



Study Guide

Creating the Schools Our Children Need:

Why What We're Doing Right Now Won't Help Much, And What We Can Do Instead

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This study guide is arranged by chapter, enabling readers to work their way through the entire book or to focus on the specific topics addressed in a particular section. This guide is designed to help you reflect on and apply the ideas presented in *Creating the Schools Our Children Need*, and is a useful companion piece for individuals, small groups, or an entire faculty. Learning Sciences International thanks you for your interest in this book, and we hope that this guide proves a valuable addition and support to your professional development practices.

Chapter 2: Getting Smarter People into Teaching

1. Reflect on your own school district or school. What are the requirements for being hired? Are teachers interchangeable (by subject or grade)? What percentage of teachers do you believe are effective? What programs are in place to determine a teacher's effectiveness?
2. Which group of students, collectively, do you see the most improvement from year to year? Is there a pattern in your district?
3. Reflect on your own district. What kinds of monitoring programs are being offered to test teacher effectiveness? Are there options available in your district to undergo a long-term teacher effectiveness study?

Chapter 4: Paying Good Teachers More

1. What kind of salary adjustments have you seen during your time as a district leader? How do you think salary is linked to teacher effectiveness?
2. How are salaries in your district determined? Are qualifications or teacher experience more valued? Do teachers see a pay raise after each additional year of teaching?
3. What methods do you think are the most helpful in recruiting the best teachers? Consider strategies mentioned in the book such as increasing all teachers' pay and systematically raising teachers' salaries over time. What are some drawbacks to each method?

Chapter 5: Reducing Class Size

1. Consider your school's average class size right now. Are there initiatives in place to reduce class size? How does an overfilled classroom affect both students and teachers?
2. If you are unable to reduce the classroom size, what are other strategies a teacher can implement to meet the needs of all students?
3. Does your school or district hire teaching assistants? What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of having a teaching assistant? How can a teacher maximize the benefits of having an assistant?

Chapter 6: Copying Other Countries

1. When you think about education in other countries, how do you think the US compares?
2. What are some ways you can assist teachers in improving student education outside of the classroom?
3. What are some similarities between education systems in countries continuously scoring high in student achievement? Of these practices or programs, how many do you recognize in your school or district? How many do you think can be replicated in the USA?

Chapter 8: Moving Forward

1. List some ways, other than the strategies already discussed, that may not have been tested that you think would improve education.
2. Why do you think it's important to test the findings on school education experiments? What are some ways the data can be misrepresented?
3. Jeffrey Pfeffer refers to the *knowing-doing gap* – when you know what you should do, but don't do it. How many improvement programs has your school or district undergone in the past 10 years? Which programs have been successful? What qualities do you think made these programs effective?

Chapter 9: Why Curriculum Matters

1. Seymour Papert says that the best skill you can possess is the skill to learn. What kind of *twenty-first-century* skills are taught in your school/s?
2. How can you promote the use of collaboration, communication, creativity, critical thinking and problem solving in your school's classrooms and teacher training?
3. According to Wiliam, education can play a large role in improving student's long-term memory. Before moving forward in the book, what kinds of activities do you think would aid in developing stronger long-term memory abilities in students?

