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It's Time We Teach Social-Emotional Competence as Well as We Teach Academic Competence

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Bernard, M.E. (2006). It's Time We Teach Social-Emotional Competence as Well as We Teach Academic Competence. Reading & Writing Quarterly, 22(2), 103-199.

Abstract :
Since the late 1960s, research has shown the important influence of student social-emotional competence on academic achievement. In this article, the author discusses the results of studies that demonstrated the relevance of an approach intended to improve the academic achievement of all students by fostering the development of their social-emotional capabilities.

You Can Do It! Education Program

This approach suggests that curriculum, teaching methods, special programmes and other student services alone cannot contribute to student academic achievement. Students must also develop the Five Foundations they should be explicitly taught as well as academic skills. This social-emotional education includes: (1) self-confidence (school work and social interactions); (2) persistence; (3) sense of organization; (4) getting along; and (5) emotional resilience.

In this model, these capabilities are associated with twelve positive habits of the mind likely to help students improve their academic achievement and social, emotional and behavioural well-being. For instance, accepting oneself, taking risks and being somewhat independent towards peers are positive habits of the mind that help youths to develop self-confidence.

Several interventions may be implemented to teach these capabilities and habits of the mind, including weekly personal development activities, positive feedback by teachers when students exhibited one of the five foundations, and reports given on a regular basis to parents to inform them of their children's progress.

The Correlation between Model Components and Student Achievement

The author of this article presented studies with results showing that students with learning difficulties also exhibited delays in the development of the five foundations identified in the model, as well as more negative habits of the mind.

One of these studies focused more particularly on the relationship between the five foundations and the reading achievement of 158 kindergarteners. Teachers evaluated each student in terms of the five foundations, and additional data was obtained on their reading skills in February and June 2004. Results showed that students at risk of developing reading difficulties also exhibited delays in social-emotional competencies.

The Impact of Teaching the Five Foundations

The author presented several studies suggesting the positive impact of explicit teaching of social-emotional capabilities on student engagement and academic achievement, especially through the application of the You Can Do It! programme. These results led the author to make the following recommendations:

- (1) Allocate equal resources to the development of academic competence as well as to the teaching of social-emotional competence;
- (2) Provide multiple opportunities for students with learning difficulties and those who underachieve to learn the five foundations and twelve positive habits of the mind;
- (3) Include a component of explicit teaching of social-emotional competence in prevention literacy and remediation programmes;
- (4) Make sure that the teaching of social-emotional capabilities and positive habits of the mind does not only concern a few separate classes but the entire school.

To obtain more information on the You Can do It! programme, please browse the following Website:
<http://www.youcandoiteducation.com/>

Links :

This journal is also available in electronic format. Publisher's Website Address:
<http://www.taylorandfrancisgroup.com/>

Key Words :

Social-emotional Competence, Self-confidence, Persistence, Sense of Organization, Getting Along, Emotional Resilience, Positive Habits of the Mind, You Can Do It! Education Program, Newsletter9