



All Kinds of Minds®

A NON-PROFIT INSTITUTE FOR THE UNDERSTANDING OF DIFFERENCES IN LEARNING

Establishing Schools Attuned® as an Evidence-Based Program

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001 and the Education Sciences Reform Act in 2002 there has been increased focus on “scientifically based research” in education. According to the NCLB legislation, scientifically based research involves the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to education activities and programs. The legislation articulates six criteria for evaluating the quality of evidence produced by research studies. High quality evidence is produced from research studies that

- Use empirical methods;
- Involve rigorous and adequate data analyses;
- Rely on measurements or observational methods that provide reliable and valid data;
- Use either an experimental or quasi-experimental design;
- Allow for replicability; and
- Undergo expert scrutiny.

While the NCLB legislation is often interpreted as valuing experimental designs as the “gold standard” for research on educational programs, it is important to recognize that no single study, even one that meets all the criteria listed above, is ever enough to provide sufficient evidence of a program’s effectiveness. Rather, education program providers must continually cultivate a mix of research that includes numerous

studies that use various methodologies, including but not necessarily limited to experimental or quasi-experimental designs. It is only by looking at an evolving body of evidence that the effectiveness and impact of an educational program can truly be understood.

Our Approach

All Kinds of Minds (AKOM) has long been committed to nurturing the educational needs of all children by translating new knowledge and solid research into practice. Our comprehensive research agenda includes internally conducted evaluation as well as rigorous independent research designed to examine the impact of our programs on students, teachers, families, schools, and educational policies.

Since 2000, more than a dozen independent research studies have been conducted on the impact of the Schools Attuned program across a variety of states and regions. In addition, many individual schools and districts have collected their own internal data on the impact of the program in their locales. In 2003, AKOM launched a new research initiative to commission high-quality studies from respected third-party research organizations. A panel of eight well-respected educational research experts conducted independent review of several proposed research studies from which three large-scale studies were chosen. These studies augment prior research completed by Dr. Mel Levine and his colleagues as they developed and refined the neurodevelopmental framework that underlies the Schools Attuned program.



These studies represent a mix of research that exists along a continuum

- From theoretical research on which the development of the neurodevelopmental theory is based
- To research that shows a *correlation* between the use of the neurodevelopmental model via the Schools Attuned program and specific teacher, student, and school variables
- To research that is beginning to demonstrate that the implementation of Schools Attuned strategies *causes* specific teacher, student, and school outcomes.

Considered as a whole, this research provides a substantial and compelling body of evidence that Schools Attuned is an effective program for educators working in a variety of contexts to help struggling students succeed. It also reveals opportunities for improving the program to increase its usability and effectiveness within schools and classrooms.

In addition to ongoing examination of the impact of the program, the comprehensive framework for understanding and managing differences in learning used in the Schools Attuned program is based on basic and applied research regarding neurodevelopmental functions and variations in learning. From 1987 through the late 1990's, Dr. Mel Levine and his colleagues worked with over 5,000 educators nationwide to develop the first version of Schools Attuned. AKOM actively gathers information to ensure our programs continue to incorporate the latest advances in educational, psychological, medical, and clinical research.

Specific observational tools and instructional strategies are also a part of the Schools Attuned program. These observational tools and instructional strategies are based on a similar body of research literature. Efforts have begun to establish the validity and reliability

of observational tools and methods used in the program. Preliminary empirical investigations have been documented in peer-reviewed journals such as *Children's Hospital Quarterly*, *Diagnostique*, and *Educational and Psychological Measurement*.

Finally, the design of the Schools Attuned program is based on applied findings from research conducted over the past two decades on the components of professional development for educators that contribute to student achievement and school change, standards of the National Staff Development Council (2001), and ongoing program evaluation using best practices (Guskey, 2002).

Schools Attuned is designed to reflect the most current research and standards on professional development that changes teaching practice and has a positive impact on student outcomes. In 2000, the Schools Attuned program was completely redesigned to incorporate the findings from research on high quality professional development. AKOM regularly reviews the program against current professional standards and new research on professional development programs that advance student learning. Our model of teacher change is based on a framework for supporting improvements in skill and growth in abilities in order to lead to positive results, such as better teaching and improved student outcomes.

To read more about the research and evaluation behind our programs, including a complete summary of the research base behind the content, design, and impact of the Schools Attuned program, visit the All Kinds of Minds web site at www.allkindsofminds.org.



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