

The Grand Rapids Public School System believes that each student is a unique individual with differing needs, abilities, and aspirations.

We are committed to educate students of all backgrounds, socioeconomic status, race, gender, or handicapping conditions. Our schools are staffed with skilled and experienced teachers, administrators, and support personnel. These dedicated professionals accept the responsibility to ensure student mastery of essential skills, the opportunity for extended learning experiences, and equal educational outcomes for all students.

We believe that effective schools are places where students, teachers, administrators, support personnel, and community agree on the goals, methods and content of schooling. We are united in recognizing the importance of a coherent curriculum, the ability of every child to succeed and public recognition for students who succeed. The learning environment must reflect the presence of quality and equity of resources while encouraging the development of the whole student.

To this end, we ascribe to the following effective schools characteristics:

1. Safe and Orderly Environment

In an effective school, the primary function is teaching and learning. The school is neat, clean, attractive, safe, and well maintained. A positive school climate exists where the norms of appropriate behavior are clearly defined and the physical health and well-being of students are assured. The school exhibits a friendly and caring atmosphere that recognizes and reinforces excellence among students and staff.

2. Clear School Mission and Purpose

In an effective school, there is a clearly stated school mission where students, staff, and community understand and share the commitment to its attainment.

3. Instructional Leadership

In an effective school, the administrator is an assertive, instructional leader who is knowledgeable about curriculum, leads by example, uses staff evaluation for the purpose of instructional improvement, and is highly visible in the school setting. The administrator involves staff in cooperative decision making and planning.

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The administrator uses the characteristics of instructional effectiveness in the management of the instructional program and gives recognition for quality staff performance.

4. High Expectations

In an effective school, the staff believes and demonstrates that all students can learn and be successful in school. Teachers are committed to high standards and believe that student achievement is a result of those standards.

5. Opportunities to Learn and Student Time on Task

In an effective school, practical approaches to teaching and learning are demonstrated by teachers planning appropriate classwork, communicating the goals and objectives, modeling the expected outcomes, sequencing and pacing course content, and checking for understanding so that knowledge builds on itself. Students are continuously and actively involved in the instruction and a significant amount of time is given to practice and process new learning.

6. Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress

In an effective school, student progress is assessed through frequent student-staff interaction, regular monitoring of student mastery of skills, and use of data to improve teaching and learning. Staff also monitors student progress with respect to social and personal growth. Instructional decision making is varied and dependent upon the weight of measurable, observable evidence.

7. Home-School Relations

In an effective school, quality education is the shared vision of the school, the home, and the community. We recognize that parent(s)/guardian(s) involvement is one of the best predictors of student success. To that end, staff makes every effort to coordinate learning goals with child's parent(s)/guardian(s). It is essential that the administrator reach out to neighborhood and community partners so they are aware of the school's mission and the array of educational services we offer. The school should be viewed as a community partner offering an essential quality educational experience to children and youth. It is critical that the staff and community engage in partnerships that promote quality of education and community life in the neighborhoods where schools reside.

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### Conclusion

The Grand Rapids Public School System believes that education is a lifelong process involving the development of the whole person. We are committed to ensuring equitable and quality educational opportunities and base our educational effectiveness on student outcomes.

Approved: June 29, 2009

