

More Effective Schools – Program Validation

The Association for Effective Schools makes sure you receive proven and practical solutions to best ensure your success.

The school improvement process developed by the Association for Effective Schools was evaluated by seven agencies over seventeen years. Findings consistently conclude that the process produces positive results in student achievement.

- ◇ There is scientifically based evidence of a “positive impact” in raising student achievement. American Institute of Research study of 18 whole school improvement models.
- ◇ There is “very strong” evidence of services and support to schools to enable successful implementation. American Institute of Research study of 18 secondary whole school improvement models.
- ◇ Met the “evidence of effectiveness in improving student academic achievement” and other criteria for inclusion in the Catalog of Whole School Reform jointly sponsored by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory and the National Clearinghouse for Comprehensive School Reform. (see attached)
- ◇ “This model has significant impacts.” Syracuse University study of 49 schools using whole school reform programs and 47 control schools.
- ◇ 248 schools had statistically significant better achievement than 998 control schools. Kentucky Department of Education study.
- ◇ 31 schools had statistically significant better achievement than 31 control schools. Association for Effective Schools study.
- ◇ There is “convincing evidence of the effectiveness” of the model. National Diffusion Network, U.S. Department of Education.
- ◇ This model is “an exemplary program.” New York State Education Department.

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Archived: Catalog of School Reform Models Whole School Models

Last updated January 2004 and no more reviews are being conducted

More Effective Schools (K - 12)

Accepted for Inclusion 7/14/2004

Type of Model	entire-school
Founder	Robert E. Sudlow, Ron Edmonds, Lawrence Lezotte, Beverly Bancroft, and Ben Birdsell
Current Service Provider	Association for Effective Schools, Inc.
Year Established	1982
# of Schools Served	405

(7/14/2004)	
Level	K - 12
Primary Goal	to improve academic achievement for all students
Main Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aligns and maps curriculum (written, taught, and tested) with state standards • enables positive changes in school culture • provides leadership training for teachers and administrators to improve and sustain school results • provides technology solutions to support instruction and instructional program
Impact on Instruction	defines student performance levels necessary to achieve state standards within each grade/course; increases use of performance-based, formative assessments; focuses instruction on student understanding and ability to apply knowledge
Impact on Organization/Staffing	shared decision making within School Improvement Team; establishment of collaborative instructional teams by grade level (ES) or content area (MS/HS); leadership dispersed across teaching staff at each grade level and/or content area
Impact on Schedule	common time for teachers to meet 30 to 45 minutes each week, by grade level (ES) or content area (MS/HS); common time for grade-level/content-area teams to meet 30 to 45 minutes each month, across levels/areas
Subject-Area Programs Provided by Developer	curriculum alignment and mapping in core subject areas
Parental Involvement	parent representatives are required on the School Improvement Team; parents are involved in defining learner expectations and measuring levels of performance
Technology	subscription to online tools to support curriculum alignment, instructional mapping, and assessment processes; Internet access required for teachers; videoconferencing supports implementation
Materials	Effective Schools survey instruments and reports; school improvement plan workbook; subscription to Effective Schools research abstracts; grade-level/content-area instructional reference notebook; instructional team workbook; performance assessment manuals and workbook

Origin/Scope

Effective Schools research emerged in response to the 1966 Coleman report, the *Equality of Educational Opportunity* study led by James S. Coleman. The Coleman report credited the student's family background as the main reason for student success in school. Based on the findings of this study, Coleman proposed that children from poor families and homes, lacking the prime conditions or values to support education, could not learn, regardless of what the school did. This proposition created controversy and prompted action on the part of researchers who believed Coleman's proposal was wrong.

proportions of students were learning, and where learning was not a function of socioeconomic class. Such schools were identified, supporting the proposition that children from high-poverty backgrounds can learn at high levels as a result of public schools, regardless of family background. (Although these findings contradicted Coleman's proposition, the debate of beliefs continues.) Having established the fact that schools can make a difference, researchers began to seek answers to the question: Why do some schools succeed while others do not? When researchers compared high-performing schools to low-performing schools serving the poor, it was found that "Effective Schools" could be distinguished by a common set of characteristics.

Growing out of these "characteristics," and the desire by Dr. Robert E. Sudlow in 1982 to use the Effective Schools research to improve schools in the Spencerport Central School District in Spencerport, NY, the original More Effective Schools/Teaching Project was established. This effort resulted in the More Effective Schools (MES) model. In 1989 Ben Birdsall, an advocate for effective schools and MES, founded the Association for Effective Schools, Inc. (AES), a not-for-profit organization, to begin national dissemination of the MES model. Since AES' founding, more than 405 schools have implemented the model with similar successes.

General Approach

MES is a systemic change process working to embed the characteristics of Effective Schools within the culture of the district, school, and classroom as a means to improve student achievement. These characteristics, applied within the district, school, and classroom context, include clear and focused mission, high expectations for success, instructional leadership, frequent monitoring of student progress, opportunity to learn and time on task, a safe and orderly environment, and positive home-school relations. The MES model incorporates professional development to build local capacity and uses team and collaborative processes to align the practices, rituals, and routines of the district, school, and classroom with Effective Schools research and practices.

The MES model is delivered using three major and sometimes overlapping implementation strategies. One strategy addresses the district context for implementing change, one the school context for implementing change, and one the classroom context for implementing change.

Under the district implementation strategy, MES schools establish a District Improvement Team and a Standards/Curriculum Committee. The purpose of the District Improvement Team is to develop a district plan and recommend policy for school improvement based on the Effective Schools research. The purpose of the Standards/Curriculum Committee is twofold. One responsibility is to describe grade-level or course-level expectations based on and aligned with state standards. The other responsibility is to align and map state standards with the taught curriculum at each grade-level and/or for each course. This completes the initial phase of the MES mapping process. Depending on the district's configuration, the next phase of mapping may be assigned to Grade-level/Content-area Teams. MES staff provide training and guidance to the District Improvement Team and the Standards/Curriculum Committee.

Under the school implementation strategy, MES schools establish a School Improvement Team, a School-level Instructional Leadership Team, and Grade-level/Content-area Teams (depending on level of schooling). Teams already in existence may assume functions needed under the MES process.

The School Improvement Team develops annual school improvement plans based on archival data,

disaggregated student outcome data, and the results of staff, student, and parent surveys measuring perceived existence of the Effective Schools Characteristics. School plans are data driven and research based. After staff members approve their school plan, they work to implement it under the stewardship of the School Improvement Team. Typically, improvement plans contain no more than three major projects, at least two of which address instruction. MES staff provides training and guidance to the School Improvement Team.

The Grade-level/Content-area Teams are responsible for ensuring curriculum alignment, developing and maintaining shared curriculum maps and performance assessments, and sharing successful instructional strategies. Although training is provided by MES staff for specific tasks and processes, the Grade-level/Content-area Team continues to function focusing on curriculum, instruction, and student learning, using the processes of reflection and collaboration to improve learning. MES staff provides training and guidance to Grade-level/Content-area Teams.

The Instructional Leadership Team, made up of the principal and representatives of each grade level or content area, has a shared responsibility for improving the instructional program and monitoring implementation of the MES process. This team meets at least monthly. MES staff provides training and guidance to the Instructional Leadership Team.

Under the classroom implementation strategy, all teachers in MES schools receive training on Effective Schools research, concept-based curriculum, developing essential questions, and formative assessment using performance assessments and rubrics.

Results

An unpublished study prepared by the model developer (Birdsell, 2004) investigated the impact of the MES model on mathematics and reading in six districts and 31 schools in Kentucky from 1992 to 1994. The evaluation compared MES schools' performance of students in 22 elementary, four middle, and five high schools with similar non-MES schools statewide. The treatment and control groups were randomly matched on participation rates in the free and reduced-price lunch program, school locale, and total school enrollment. The total gain score on state assessments in reading and mathematics from 1992 to 1994 was the metric used in the study. All 31 MES schools had a higher total gain score in reading than their matched school. In math, 25 out of 31 MES schools had a higher total gain score than their matched school. MES school gains compared to non-MES school gains were statistically significant at the $p < .001$ level in both reading and mathematics.

The 2004 study is based on the first cohort of six districts to participate in the original evaluation conducted by the Kentucky Department of Education in 1995 to investigate the impact of MES on student performance between 1990 and 1994. By the end of 1994 a total of 47 districts and 248 schools had initiated implementation of the MES model. In some cases, particularly at the middle school level, the evaluator of the Kentucky study concluded that the implementation of the MES model showed a statistically significant impact on mathematics and reading scores compared to non-participating schools.

Implementation Assistance

- **Project Capacity:** The Association for Effective Schools, Inc.'s corporate headquarters, currently employing five employees, is based in Stuyvesant, New York. Over 50 MES trainers are located around the country and work as independent contractors.

- **Faculty Buy-In:** The principal and a majority of teachers must agree to participate.
- **Initial Training:** Between 11 and 20 days of training are provided on-site each year. The number of days is determined by AES when the project is designed. Trainings are administered for all teams and committees as they are formed and assume their rolls and responsibilities. At least one day of training is provided for the whole staff in August/September.
- **Follow-Up Coaching:** All trainings are followed up to ensure successful implementation. Off-site support is provided through telephone and videoconferences. Additional training is provided on an “as needed” basis, subject to existing project limitations.
- **Networking:** Teachers from MES schools have opportunities to network through annual conferences, school site visits, newsletters, and other electronic/Internet forums.
- **Implementation Review:** MES provides benchmarks for implementation and instruments for self-assessment, off-site support through telephone and videoconferences, and on-site reviews.

Costs

Costs are based on the specific plan agreed upon between the participating school or district and AES. Specific costs depend on the need, size of school, and level of service. A sliding cost schedule is available based on increased district and/or multiple schools’ participation. Average costs per school range between \$60,000 and \$90,000 per year for a three-year implementation.

State Standards and Accountability

MES is designed to help teachers define a time frame for student mastery of local and state standards. This is accomplished by assigning standards and formative assessments to specific grade levels through MES’ curriculum mapping process. This process depends on collaboration between teachers at each grade level and within each content area; it begins with a teacher review of state standards. Teachers receive training in the development and use of student performance assessments.

Student Populations

Special Considerations

The MES model is designed to create a learning organization with a school culture comprised of teacher and school leaders who take ownership of a continuing school improvement and successful student learning process. Success of the model depends on the level of cooperation and trust established among teachers and school leaders. Teachers and administration must commit to data-driven, research-based, collaborative decision making.

Selected Evaluations

Developer/Implementer

Birdsell, B. (2004). *More Effective Schools: Kentucky cohort implementation 1990-1994*. Association for Effective Schools, Inc.

Independent Researchers

McDonald, D. (1995). Kentucky Effective Schools Network. Kentucky Department of Education.

Sample Sites

School/Contact	Size	Locale	Race/Ethnicity					Free Lunch	ELL	Stud. with Dis.
			Afr. Amer.	Am. Indian	Asian Amer.	Hisp.	White			
Zablocki Elementary School 1016 West Oklahoma Avenue Milwaukee, WI 53215 414-294-2200 Contact: Patricia Walia	603	large city	7%	2%	3%	32%	55%	65%	2%	17%
Data are provided by model developer.										

For more information, contact

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