

Ed Directions Company Information

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Educational Directions (Ed Directions) is a mid-sized educational consulting company celebrating 22 years of service to educators. Since our founding, we have provided quality leadership training, academic/culture and climate/reading/ECE audits and academic reviews, “pipeline training” for identified schools and school districts, to build internal capacity, on-site mentoring and training for leaders, teacher leaders, and ongoing coaching/mentoring programs for teachers and schools in a variety of states including Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, Florida, etc.

Priority 1: Academic Mastery

1.1 - Ed Directions has, for more than 22 years, emphasized that the state standards represent competencies required of all students. Our company’s whole program is focused on the “success for all” approach to school change and has led to the development of several proprietary tools for focusing district or school support on student proficiency. To help schools fully understand what “proficiency in state standards” means, we offer an approach to:

- “Unpacking standards” that leads to congruence with state expectations – not just alignment.
- Creating and marketing a vision of a school that is “best practice” for students.
- Curriculum development, paired with unit and lesson planning, that defines end-of-course expectations and builds pathways for all students to reach those expectations.
- Teacher planning that honors the evolving expectations of student work through the school year, and the way students learn.
- Literacy and numeracy that expands traditional concepts of both to include e.g., the test as genre, applied math, mathematical reasoning, critical reading, etc.
- Identifying student needs based on elements of performance that determine the level at which a student demonstrates their knowledge (attitude, perceptions, knowledge base, thinking proficiency, and successful experience base).
- Progress monitoring that helps to identify the point, and the cause of student work breakdown.
- Ongoing data monitoring with analysis of student RTI to determine the impact of support on performance.

1.2 - Ed Directions provides a variety of programs and/or supports for districts and schools. These include:

- PD for leaders and teachers in current research regarding how students learn and perform. This is fundamental to establishing the “why” and “when” certain practices become “best practices.”
- PD for current and potential school leaders in academic leadership instead of building and systems management.
- Facilitated planning for leaders and teachers in re-imaging and redesigning their roles.
- Facilitated course, unit, and lesson planning followed by coaching and mentoring so that all teachers become independent and competent in their craft.
- Intentional coaching and mentoring for school leadership in academic leadership (planning, facilitating, monitoring, etc.).

Standards-based reform is all about building confident and competent performers in a variety of settings. Our approach includes all students that we identify as “at risk.” Some are identified formally – ECE, EL L, low SES, etc. We believe there are many other at risk categories that are sometimes overlooked as they design support systems – attendance issues, emotional/behavioral issues, lack of academic success, home or community barriers, etc. Our approach includes strategies that emphasize the preparation of all students to be proficient learners and performers by:

- Employing an approach to the components required in standards – unpacking the standards to establish competencies required (e.g., critical vocabulary, tasks, test format/venue, levels of rigor, etc.).
- Employing an approach to curriculum development that emphasizes “beginning with the end in mind,” and then developing a curriculum map that leads all students to successful/proficient performance.
- Focusing on the weaknesses of the “one-size-fits-all” approach to school improvement or student support.
- Acknowledging that standard competencies require other competencies that aren’t necessarily spelled out (e.g., critical thinking, active listening, “test wiseness” strategies), but are critical to developing proficient learners and performers.
- Emphasizing the importance of student experience in the classroom to build the five “legs” that support student performance (i.e., attitude, perception, knowledge base, thinking competency and successful experience).
- Emphasizing the importance of the “Learner Year” to develop proficient learners and performers.

- Building effective learning practices (attending work, acquiring work, organizing work, creating meaning, extending learning to real-world activities).
- Monitoring progress with strategies that go beyond scores (e.g., academic processing observations, causal analysis, process interviews, etc.).

Our goal is success for all, and we believe that for that to happen every student needs to have support that is intentional in terms of student priority needs – which we accept will change on a regular basis.

Ed Directions has dedicated time to analysis of current academic research and the integration of relevant research into our programs and materials. During the pandemic, much of this time was devoted to “end of level” expectations to help map milestones development of proficiencies.

In the example of the 3rd grade literacy, time was spent studying current thinking on executive processing of third, fifth, eighth, and 10th grade literacy evaluation by Tim Shanahan. This led to a reevaluation of student experiences that are probably critical pre-k through 3 in terms of genre options, independent reading, structured and unstructured analysis, “struggle time,” etc. Our thinking today is that by the time students take the state test at the end of third grade they need to be able to independently read grade level selections & questions in all tested content areas, think about and with the readings, and do purposeful and critical readings.

We found that the high school certifications differ from state to state and try to develop a comprehensive picture of end of 10th and end of 12th grade expectations. Due to the nature of our work some of this focuses on the high school test patterns in the state and the expectations of those tests, but they include college and “school to job expectations.” Our experiences with the Indianapolis Public schools lead us to partner with local universities and with local education improvement nonprofits.

1.3 – Ed Directions “keeps score” for the school or the district using the metrics that “count” for the school or district. This can involve increased scores, decreases and performance gaps, expanded opportunities for students, etc. EC also gives the company a score based on variables that frequently don’t count the district or the school’s accountability (e.g., academic success for underperforming students, number of students move from self-contained classrooms to GEN Ed classrooms, reduction in teacher absences/increase in teacher retention, inclusion of at risk students in school activities (co-curricular and extracurricular), etc.

In most cases, if we have enough lead time, we negotiate the metrics that the district needs to be in focus and then build our training, support, and coaching to maximize growth in those areas. We also informed the district/school of the metrics that we will study “in-house” to measure success.

The mention of a portfolio collection has particular relevance for Ed Directions. We have long advocated that monitoring student progress requires regular analysis of student work as learner and student work as performer/test-taker. In some of the Indianapolis schools the coaches created “data rooms” where samples of student work could be collected in folders and then made available when PLC groups needed to analyze the performance of individual students. He went so far as to develop a patented software program for collecting annotated student portfolios.

1.4 – Ed Directions approaches every partnership with the idea that our first goal is to create a vision of best-practice, then begin the staff’s movement towards actualizing that vision. The second goal is for all stakeholders to receive additional training and mentoring, if needed, to become proficient practitioners. For school to become self-sustaining (e.g., intentionally orienting new staff or new leadership to the climate/culture/practices that the school has found effective) as much as one third of a year might be needed to fully develop master practitioners who have the capacity to train and mentor others in the school community.

We found in several of our long-term districts that leadership tended to identify potential leaders and quickly promote them, forcing the school to reorient new staff. In response, we have designed “pipeline development” programs to accelerate the training and mentoring of staff that the districts identify as “potential leadership.”

Another policy that relates to this involves our approach to school planning. Ed Directions doesn’t see planning as something done each spring. Ed Directions sees planning as an ongoing process that is always seeking ways to better meet the priority needs of students. After the first year of many partnerships with schools, we have found that leaders plan to perpetuate the emerging vision that has caused them to become more successful. This approach to planning involves strategic analysis of goals, the development of a strategic plan related to changing priorities, visioning maintenance, improving data management, etc. The strategic plan is then marketed to all stakeholders who, then, assess their readiness to successfully implement the plan in their job responsibilities. This assessment leads to logistics planning and tactical planning for the instructional leaders (e.g., intentional materials/strategies purchases, catch up or enhancement professional development, etc.), and is also translated into individual action plans identifying each stakeholders priority takeaways (impact on job responsibilities).

Priority 2: Career and Postsecondary Readiness

2.1 – For Ed Directions, developing career pathways and postsecondary readiness is a pre-k through grade 12 process. Many of the unstated expectations from colleges and businesses must be identified, related to the standards expectations embedded in the state program of studies, and built into the cumulative district curriculum.

Some of these unstated expectations (e.g., critical listening, purposeful reading, critical thinking, creative thinking, effective real-world written and oral communication, task analyzing, task completion, task review and revision, active listening, etc.), can be started in the pre-k – 3rd grade window.

Ed Directions approaches work-based learning on numerous levels.

- The student classroom work base (student as worker approach) is not just critical to test preparation. Student work in the classroom shapes their work ethic, perception of proficiency, willingness to attack tasks that are outside their comfort zone, analysis of tasks, and following through to completion are all competencies desired by university and business leaders.
- Classroom work that relates to the world of work outside the classroom is another aspect of student experience. There are “on job experiences” that can be from pre-k on that help develop the students’ perception of what the world of work looks like and what it takes to be successful in that world. The goal of this type of classroom work is to introduce the students to responsibilities and benefits of a job, the workforce environment in their community or secondary school choices and shape their perception of what advantages and responsibilities go with being a “good employee.”

In talking with a variety of university and community leaders, Ed Directions found that employability standards differ from job to job, college to college, and community to community. In building a program that produced effective employability behaviors in students we found that our first task was to qualify and quantify the greater community expectations, and then develop curriculum that would include experiences that would help students meet those expectations.

2.2 – As mentioned before, it’s success in terms of scores. We also try to measure a number of different academic and affective domain characteristics that relate to student readiness to make a successful transition (e.g. attendance, high levels of engagement, content or job-related reading, discipline specific reading, effective written and oral communication, ability to effectively lead or follow). This analysis usually involves the goals, the level of success in reaching their goals, the cause of missed goals, and barriers that might exist that could prevent improvement within the goal.

If the school does not include transition metrics (from grade to grade, from elementary to secondary, from secondary to postsecondary), or “follow-up success analysis” to assess how well students were prepared for success, Ed Directions will provide targeted suggestions for acquiring the data that’s needed to inform planning and decision-making.

2.3 – We are usually hired because we have had success in improving student test scores and school report card scores. That’s not what we see as our major contribution to school partnerships, but we must acknowledge that it’s important. We see our job as a change agent, doing what needs to be done to enable all students to become proficient learners and performers, and make a successful transition to the next level.

This involves recognizing that student academic work and experiences will have the most important impact on student understanding and performance. To this end, when it’s one of the priorities for the district or school we are partnering with, we will help identify exit expectations, translate those program expectations into a set of milestone goals, and monitor concrete and affective indicators of the program on student perceptions of the world of work and aspirations in terms of their personal course.

Priority 3: Sustainable Innovation

Ed Directions would be remiss if it treated every school as an “in and out” relationship. Our goal is to create systemic change that will benefit students even after we no longer work in the building, and we have a process for this.

Assess the need.

- Build the content base to define that need, and the capacity of leadership to address the need.
- Create and market a vision of what the school will look like when it meets the needs successfully.
- Prepare strategic, logistic, and tactical plans to actualize the vision.
- Provide the professional development teachers need to own the concept base that underlines the vision.
- And finally, develop plans that are consistent with reaching the vision (personal action plans, plans for student work, data monitoring, etc.).

Sustainable intervention is something missing from a lot of the “canned” best practices that schools use in attempts to solve a problem. We have found that if schools want to solve a problem for the long-term and have an accumulative impact on student success they have to understand what needs to be done, why it needs to be done, what they need to do differently to get it done, how they can tell if what they’re doing is having the desired results, and what data they need to collect to see if they can do a better job in the current or following year.

3.1 – The approach to change emphasizes the development of a school culture focused on intentional change that supports student success. The competencies that Ed Directions brings to schools include planning and successfully implementing change.

For Ed Directions, change is an ongoing process that emphasizes the evolving nature of “best practice.” As expectations change or as student competencies and needs change, schools must be flexible enough to adapt.

Student success is the prime directive. Everything else needs to be subject to that directive. That’s why Ed Directions does not use “one-size-fits-all” strategies or materials. It’s why we analyze situations before we start asking people to change, and it’s why we constantly monitor the success of our program.

Ed Directions senior team have written three books on building student focused school programs. The latest, **Turning Around Turnaround Schools: Volume 2 - Embracing the Rhythm of the Learner Year**, states that during the Opening of School Window the focus is on equipping all students with the basic learning tools they will need to be successful in class. In the Formative Period, the focus is on making all students competent learners and linking their learnings to expectations. In the Calibrating Period, the focus is on maximizing student performance so that all students can work successfully to the level of the assessment. And the Testing Period is a transition time where tests are taken and transitions to the next level begin.

This approach emphasizes building confident and independent learners (active engage listeners, competent acquirers of knowledge, competent organizers of knowledge, learners who can create meaning for what’s learned) who develop learning skills that will make them lifelong learners. It also emphasizes preparing confident and proficient test takers and real-world users of knowledge (best efforts attitudes, positive perceptions of self as learner and performer, adequate support of knowledge bases, proficient thinking, planning, and communicating skills, and recognized successful experience in attacking new and rigorous tasks).

One unique feature the Ed Directions approach is its inclusion of discipline specific competencies (i.e. test taking) and supporting them with opportunities that build confidence and competence (e.g. critical and creative thinking competencies, critical and purposeful reading competencies, academic and real-world writing competencies, active listening and effective speaking competencies, planning and implementing competencies, self-monitoring competencies, and effective leadership competencies). In our book we call this developing the taught curriculum, the experienced curriculum, and the learned curriculum.

Our approach begins with defining what’s expected of students and then developing a curricular path to get them there. It doesn’t just focus on the content students have to know. It includes brain research on how the brain changes over time, thinking research that deals with multiple thinking strands and approaches to developing thinking that emphasize the importance of student experience in developing thinking, and in developing optimum environments in classrooms that will provide experiences that help shape positive social and emotional characteristics in all students. For many students this must involve experiences outside classroom walls. Some students need the opportunity to see hands on application (e.g., school to work programs, job experience programs, community is laboratory programs, etc.). Other students need more professional services than those found in the regular classroom setting (e.g., family support programs, psychological/grief/emotional professional support, etc.), and still others need to see education in operation outside the school room and need access to community/job leaders (e.g., guests speaker programs, mentoring/coaching programs, etc.).

In Ed Directions’ experience there is no one approach to “tapping into” the community resources that will meet the needs of all schools and students. Instead, we try to create a vision of student success, assess the school’s ability to actualize that success, and build a competency-base in school leadership and instructional staff that enables them to identify and utilize community resources to better help them develop the students they have in class.

3.2 – Several efficiencies are fostered through the Ed Directions approach to education:

- School use of community resources is intentional and related to the development of competencies and confidence in students.
- Time isn’t wasted on community resources and programs that are not relevant to developing students that are currently in class.
- This approach enables schools to move towards a model of educating the whole child by expanding the menu of services and people that bring their expertise and experience into that process.
- As a part of Ed Directions’ academic leadership strand, we work with school leadership teams and teachers (as leaders of learners) in developing the cognitive base and the competency-based that they need to maximize the impact of school and community resources on students.

3.3 – There are several features in the Ed Directions approach to school change that we think set us apart from others:

- We are flexible and work with schools to help design the support program that will best meet the needs of the school.
- We provide a variety of “stand alone” programs that support our ongoing relationship with our schools (e.g., academic/curriculum/culture/ECE audits, targeted data management tools, facilitated planning programs, teacher development/retention programs, “pipeline” programs to identify and prepare emerging leaders, etc.).
- Our staff has successful school administration experience, lead, and educated both students and adults, worked successfully in turnaround schools as a leader, and work in close collaboration with school personnel.

- We do not market a plan set of materials or a particular strategy, but instead have free proprietary materials and toolkits that support teachers and administrators as part of our contracted services.
- Ed Directions brings with it an approach to data management that emphasizes data beyond scores to drive planning and decision-making. Specifically, we try to build school competency in working with a variety of data management streams that include identification of “point of breakdown” and “cause a breakdown” of any non-proficient student work.
- An Ed Directions team includes more than just coaches and presenters. There is a senior staff that works in the office helping coaches find relevant resources, strategies, and tools, a technology support group, a site director, PD presenters, school leadership coaches/mentors, and teacher coaches/mentors.
- Ed Directions provides initial thoughts on change and school needs, facilitates planning to meet those needs, provides monthly reports from the on-site team members to district leadership, and provides a summative report of successes and next steps.

Section 3

Ed Directions’ most obvious success is in raising school academic scores. We have had several years were 100% of the schools that we were working with in multiple states met their academic goal. Equally important to the Ed Directions staff is the fact that in most the schools we had significant impact on erasing performance gaps, significantly reducing the number of novice or bottom 30% performers and increasing the number of ECE students scoring above the novice level.

Ed Directions has worked in many school districts over the last 22+ years. In one state alone, we provided academic management to 25 different schools, worked with the state to create a cognitive and noncognitive data room protocol for schools, offered over 160 professional development sessions specific to school improvement, and provided leadership coaches for more than 80 schools. We also provided over 60 complete academic reviews of priority schools in the state.

In one of our partner districts Six Title I schools in that county increased their school grade during the 2019-2021 Biennium (below). **Educational Directions served five of the six.** In that same county, Ed Directions was a provider of services to 13 of the Top 20 Title 1 schools with the most gains and fewest losses in the 2019 – 2020 school year.

	19-21 Ed Directions Biennium Service	Total Points Earned	% Of Possible Points	Total Points Earned 19-20	Points Gained	% Of Possible Pts	2019 Grade	2021 Grade
Purcell Elementary School	X	308	44	238	70	34	D	C
John Snively Elementary	X	334	48	269	65	38	D	C
Alta Vista Elementary School	X	297	42	247	50	35	D	C
Philip O'brien Elementary School	X	299	43	251	48	36	D	C
Mclaughlin Middle School		376	42	351	25	39	D	C
Dixieland Elementary School	X	292	42	281	11	40	D	C