

The Eleven Attributes of Comprehensive School Improvement viz-a-viz No Child Left Behind

by Ross Diener

With the emergence in 2001 of the No Child Left Behind legislation, Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) took on more weighted significance. With an increase in federal dollars to support the program, an even greater number of schools received funding under this program, and a substantial increase in the number of “models” or “designs” were implemented.

Under NCLB, the following attributes have been established...

1. Parent and community involvement in the process is necessary. For school improvement to be meaningful, buy in and participation by parents, a very important partner in any school endeavor as well as the larger community, in which includes teachers, staff and district, need to participate. Acceptance of change will not occur if these groups are absent. The necessary resources, internal and external, also need to be accounted for.
2. In order to receive CSR funding, schools must use programs that have a strong research-based methodology and have shown success in the previous usage. To use a “model” or “design” that does not have a proven track record and that cannot be “tested” would make no sense.
3. Without buy-in by staff, teachers and administrators, any program is bound to failure. In addition, true improvement can not just work on one endeavor without somehow being integrated into the entire school milieu. To monitor progress, goals need to be set in advance-what constitutes achievement/success-and benchmarks need to be establish that will keep track of how the program is succeeding.
4. Schools need to work with experts in the field, who have a proven track record and whose designs have been researched and shown success. Professional development plays a significant role in this endeavor since without it program change cannot be viably incorporated and utilized. In addition, the experienced partner should be able to provide support and assistance in order to get the program up and running as well as to maintain credibility.
5. Continuous evaluation of the program and how it relates to student achievement is most important, and should be in continuous use once the program is put into place and maintained.