Thursday's Thoughts.....

“Improved classroom instruction is the prime factor to improving student achievement.” Allan Odden

The Seven C's of Effective Teaching

Harvard Kennedy is an educational researcher who does work on teacher effectiveness. His research shows that there are seven C's that make a difference in the learning environment:

Caring about students (nurturing productive relationships);

Controlling behavior (promoting cooperation and peer support);

Clarifying ideas and lessons (making success seem feasible);

Challenging students to work hard and think hard (pressing for effort and rigor);

Captivating students (making learning interesting and relevant);

Conferring (eliciting students’ feedback and respecting their ideas);

Consolidating (connecting and integrating ideas to support learning).

A lot of Kennedy’s work has been done by surveying children about their teacher to assess whether or not students agree with a variety of statements designed to measure these seven teaching practices. Here are some examples of the questions. The children are asked whether or not these statements are true of their class:

Caring about students: “The teacher in this class encourages me to do my best.”

Captivating students: “This class keeps my attention - I don’t get bored.”

Conferring with students: “My teacher gives us time to explain our ideas.”

Controlling behavior: “Our class stays busy and doesn’t waste time.”

Clarifying lessons: “When I am confused, my teacher knows how to help me understand.”

Challenging students: “My teacher wants us to use our thinking skills, not just memorize things.”

Consolidating knowledge: “My teacher takes the time to summarize what we learn each day.”
The researchers have found that asking children about the effectiveness of their teacher is more reliable than observational ratings of teachers - primarily because the children see their teachers every single day, not just for an observational lesson. (In other words, the ratings of different classes of children with the same teacher are more similar than not, and student ratings from one year to the next are more similar than observational ratings). Here are some other interesting findings:

- Teaching in some classrooms is much more effective than in others at fostering the Seven C's learning conditions
- Student perceptions of classroom practice on Seven C's dimensions can help in predicting learning outcomes
- The "Controlling behavior" learning condition (culture of cooperation and peer support) was most closely associated with student achievement

Something to think about!