Social and Emotional Outcomes

Building Warm Communities of Learners

Forming personal relationships with youth can have rewards that are worth the risk.

An education consultant, teacher trainer, and former principal, Thomas Mawhinney, and social studies coordinator, Laura Sagan, encourage professionals who work with youth to create an atmosphere of caring, understanding, and love. Forming personal relationships can lead to benefits that outweigh the risks, which often lead teachers to keep a professional distance, they argue. Academic success is one such benefit. “We now understand,” they write, “that higher-level thinking is more likely to occur in the brain of a student who is emotionally secure than in the brain of a student who is scared, upset, anxious, or stressed.”


Recognizing Hidden Forms of Bullying

School psychologists discuss child outcomes of relational aggression among girls.

Relational aggression is a form of bullying that occurs primarily among girls. Unlike bullying that entails physical harm, the intention behind relational aggression is to damage the social connections of a peer by creating cliques, excluding or isolating certain peers, spreading gossip, giving peers the “silent treatment,” or shaming or ridiculing them. Ohio school psychologist, Heather Doyle, and graduate student, Jennifer DeFago, describe methods for assessing relational aggression. The consequences, they write, are “significant and sometimes devastating outcomes” including poor academic achievement, depression, anxiety, loneliness, and withdrawal. Prevention and intervention can take many forms, such as pair work exercises that foster acceptance, cooperation, and tact. The authors highlight successful intervention programs, such as WITS (Walk Away, Ignore, Talk), Second Step, and Making Choices: Social Problems Skills for Children.


STEM/STEAM

Long-Term Benefits of STEM Education

Many women who received STEM education as girls are now working in STEM-related fields.

A recent study found that nearly half of the women (48%) who participated in a STEM program for girls in the 1980s are currently working in a STEM-related field. The women also had extremely fond memories of the programs.

Academic Outcomes

Motivation and Beliefs Shape Success

Belief in their ability to reach academic goals predicts success for youth in Latino-based OST programs.

How does motivation influence success in Latino-based, academically-oriented OST programs? Researchers examined the relationship between motivation and “self-efficacy,” or belief in one’s own abilities to reach goals, in 47 youth in Latino-based OST programs. After youth in these programs were exposed to master-level experiences, peer learning, and social influences, they found that: 1) self-efficacy was an important predictor of school attendance and success in math; 2) intrinsic motivation (or motivations that come from within) was associated with higher GPA; and 3) youth in OST programs had higher scores on high-stakes tests. The authors concluded that youth should have access to high-quality social environments in order to succeed in school.


Problem-Solving Skills Through Games

Youth in OST programs build games to develop their problem solving skills.

Game building is one of the latest activities that researchers are exploring to help youth learn problem-solving skills in a non-academic setting. Twenty youth in OST programs participated in the Game-Design and Learning program (GDL) over a 5-week period with the goal to “leverage...[youth’s] interests in games and design to foster their problem solving and critical reasoning skills.” By including the problem-solving process (planning, executing, evaluating) with problem solving methods (teaching basic skills, teaching for understanding, teaching using analogies, and teaching metacognitive thinking), youth were exposed to: 1) how to create digital games, 2) exercises to become producers instead of consumers of digital media, 3) troubleshooting techniques, and 4) a deeper understanding of game programming. The results showed that, in relation to the control group, significant increases occurred in problem solving skills, along with large gains in the areas to which youth were exposed.


Policy and Leadership

Mounting Public Will for OST Programs

Government officials are realizing the importance of OST programs for their communities.

The National League of Cities (NLC) is the oldest organization representing municipal governments. An organization within the NLC, the Institute for Youth, Education & Families (YEF), helps municipal leaders implement strategies to help their communities strengthen and empower their youth and family areas. These leaders are beginning to understand that by having OST programs, they help the community in a number of ways (e.g., increasing safety, reducing juvenile crime, and giving working parent(s) a sense of ease instead of worrying where there child(ren) are). Municipal leaders are recognizing that children in OST programs today are the workers of tomorrow. These workers will need skills which the programs can provide. As a result, leaders are working with the community to find and use the appropriate resources, such as technological groups, to educate the youth in the programs and be prepared for the future.