the GOOD SCHOOL toolkit

an overview

an overview

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What is a Good School?

Good Teachers

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Good Learning Environment

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Good Administration

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A Good School aims to create a violence-free learning environment within which students develop their skills and confidence to grow into creative, constructive and thoughtful members of their community.

The Good School Toolkit is designed to help you create such a school.

What You Will Achieve

The Good School Toolkit has three objectives:

1. To equip **teachers** for increasing student confidence and success
2. To create a **learning environment** that is safe and respectful
3. To support the **administration** in becoming more transparent and accountable

These are the three things that transform schools!

This is what you will achieve using the Good School Toolkit!

The Toolkit has been designed and tested with the involvement of teachers, students and administrative leaders from schools like yours.

The Most Common Questions

What is the *Good School Toolkit?*

The Toolkit is a six-step process that helps you create a Good School. This Introductory Package will give you an overview of what it contains and how you can use it.

How long will it take?

The Toolkit has six steps. You could complete two steps per term and thus all six steps within two school years. However, your progress is entirely dependent on your school.

Who will do the work?

The whole school! However, your Good School Committee will help coordinate the activities and spread the ideas introduced in each step. This group of students, teachers and community members will also participate in special learning and skill-building modules.

How will we know what to do?

Every activity is outlined in detail. You'll find easy-to-follow instructions, monitoring checklists and ready-made materials. You can customize the Toolkit to your needs, or follow it step by step from beginning to end.

What kind of leadership is required?

The school administration must approve the school's implementation of the Toolkit. The Toolkit is then implemented by educators and students who:

- are involved in the day-to-day running of the school
- see themselves as leaders
- feel the responsibility and inspiration to make their school a better place
- will be motivated to endure challenges and quick to celebrate successes
- will role model—in everything they say and do—an openness to new ideas and learning new skills

What resources will we need?

You do not need any special resources or a large budget to implement the Toolkit. You just need the motivation and desire to improve the quality of education at your school.

How will we know if we are making progress?

Each step includes a monitoring checklist that will enable you to track your progress.

What if we need help?

We encourage you to join the Good School Network where schools like yours and the teachers within them share the ideas, skills and tools they have developed (details and registration form available in Step 1).

If you need more information or have questions, please get in touch with Raising Voices through our website or sending an email to

goodschools@raisingvoices.org

The Toolkit's Six Steps

Overview

Everything Is Connected!

Good teachers, a good learning environment and a good administration are all interconnected. Although some of the Toolkit's steps focus on one area more than the others, every step contributes to all three aspects of a Good School. For example, every step helps build a good administration. It is just that in Step 6 the accumulation of these efforts creates an administration trusted to lead the way forward.

In this package you will find:

a) 4 Cartoon Booklets that help you understand key ideas promoted by the toolkit

Cartoon Booklet 1: *What is a Good Learning Environment?*

Cartoon Booklet 2: *What is a good teacher?*

Cartoon Booklet 3: *What is Positive Discipline?*

Cartoon Booklet 4: *What is Corporal Punishment?*

b) 4 Posters

Poster 1: *A Good learning Environment is everyone's right*

Poster 2: *A Good teacher is everyone's right*

Poster 3: *A Good School is everyone's right*

Poster 4: *An accountable admnistration is everyone's right*

Step 1 Your Team & Network

This project requires the vision and dedication of many. In this step you will create your Good School Committee and join the Good School Network. The goal is to connect yourself with key people who share your commitment to creating a better school, and who will help you along the way.

In this step, you will find:

What is a Good School? by Dipak Naker

Step 2 Preparing for Change

Change is challenging, no matter how positive. In this step you will conduct preliminary activities that will spark people's interest and document their starting perspectives. The goal is to launch the project with an inclusive culture and with the tools to measure and celebrate change.

In this step, you will find:

Four Good School Toolkit posters

Step 3 Good Teachers & Teaching

Good teaching requires many skills that reach far beyond traditional academic instruction. In this step you will provide teachers with a renewed sense of their role, greater professional support, and approaches for interacting positively and creatively with students. The goal is to create motivated teachers who excel as educators and take pride in their work.

In Step 3, you will find:

The cartoon booklet, *What is a Good teacher?*

Step 4 Positive Discipline

The strongest type of discipline comes from within. In this step you will establish the school culture and disciplinary methods that support positive discipline instead of corporal punishment. The goal is to create students who believe in themselves and are thus motivated from within to be their best.

In this step, you will find:

- *Positive Discipline: Alternatives to Corporal Punishment* by Raising Voices
- *Positive Discipline Responses* poster
- The cartoon booklets, *What is Wrong With Corporal Punishment?* and *What is Positive Descipline?*

Step 5 Good Learning Environment

When students feel protected and respected, they can cease to focus on self-protection and open themselves to personal growth. In this step you will create a psychological sense of safety and inclusion, as well as enhance the school's physical compound. The goal is to give students a sense of security, dignity, value and voice.

In this step you will find:

The cartoon booklet, *What is a Good Learning Environment?*

Step 6 Good Administration & The Future

Remaining a Good School requires valued and trusted administrative leadership. Every step so far has helped you build just that. In this step you will measure and celebrate the successes of your Good School project and transfer ongoing Good School leadership to the administration. The goal is to inspire everyone with what you have accomplished and with a vision for the future.

Why Use the Toolkit?

The following reasons have inspired many people to envision better schools for students. Use these explanations to help express your motivation to lead change.

Our current school is not responding to children's needs.

Approximately three out of four children who joined the Universal Primary Education (UPE) program in P1 in 1997 did not finish P7. They dropped out for many reasons, mainly because the school was not responding to their learning needs. An accountable school cannot afford this kind of loss.

Our schools are designed to teach children to memorise information, motivating them by fear and humiliation.

Those kinds of skills are virtually useless in today's world. We need to change our teaching methodology to build children's confidence and help them explore new ways of thinking and learning. We need to teach them how to think creatively and solve problems, not memorise useless information.

The psychological and physical environment of our school influences how and what children learn.

If children are made to be fearful and hesitant and their opinions are silenced, they may not take the risk of exploring new ideas. If our school is falling apart and no effort is put into maintaining it, children learn that they are not valuable to the system that creates that environment. In this way, they miss out on the opportunity to learn new thinking skills and develop beliefs about how valuable they are as individuals.

If children have no role models and no one takes interest in their long-term development as human beings, they will not develop positive discipline.

Instead they develop unhealthy ways of trying to get attention. They develop anti-social behaviour and rely on external forces to control their behaviour. We know that lasting behaviour change can only come when the person sees the value of the change in behaviour and when the motivation comes from inside.

Our schools are based on ideas that no longer serve the needs and challenges of today's world.

Look around you at the way the world is changing and the kind of skills needed to succeed in it. We need compassionate leaders and imaginative thinkers who can analyse old problems in new ways and bring new thinking to develop solutions that are creative. Our schools are trying to produce obedient students who will do what they are told. This will not help us create leaders and creative thinkers.

If the school governance is ineffective, unfair or only selectively enforced, teachers, parents and children lose faith in it.

If students and teachers do not feel accountable for their behaviour and do not feel that there are clearly articulated values all school members must live by, they lose respect for the school. They stop caring. The school will start its slow decay towards mediocrity and produce students and teachers who have no stake in performing well. What follows is a decline in academic performance and discipline at school.

For these and many other reasons, it is important that we all take proactive steps to create a Good School. The Good School Toolkit is designed to help you and your school take those proactive steps.

Is the Toolkit Right for Your School?

These questions will help you reflect on what is currently happening in your school, identify areas you would like to focus on, and evaluate the commitment needed to proceed with the project.

1. Do we support good teachers?

   a. How do teachers feel at our school? Do teachers feel supported and valued or overwhelmed and frustrated?

   b. Do teachers help students to ask questions and learn from their mistakes?

   c. Do teachers help students to analyse information and think critically? If so, how?

   d. Are we committed to providing a quality education for our students? If so, what exactly does that mean?

   e. Do teachers and students relate well to each other? Do students feel free coming to teachers with their problems?

   f. Do we have a way of recognising student effort and encouraging good behaviour instead of just punishing bad behaviour?

2. Do we practice positive discipline?

   a. Is there a problem with discipline in our school?

   b. How are students currently disciplined in our school?

c. Do we have specific guidelines on how children should be disciplined?

d. What are the shortcomings of our current approach to discipline?

e. What do we believe is the purpose of discipline?

f. Why do we use corporal punishment?

3. Does our school have a supportive environment?

a. Psychological environment

i) Do students have a voice at our school? Is there a way for students' voices to be heard?

- Do we have a student council?
- Do we have a prefect's body?
- Do we have a student magazine or newsletter?
- Do we have a suggestion box?
- Do students participate in making school rules?

ii) Is there a clear channel of communication between students and teachers?

iii) Is there a way for students to make a complaint about something or to suggest an idea to improve the school? Do the students know what it is?

b. Physical environment

i) Is our compound clean and smart?

ii) Are we proud of the way our school looks?

iii) What are some of the challenges we are facing in terms of improving our environment?

iv) Is it possible for us to improve the environment with the resources we have? Are we willing to work towards making the environment better, even without funds? What might that entail?

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4. Do we have a transparent and accountable administration?

a. Do we have school policies in place?

i. Do we have a discipline policy? What does it say?

ii. Do we have a policy on corporal punishment?

iii. Do we have a policy on sexual violence?

iv. Do we have a policy on bullying?

b. Do we have clearly stated rules for:

i. Students?

ii. Teachers?

iii. Parents?

c. Are the rules posted anywhere?

d. Is it clear what happens to students when the rules are broken?

e. Are all students treated fairly and equally when the rules are broken?

f. Are all stakeholders engaged in how the school is run?

g. Is the school community inspired by clear school standards and the school's vision for the future?

5. Can we commit to implementing a Good School project?

a. How much time do we think this project will take?

b. Can we make this project a priority?

c. Are there other projects that the school is committed to right now? Will they conflict with this project?

d. What are the benefits of this project? Do we agree with them? Are they worth our time and effort?

e. Do we believe in the objectives of the project? What are some of the challenges we might face in achieving the objectives?

f. Are we willing to commit to not using corporal punishment?

g. Do we have open minds? Are we willing to challenge our ways of thinking and doing things?

One School's Story

What a student says about the Toolkit.....

In my school we use the Toolkit and I like it! The Toolkit contains books and posters from which we learn many things that make our school safe for the children and other people. From the Toolkit we learn that corporal punishment is bad. Corporal punishment causes injury to other lives and it does not give knowledge. Teachers who in most cases punish children using corporal punishment should use better methods to discipline children. We call this, positive discipline.

From the Toolkit, we also learn that it is good to have a good learning environment which helps children to learn without interference. We use the Toolkit in my school to promote good ideas. Our teachers and pupils work together to promote children's ideas.

The Toolkit has helped us to learn how well we can express our feelings and become school leaders responsibly. Our teacher's and pupil's committees use the Toolkit to teach everyone about how our school can become a better school.

OKIROR BRUNO

Primary school pupil in Uganda

One School's Story

What a teacher like you says about the Toolkit…..

In my experience as a teacher at St Peter's Primary School in Kanyanya, I have found the Toolkit very useful in helping me to develop my own vision of what makes a good school. The Toolkit has contributed to my skills and capacity to help other teachers, pupils and parents, appreciate the ideas and be able to start creating a good school.

There are many wonder-working activities suggested that my school has already adopted. We also use the Toolkit to reach out to many within the division. Since the introduction of the Toolkit in 2008, tremendous achievements have been reached. Policies that are fair, acceptable and respected by everyone have been instituted to guide the general behavior and actions of the school wide community.

As teachers, we have been able to develop a teaching approach that has made teaching and the learning process more adventurous. Members of the school have a shared vision of what their school should be. We are also promoting an environment where the learner can raise his or her opinion and is respected and attended to without bias.

Primary school teacher in Uganda

Our Many Thanks

First and foremost, our gratitude goes to the students and teachers of St Peter's Primary School in Kanyanya and Mulago Secondary School. For eighteen months they embarked on the courageous enterprise of creating a Good School. We have learned much about what works and what doesn't from their openness and willingness to share their experiences. Their resiliency, courage and perseverance have inspired us to believe that with commitment and passion, it is possible to create better schools anywhere.

Our gratitude also goes to the twenty schools that responded to our questions about what helped most in creating a Good School and what their greatest challenges were. Their patience and candour over hours of questions have saved us from many costly mistakes and lead to many insights regarding what it takes to create a Good School. We would also like to thank more than 1,400 children and 1,100 adults from diverse parts of the country who shared their perspectives with us about schools. This work would have lapsed into an academic exercise without their insights and insistence on workable solutions.

Many people contributed their talents and creativity to bring this work to fruition. The time-consuming work of testing ideas, documenting experiences, working with teachers and developing the first draft of this work was heroically undertaken by Deborah Sekitoleko. Her unique ability to work with adults and children concurrently and compassionately created a strong foundation upon which others could build. Marco Tibasima's witty artwork, Sarah Healey's and Samson Mwaka's elegant design work and Emily Simon's preliminary edits of the final draft have made the work accessible to a wider audience. Prema Michau's and Kirsten Zook's meticulous final editing and patient, detail-oriented copyediting as well as Sara Siebert's final editing have saved us from many embarrassing oversights.

The painstaking work of documenting the experience of using the Toolkit and the vast amount of feedback received from more than 450 schools that are currently using the Toolkit was skillfully coordinated by Willington Ssekadde. His patience and persistence was the direct impetus behind updating the Toolkit to this second edition. Stephanie Sauvé's creativity and imagination helped us rewrite and reorganize this second edition of the Toolkit to make it clearer and responsive to the users' needs and feedback. Without the commitment of each of these individuals, this second edition would have been noticeably less.

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Lastly, special thanks to Lori Michau—for thoughtful questions and friendship. Her insistence on quality inspired us to reach beyond what we thought we were capable of.

Without input from these friends and colleagues, as well as many other unnamed individuals who work daily to influence the quality of our schools, this work would not have been possible. To them we owe the debt of bringing these ideas alive in our schools.

Dipak Naker

June, 2011