful force in fostering a sense of ownership by all groups in a school. The following question might be posed:

- Do students have equal and fair access to academic and cocurricular school programs?

Codes of conduct are important in a successfully desegregated school, as they are in a safe school. Studies point to a need for a uniform code of conduct, firm discipline, and procedures that are perceived to be fair by all groups (Lincoln, 1976; Migell, 1978; Wilie and Greenblatt, 1980). The principal appears to be the key person in establishing the "working" code of conduct and the climate of the school. The successful principal is able to communicate expectations of fair play to all staff and students (Egerton, 1977; Noblit, 1979). A question reflecting this is:

**Figure 4. School Processes and Outcomes in Desegregated Schools.**

Input	Process	Outcome
Schools under study as desegregated institutions	Student participation Codes of conduct	Reduction of conflict
	Principal's leadership Faculty models and expectations	Successful desegregated schools
	Inservice training	Improved achievement

- Is the principal perceived by students and faculty as modeling expectations of fair and equal treatment?

High expectations are also important, for what children learn depends to a large degree on what teachers expect of them (Davey, 1973; Eddy, 1976; Mackler, 1969). Moreover, a desegregated faculty may help provide positive role models for children (Cohen, 1980; Davidson, 1978). Two questions arise:

- Do school personnel provide positive role models for children?
- Do teachers have high expectations for all students, regardless of race or class?

Inservice training is one way a school demonstrates commitment toward the goal of equal opportunity. Successfully desegregated schools provide staff with inservice on skills for teaching heterogeneous classrooms and skills in classroom management, as well as self-analysis in actions that indicate discriminatory behavior. A question that comes from this discussion is:

- Is inservice training provided that encourages self-reflection and skill building in areas promoting equal opportunity?

## Descriptive Studies of Effective Schools

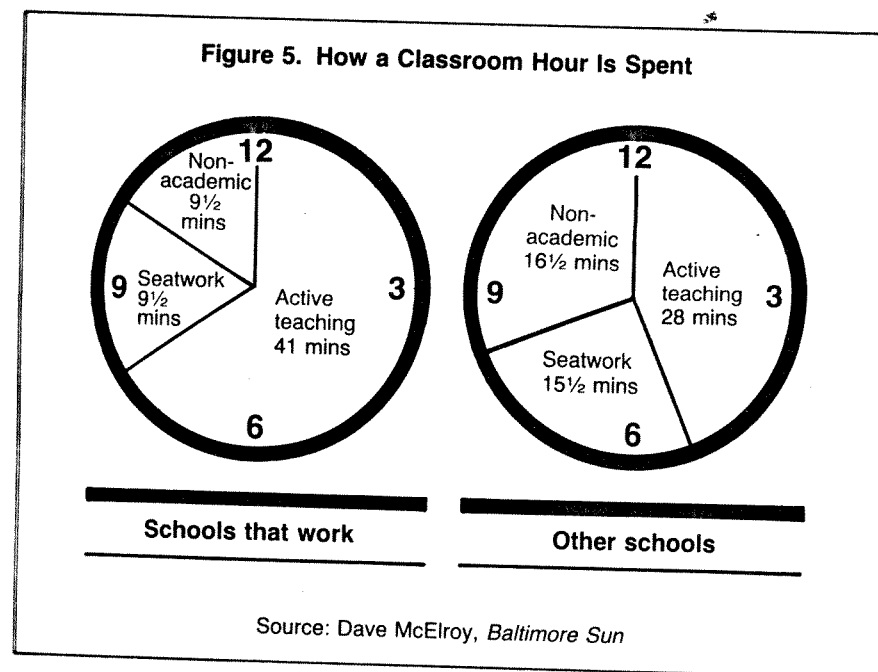
Recent research findings on effective schools have been indirectly confirmed in a rather unusual way by a group of journalists on a research fellowship at George Washington University's Institute for Educational Leadership. Their reports are compiled in D. Brundage, ed., *The Journalism Research Fellows Report: What Makes an Effective School?* (1979). After an overview of current research, the journalists were asked to visit schools across the country that local communities thought were effective or that had higher achievement test scores than would be expected. While journalistic descriptions do not hold the validity and reliability of research data, we think they ring true enough, and are consistent enough with the research, that useful questions can be posed from them. For the most part, our reading of the *Journalism Research Fellows Report* parallels that of Robert Benjamin of the *Cincinnati Post*, who wrote one of the articles. Benjamin found that effective schools are similar in terms of their principals, beliefs, instruction, teachers, reading, and resources. We will describe all but reading and resources because our own analysis of the *Journalism Research Fellows Report* doesn't support these as major characteristics of effective elementary and secondary schools.

Throughout the articles, the principal emerged as the one who sets focus, tone, philosophy, and direction in a school: "Good principals tend to rock the boat. They forsake the desire to be loved for the hard task of monitoring students' progress. They set achievement goals for their students, and they judge their teachers and themselves by them" (p. 102). Furthermore, the principals who were featured in this report tended to observe classes frequently, to have at least a partial say in hiring teachers, to actively structure the development of curriculum and instruction, to obtain the staff's commitment to a schoolwide program, and to elicit respect from students as a "straight shooter." Although the articles described both elementary and secondary principals with varying leadership styles, one of the headlines from the report summed it up: "Principals demand—and get—results, but allow flexibility in achieving them" (p. 24).

"Belief that students can learn—that the job can be done" (p. 102) is the second indication of effective schools. It appears from the news articles' descriptions that this belief originates with the principal and spreads to staff and students. But belief, from our analysis of the articles, goes beyond believing that children can and will learn. Belief also has to do with school focus, philosophy, and goals. The focus of a school could be a particular curriculum program, or an emphasis on community participation, or a successfully desegregated school. But there has to be a focus—a belief. As one of the headlines put it, "Good Schools Have Quality Principles."

"Instruction" is the third characteristic of an effective school. As Benjamin reports, "Student achievement results from time spent directly and efficiently on teaching academic skills" (p. 102). Task focus, a sense of urgency, and a belief that time is valuable all characterize effective classrooms. These classrooms appeared to be more humane places than classrooms where there was a lot of off-task behavior. Figure 5, based on logs compiled over two months of observation, shows that more time is spent on instruction in what Benjamin called "schools that work."

"Teachers" is the fourth theme mentioned in the articles, and in effective schools most teachers believe that children can succeed and have confidence in the principal's ability to lead. The effective teachers these reporters observed were able to maintain discipline in their classes without spending time punishing students, and the students appeared to understand the rules. Effective teachers planned their lessons in advance. When a teacher needed assistance, appropriate help was available from the principal or from another teacher. Effective teachers expected their students to learn and were able to structure their classrooms, using whole-group teaching techniques, to fulfill their



expectations. In effective schools, teachers handled most discipline problems themselves and rarely sent children to the principal's office. Furthermore, they cared for the students, had a sense of pride in teaching, and were relatively satisfied with teaching in a particular school. Effective schools usually did not have a transient teaching staff. The reporters did not paint rosy pictures of all the "effective schools," however; some still had problems with discipline (although most reported improvement), apathy, lack of student motivation, poor community relations, and large and insensitive bureaucracies. Nevertheless, these schools appeared to be moving in a set direction.

These journalistic descriptions of effective schools reinforce the importance of student engagement, student success, teacher management of instruction, and supervision by the principal, and as such they bolster the previously reported research on classroom effectiveness. Moreover, they suggest the following questions about effective schools:

- Does the principal actively set the tone and focus of the school by observing classrooms, enforcing the discipline code in a "fair but firm" manner, and setting goals for the school that are supported by the staff?
- Does the school have a focus or philosophy, a direction that is supported by administration, staff, and students?
- Is time spent efficiently and directly on teaching academic skills?
- Do teachers usually handle their discipline problems themselves?