

Common Sense for Our Common Good: A Parent Guide to Good Schools

Jim Baumann

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Common Sense for Our Common Good inspires hope that every school can be a good school.

Common Sense for Our Common Good: A Parent Guide to Good Schools is an informative, engaging, and lively workbook that gives parents the understanding and tools they need to make a real difference in their children's education.

The book offers a compelling vision of what a “good school” looks and feels like: one that raises expectations for every child, provides a clear path to learning success and a purposeful life, and believes in the brilliance and potential of every child. It provides clear descriptions of the roles and responsibilities of all of the school's stakeholders: parents, teachers, administrators, the community, and children.

Based on critical common sense, research, and effective practices, the guidebook equips parents to evaluate whether their child's school is effectively helping all students realize their full potential as learners, as human beings, and as part of the larger community. The “Good School Puzzle” illustrates how effective educators (teachers and administrators), engaged parents or guardians, and a committed community must be connected to support learning success. Discussions of this principle and of the “Three Vital Lenses”—Culture (including the “Four Rs”: Respect, Relationship, Resolve, and Results), Learning, and Accountability—further clarify the material presented and make it more memorable through graphic representations.

While the book is geared toward parents, anyone who is part of the educational process will find it helpful for creating a more level playing field and for discussions about what is, or should be, happening, not just in a particular school but in the nation's schools in general. Chapter summaries, with space provided for making notes and commentaries on the material, help consolidate the information, and intelligent, probing questions encourage both reflection and action.

The text is conversational in tone. It takes a complex topic and brings it within the reach of parents who are not educators by profession. Graphic designer Kaylee Conrad enhanced the text with cheerful photographs, bright charts, and other visuals that lift the spirit as well as offer information. A glossary of educational terms gives parents what they need to facilitate conversations with teachers and administrators.

Though the task of tackling the many challenges schools face today may appear daunting, Jim Baumann's *Common Sense for Our Common Good* inspires hope that every school can be a good school—one that recognizes the brilliance and worth of every child and strives effectively to help all students realize their full potential.

KRISTINE MORRIS (September 25, 2017)

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