

Since we released *What Works: Research About Teaching and Learning* in March 1986, the Department of Education has been deluged with requests for the booklet. We have distributed more than half a million copies to parents and children, teachers and principals, scholars and policy-makers.

Editorials praising the book's clarity, good sense, and usefulness have appeared in newspapers from *The Christian Science Monitor* to the *New York Post*. Teachers have told us that it should be studied by every present and future member of their profession.

Unlike most education research—and many government reports—*What Works* was addressed to the American people. It provides accurate and actionable information about what works in the education of our children, and it does so in a form that is accessible to all of us—parents and taxpayers, teachers and legislators, newspaper reporters and their readers, school principals and school board members.

The original *What Works* contained 41 findings from some of the best research about what works when it comes to educating a child. This updated edition contains an additional 18 findings. The information in this booklet is a distillation of a large body of scholarly research in the field of education.

The American people have responded favorably. An Ohio mother wrote: "My daughter is only 16 months old, but I feel your booklet has already given me ideas to help her learn more. I will be sure to read it again when she enters school."

The Chicago Board of Education, spurred by the *What Works* finding

documenting the benefit of homework, has promulgated a policy requiring that all students be assigned homework every night.

Principals are using *What Works* for staff development, professors for courses they teach. The booklet has been reprinted from Juneau, Alaska, to Albany, New York, by boards and departments of education, school districts and professional associations. The superintendent of schools in St. Paul, Minnesota, gave every one of his professional employees a complete copy of *What Works*. The University of Texas used it to create a home learning guide for parents in both English and Spanish. The National Association of Secondary School Principals and the National School Boards Association also reproduced copies.

The Appalachia Educational Laboratory in Charleston, West Virginia, developed a workshop to train school personnel to use *What Works* with administrators, teachers and parents. As a result, one elementary principal has begun sending home to parents written notices featuring a different finding from the booklet each week. Several teachers in the area have started inviting small groups of parents to the school for regular meetings to discuss some of the findings.

*What Works* was even used as a Christmas stocking stuffer! A fifth-grader from Kenmore, New York, wrote: "I would like a *What Works* book. I would give it to my mom and dad for Christmas. Probably after they were through with it I would read it. I'm sure it would be a good book."

Clearly, the American people know a good thing when they see it, and we're heartened by that. But even

though the response has been overwhelmingly positive, we have had our critics. They complain that *What Works* tells only part of the story; that its real purpose is to divert attention from the Federal education budget; that it just rehashes old stuff that everybody already knows; and that it only helps white, middle-class kids.

*What Works* does leave some things out. It is not an encyclopedia; it was never meant to be. It simply tells a part of the story—maybe the most important part. (And this updated edition, with its additional findings, tells a larger part than the original volume did.) As for the budget criticism, we will all differ on the appropriate level of Federal funding. But the fact remains, if we want to give our children a good education, we have to do the things described in *What Works*. We can spend all the money in the world, yet if we do not do these kinds of things, we won't get the education results our youngsters need.

Some cavil that *What Works* simply repeats things we've known for a long time. Common sense tells us that children improve their reading ability by reading a lot. True, but why are there so many students coming out of school who can barely read?

The fact that homework helps students learn is nothing new. Yet, why do one-third of our 9-year-olds say they have no homework? Perhaps people need to be reminded of "what everyone knows"; common sense has to be reinforced and acted upon. Our purpose in *What Works* is to make this happen so that our practices correspond to "what we do know."

Others mutter that this book leaves disadvantaged youngsters out in the

cold. Quite the contrary. Many of the findings in *What Works* come from "effective schools" research that was done primarily to determine what kinds of schools help poor, disadvantaged and minority children the most. We *know* these things can work for those children.

This is important because middle- and upper-class kids often manage to get by in life with a mediocre education. This is much less likely for disadvantaged youngsters; a good education is frequently their only ticket to a better life.

Many schools, located in desolate inner city neighborhoods, know and practice what works. Making sure that the lessons these schools can teach us become more widely known and followed is one of my top priorities. That's why we have prepared another volume on what works for disadvantaged youngsters.

In the meantime, I am confident the findings in this booklet can help *all* children learn more. I see evidence everyday that they really do work. For example, the Department's recent study, *Japanese Education Today*, makes plain that many of the research findings in *What Works* have been standard practice in Japan's education system for years. Parent involvement, clear school goals, high expectations—all discussed in *What Works*—have contributed to the manifest success of Japanese schools.

When the first edition of *What Works* was issued, I invited readers to send us comments and to suggest topics they would like to see in future books. This revised edition incorporates many of these suggestions, corrects a few errors, and updates some of the findings contained in the original publication.



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We chose the new findings for this revised edition according to the same criteria by which the original findings were selected: they tell us things we can do at home, in classrooms and in schools to help our children learn more. And that, after all, is what education is all about.

Dr. Chester E. Finn, Jr., Assistant Secretary for Research and Improvement, and his staff prepared the original *What Works* as well as this updated version. As he explains in the introduction that follows, many individuals inside and outside the Education Department have contributed

their ideas, knowledge and energies. I am grateful to them all.

Education is not a dismal science, though many act as if it were. In education research, of course, there is still much to find out, but education is not essentially mysterious. One of my goals is to make sense of education and talk about it in terms that the American public can understand. We want to make the best information available to the American people.

This booklet is a significant part of that effort. It is, of course, entirely up to the reader to decide which parts of it, if any, to put into practice. All we can do is suggest that they do, in fact, work.