

Seven Irreducible Needs of Children

Stanley Greenspan, M.D., *The Growth of the Mind And the Endangered Origins of Intelligence*, Persus Books, Reading Mass., 1997.

1. Every child needs a safe, secure environment that includes at least one stable, predictable, comforting and protective relationship with an adult, *not necessarily a biological parent*, who has made a long-term personal commitment to the child's daily welfare and who has the means, time and personal qualities needed to carry it out.
2. Consistent, nurturing relationships with the same caregivers including the primary one, early in life and throughout childhood are cornerstones of both emotional and intellectual competence, allowing a child to form the deep connectedness that grows into a sense of shared humanity and, ultimately, *empathy and compassion*.
3. Children *need rich, ongoing interaction*. In addition to love and nurturing is the need for the caregiver's ability to read a child's individual signals and to respond flexibly and appropriately.
4. Each child and family needs an environment that allows them to progress through the developmental stages in their *own style and their own good time*. Only in this way can children cultivate a sense of themselves both as distinct individuals and as members of particular groups.
5. Children must have opportunities to experiment, to find solutions, to take risks and even to fail at attempted tasks. From trying different approaches, seeking out allies, and assessing all options, emerge the perseverance and self-confidence needed to succeed at any serious endeavor. ***** A child's self-worth and positive self-esteem are rooted in relationships that support his/her initiative and ability to solve problems.** The lived experience of engaging with and overcoming challenges makes real his/her belief in her own powers.
6. Children need structure and clear boundaries. They derive security from knowing both what to expect and what others expect of them. They learn to build bridges among their thoughts and feelings when their world is predictable and responsive. *Firm yet reasonable limits, set within an atmosphere of warmth and empathy, constitute a crucial element of any relationship that truly nurtures a youngster's growth and allows him to learn self-discipline and responsibility.* (Many people erroneously see a conflict between structure and spontaneity, between love and limits.)
7. To achieve these goals, families need stable neighborhoods and communities. The appropriate, consistent and deeply committed care that a child needs to master the developmental levels requires *adults who are themselves mature, empathetic and emotionally accessible*.

MOTIVATION

by John H. Fitzgerald

After the first week of school in September, teachers begin to ask themselves and parents, How can I get Johnny or Juhuang or Muhammad to complete their work?

One answer to this question is to teach children to visualize being successful completing their task. The key to motivation is being able to see the way through to the end.

Teachers and parents can help children meet the challenge of their tasks by talking through with them what has to be done and by explaining what the finished product should look like or sound like. It helps to use examples.

They can also help their children by encouraging them to visualize the process of completing the task—guiding them through a mental moving picture of the steps necessary to get from where they are to completing the task.

I ask skeptical teachers and parents to picture a hobby or pastime they enjoy doing and ask them why they like this activity. They answer they like a particular activity because they are good at it and it gives them satisfaction. It is the same with children. Success brings satisfaction.

Children who are self-starters have enough confidence in themselves to take on new tasks and acquire new skills without any coaching. Children who have met with little success or criticism of their efforts have difficulty mustering up the courage to risk failure. These children especially need some help.

The key to helping reluctant children is to find an activity where they have experienced success in the past, have them talk through the familiar activity from beginning to end, then encourage them to apply the same beginning-to-end thinking to a new activity.

With reluctant children who have difficulty completing their work, it is also important to emphasize finishing the task over achieving a perfect result so that they do not become discouraged. Children who can see how to get to the end of a task believe there is a light at the end of the tunnel, in other words, that it is possible to succeed. This belief leads children to make the effort necessary to succeed.

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Two Sculptors

I dreamed I stood in a studio
And watched two sculptors there.
The clay they used was a young child's mind,
And they fashioned it with care.
One was a teacher; the tools she used
were books, music and art.
One, a parent with a guiding hand
And a gentle, loving heart.
Day after day the teacher toiled
With touch that was deft and sure.
While parents laboured by her side,
And polished and smoothed it o'er.
And when at last their task was done,
They were proud of what was wrought;
For all they had molded into the child
could never be sold or bought.
And each agreed he would have failed
if he had worked alone
For behind the parent stood the school
and behind the teacher - the home.

Author Unknown

Characteristics of Effective Schools

A Common Mission

1. Clear Goals
2. Shared Values and Beliefs
3. Instructional Leadership

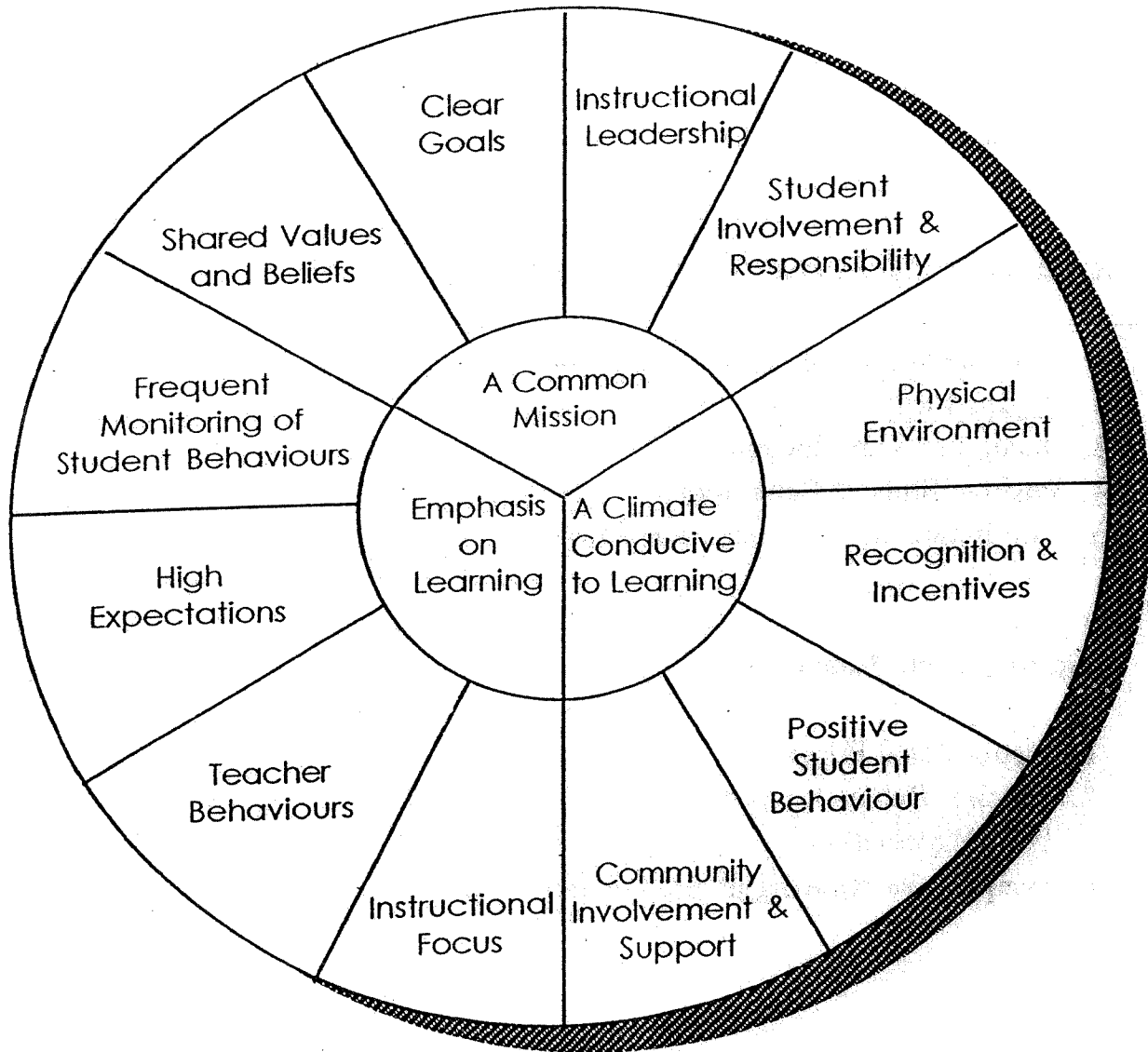
A Climate Conducive To Learning

1. Student Involvement and Responsibility
2. Physical Environment
3. Recognition and Incentives
4. Positive Student Behaviour
5. Community Involvement and Support

Emphasis on Learning

1. Instructional Focus
2. Teacher Behaviours (modelling)
3. High Expectations
4. Frequent Monitoring of Student Behaviours

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS



*Adopted from L.E. Sackney's
Practical Strategies for
Improving School Effectiveness
The Canadian School Executive,
October 1986, p.17*