9.

Summary

Schools can be effective in producing high student achievement, a safe environment, low delinquency, good student behavior, and high attendance regardless of students' socioeconomic status. In effective classrooms, achievement on standardized tests is linked to the amount of time a student actively works on academic content, the amount of content the student covers that is on the standardized test, and the student's success on daily assignments and unit tests.

Student involvement, coverage, and success can be enhanced by teachers' actions in the classroom, by supervisors' and principals' work with teachers, and by school leadership that structures the organization to create a positive school climate. For example, teachers, through planning, classroom management, and instructional procedures, and principals, through their supervision, influence the degree to which students are involved, cover the appropriate content, and succeed in daily assignments and unit tests. These indicators of effective classrooms are also found in the research on effective schools. For example, school leaders can enhance a school's effectiveness by emphasizing academics, promoting an orderly environment, and reinforcing expectations of success. Principals and teachers can create such a positive school climate by modeling appropriate behavior, providing feedback on academics and discipline, and building a consensus about school goals related to achievement and discipline.

While schools can be focused on student involvement, success, and coverage, it is not a simple job. If adequate time is to be spent on basic skills instruction in reading and math, then such instruction will "use up" significant portions of the school day. Teachers and principals face difficult choices in deciding how to allocate time. Schools are experiencing increasing demands for education in a wide variety of subjects, such as family living, vocations, computers, environmental education, and nutrition education, along with subjects already in most school curricula—art, music, shop, physical education, and health. Time, probably more than money, dictates school priorities. Decisions about time allocation aren't new, of course, but more is now known about the relationship of time to student achievement. Curricular decisions can now be more precise, albeit more complicated, because of our knowledge about the impact of student involvement on student achievement.

Similar dilemmas exist for coverage—particularly if one basis for determining adequate coverage is standardized tests. Standardized tests in any subject area do not cover all the essential skills and knowledge in that area. In communications skills, for example, standardized tests cover such skills as reading comprehension of short passages, phonetic analysis, and usage, but often ignore writing, oral language, and an analysis of other media. Using knowledge about the relationship of coverage to student achievement, school leaders can weigh what is important to cover in any curriculum. We have some tools, such as objectives and curriculum alignment procedures, for keeping track of the contents of the school's curriculum. Progress is even being made in mapping the "hidden curriculum" of schools (Bussis, Chittendon, and Amarel, 1976). These tools can assist school districts in focusing their instructional programs. The anecdotes and research summaries from this book contain other suggestions.

If success fosters success, as the research on effective schools and classrooms indicates, then school leaders may want to examine how schools as organizations encourage students' success. Indeed, a number of our nation's schools are organized to screen students so that only the "better" ones remain for further education. The United States has been remarkably successful in educating large numbers of students for a greater number of years than any other country. Nevertheless, the tension continues between sorting students and ensuring that all students master the curriculum. The research cited here suggests that all students *can* master the content and concepts of a school's curriculum.

The research on effective schools points to a school's organization and leadership as major contributors to positive school outcomes. For example, Rutter (1979) found that students who attended effective high schools in inner-city London were less likely to have their names recorded in police records. The schools with lower delinquency rates also had higher attendance, higher achievement, and lower rates of violence and vandalism within the schools. Such evidence leads to the conclusion that schools, as organizations, have a significant effect on students' academic and social lives.

Other studies suggest that the leadership of the school, particularly the principal, plays a critical role in positive school outcomes. Such leaders organize the school so that teachers maximize student involve-

ment and success. Effective schools have leaders who reinforce an academic emphasis, an orderly environment, and expectations for success from students and staff. Leaders reinforce these norms by modeling desired behaviors, providing appropriate feedback, and generating a consensus about the purpose of the school. The questions in Chapter 7 suggest areas that leaders of effective schools have in common.

The research on effective school leadership is strong enough that we can begin using it in planning and performance appraisals of schools and their leaders. Again, this is much more easily said than done. The design of plans and appraisals begs a discussion about what is important for children to learn, for schools to teach, and for a school's leadership to nurture and direct. The successful judgments made in the past can now be bolstered by findings that correlate with school outcomes.

In summary:

1. Research points to questions that can be asked to determine the effectiveness of schools.
2. Measurement of school and classroom effectiveness is possible in terms of both outcomes—such as achievement, attendance, safety, and student behavior—and processes—such as students', teachers', and principals' behaviors of modeling, feedback, and consensus building.
3. Areas that contribute to school effectiveness are under the control of those who structure, direct, and govern the schools.

Findings from the research on effective schools and classrooms are not meant to be used as hammers; they should not be held as ultimate and fixed standards for all schools. On the other hand, they shouldn't be ignored, particularly by schools in which student achievement could improve. These findings provide one way to test individual practices and assumptions about the complex realities of schools against findings that may be more reliable and valid and involve a greater number of schools. This review frames questions for those interested in providing quality education for all children. With these questions, they can test their own circumstances, assumptions, and behaviors while confirming the best of their educational practices.