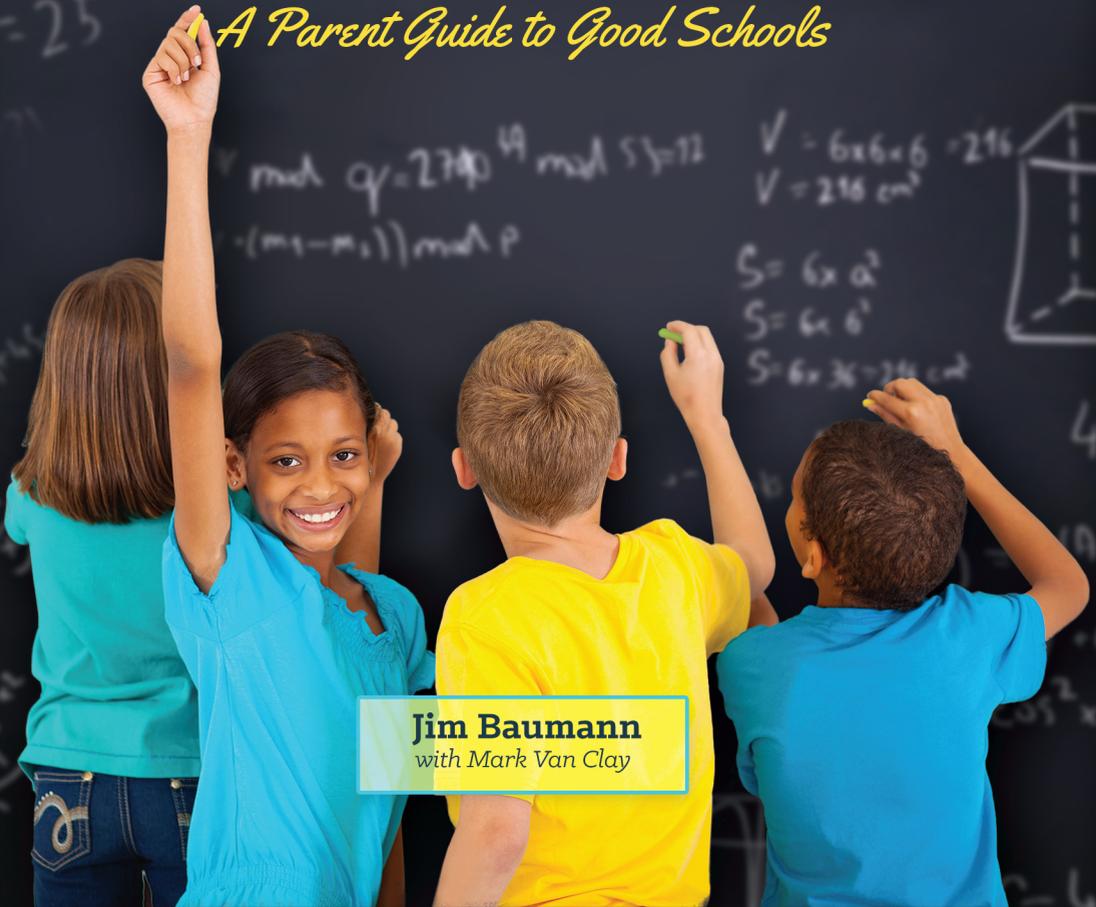


COMMON  
SENSE

for our

COMMON  
GOOD

*A Parent Guide to Good Schools*



**Jim Baumann**  
with Mark Van Clay

## Dedication

Dedicated to my Mom and Dad for their unconditional love, and to the love of my life Heidi and the loves of our life Kyle, Elise, Brittany, Dylan, Rodes, Fitz, Meyer, and Blythe.

## WELCOME FELLOW PARENT!

*How do you know if your child's school is a good school?*

The purpose of **Common Sense for Our Common Good: A Parent Guide To Good Schools** is to make critical information about good schools available to you so you know what makes your child's school a good one and how you can assist your child's school to become better. It puts a premium on common sense linked to research and effective practices by identifying basic components that all good schools should have.

Common Sense for Our Common Good also suggests ways by which you, in your parental role as school parent partner, children's advocate and informed educational consumer, can be effective in supporting and promoting a good school.

I attended public schools, as did my wife and our three kids. I have been a teacher, led a billion dollar business and a national nonprofit organization, been a local school board member and a member of a state board of education... but, to me, my most important role is that of a parent. Like you, I am dedicated to my children and strive to be a thoughtful, engaged, supportive and loving parent.

Raising expectations for every child and clearing their way toward learning success and a purposeful life is what all good schools do. As parents we can be powerful champions for good schools because we recognize the important role schools play in our child's life and we believe in the brilliance and potential in every child.



I have long searched for a guide to understanding schools that was written for parents. Having never found that guide, I dedicated myself to creating one. Now I am hoping *Common Sense for Our Common Good* becomes a valuable resource in helping you to do all you can to make certain that your child, and all children, realize their full learning and human potential.

*Jim Baumann, Author*

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## INTRODUCTION

# COMMON SENSE for our COMMON GOOD

**There is no organization or system that can, or should, survive and thrive that is not meeting their stakeholder's expectations.**

**Education is no different...**



## WHY CARE?

**Common Sense For Our Common Good:** *A Parent Guide To Good Schools* is about how you, as a parent, can most effectively support your child and your child's school. That takes both individual passion and collective commitment. But it also takes some basic knowledge about what a good school, public or private, looks and feels like. However, before schools can hope for your support, we need to address the central question: Why should we as parents support our children's schools?

There are two reasons. One is ethical and the other pragmatic.

Ethically it is the "right thing to do" to care about and prepare our children for a purposeful, productive and fulfilling life. As a society and as individuals, we have an obligation to do all we can to make certain every child realizes his or her full learning and human potential. Schools are central to fulfilling that obligation.

The pragmatic reason is societally based: the better educated our children are the better citizens and workers they will be, and the more our American society will prosper both economically and socially. More positive and productive citizens translate to better workers, a more robust economy and more vibrant communities.

This makes supporting schools not just the right thing to do but also the most sensible and productive thing to do. Education is a thoughtful and prudent investment in the brilliance within every child. That investment will reap human and societal benefits both today and into the future.

It's just common sense. **Common sense for our common good.**



## HOW DO YOU, AS A PARENT, MAKE SENSE OF IT ALL?

Schools are buffeted by demands from every corner of society. Everyone, you and me included, has strong opinions on what schools should do. Issues around too few graduates prepared for employment demands and college, inequitably distributed resources, low graduation rates and minority achievement gaps, to list just a few, are regularly cited as examples of why American education needs to improve.



You may hear (and contribute to) continual demands for school enhancements and innovations: greater access to early childhood education, technology use and training, teaching world languages, education/workforce development, proactive data use, implementation of learning standards... And teaching is a profession requiring specialized training and skills sets, with a language all its own – one that is too often hard to understand for most non-educators, parents included.

*So how can you know when a school is operating to its full potential around maximizing the learning and human potential for your child and for every child?*

*Common Sense for Our Common Good* provides a roadmap for you to sort through a thicket of educational, social and political complexities by providing answers to two crucial questions:

- 1 What makes a good school good?
- 2 What can you do to help make your child's school better?

In seeking answers to these questions, learning how to successfully solve the **Good School Puzzle** is a great place to start.

The real voyage in discovery consists not in seeking  
**NEW LANDSCAPE**  
but in having  
**NEW EYES.**

—*Marcel Proust*—

# COMMON SENSE COMMON GOOD

*A Parent Guide To Good Schools* is about how you, as a parent, can most effectively support your child and your child's school. That takes both individual passion and collective commitment. But it also takes some basic knowledge about what a good school, public or private, looks and feels like. Supporting your child and your child's school is not just the right thing to do but also the most sensible and productive thing to do. Education is a thoughtful and prudent investment in the brilliance and potential in your child and all children... and will reap human and societal benefits both today and into the future.

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