



Thank you for your request to our REL Reference Desk regarding the effectiveness of management by objectives in a public school district. Ask A REL is a collaborative reference desk service provided by the ten regional educational laboratories (REL) that, by design, functions much in the same way as a technical reference library. It provides references, referrals, and brief responses in the form of citations on research based education questions.

The information below represents the most rigorous research available. Researchers consider the type of methodology and give priority to research reports that employ well described and thorough methods. The resources were also selected based on the date of the publication with a preference for research from the last ten years. Additional criteria for inclusion include the source and funder of the resource

Question: *What research demonstrates the effectiveness of management by objectives in a public school district?*

Search Process

Key words and search strings used in the search: *Public schools AND management by objective; Public education AND management by objective; school effectiveness AND management by objectives; accountability AND education AND management by objectives*

Search databases and websites:

1. ERIC: <http://www.eric.ed.gov>
2. JSTOR: <http://www.jstor.org/action/showAdvancedSearch>
3. Google Scholar: <http://scholar.google.com>
4. Institute of Education Sciences (IES) Resources: <http://ies.ed.gov>
5. What Works Clearinghouse: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

Results:

Based on the database searches described above, there were no results that reflected rigorous research as defined by the U.S. Department of Education-Institute of Education Sciences. Below are some resources to guide your search for information pertinent to your question.

Sample Citations Retrieved: (NOTE: Abstracts and executive summaries are copied directly from the reports when possible to ensure accuracy):

Harmon, S. J. (1976). The systems approach to the management of a middle school planning task force. *Middle School Journal*, 7(1), 14-17.

Abstract/Summary: The call for accountability can be viewed as a positive move toward the streamlining of public education. Among the accountability systems advocated have been



performance contracting,' alternative schools,² and a more scientific and business oriented approach to the management of school finance and decision making.³ The objective of this article is to relate an attempt to manage a planning task force using a systems approach.

Kowalski, T. J. (1984). The debilities of MBO in educational organizations. *NASSP Bulletin*, 119-123.

Abstract/Summary: After a comparison of the organizational characteristics of environmental interference, goal conflicts, reward potentials, and goal selection in public school systems and in private industry, caution is urged in the application of the management-by-objectives model of industrial management to educational administration.

Lau, J. (1995). Forms of decentralisation and their implications for education, *Comparative Education*, 31(1) 5-30 doi: 10.1080/03050069529182

Abstract/Summary: The paper argues the case for disaggregating the concept of 'decentralisation', and presents a range of types which differ as to their rationale. Under the rubric of 'political' rationales there are: federalism, populist localism, participatory democracy, and liberalism. Under rationales that mainly concern quality and efficiency, there are: pedagogic professionalism, management by objectives, the market mechanism, and deconcentration. These different forms are described and compared with special reference to their implications for the distribution of authority in education, and for evaluation of schools.

Lindberg, E. & Wilson, T. L. (2011). Management by objectives: The Swedish experience in upper secondary schools. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 49(1), 62-75.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09578231111102063>

Abstract/Summary: Purpose – This paper seeks to explore how managing by objectives (MBO) has been adopted in Swedish schools and to reflect on some of the consequences in a longitudinal study. Results relate to whether introduction has increased student performance and whether it works as a tool for the principals to create more effective schools. Findings – Principals' perceptions suggest that the effects of MBO have diminished over the ten-year period. Ancillary measures of student performance correlated to MBO practices appeared statistically insignificant, or perhaps even negative. Thus, the change appears to have produced unimproved student performance, frustrated principals and perhaps somewhat less stressed teachers. Practical implications – These findings have implications on the direction the management of upper secondary schools subject to central direction may take. Although MBO may improve efficiency in staff performance, it appears to have little effect on effectiveness, if student performance is used as a criterion.



Newton, R. R. (1980). Management by objectives: Practical applications to school supervision. *American Secondary Education*, 10(2), 39-46.

Abstract/Summary: No panacea for all school management problems, a process may be inaugurated which can be a powerful tool for systematically planning and improving many areas of school operation.

Referrals

Federally Funded Resources:

- Institute of Education Sciences (IES), public search engine available at: <http://ies.ed.gov/pubsearch/>
- What Works Clearinghouse: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

Disclaimer:

This Ask A REL response was developed by REL-SE under Contract ED-IES-12-C-0011 from the U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. The content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. government.