

Developing Relationships with Students: School Connectedness

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The Learning Advantage: Psychological
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School Connectedness

Definition:

- Students' sense of belonging to the school community
- Students' belief that adults care about them as individuals as well as care about their learning

Why bother?

- Reflects a basic human need that must be met before an individual will desire a secondary or higher-level need (Maslow)
- Humans have the need to be an accepted member of a group (Belongingness hypothesis)

Positive Outcomes

- Reduced likelihood of school dropout
- Strongest protective factor for decreasing drug and alcohol use, early sexual behaviors.
- Lower use rates of alcohol, marijuana, cigarettes
- Lower rates of substance use, delinquency, violent behavior and gang membership
- Buffer against a negative home environment and emotional distress

School Connectedness is associated with:

- Healthy self-esteem, self-efficacy, optimism, positive peer relationships
- Academic achievement
- Student motivation
- Self-regulation
- Better attendance and, therefore, increased likelihood of academic, occupational and life success

Protective factor for at-risk populations

- Have increased challenges, impairments or disruptions in psychosocial and academic functioning

Video and Discussion questions

- What are you already doing to make connections with student? How do students know that adults in the building care about them?
- What students/groups of students are likely already connected to adults at SHS?
- What students/groups of students may not feel connected to adults at SHS?
- How would you know if students are connected to adults at SHS?

Strategies

For classroom and whole school strategies, refer to advisory resources available on-line

- See the handout Fostering School Connectedness: Improving Student Health and Academic Achievement

Collecting Kids

- Based on work of Gordon Neufeld Hold on to Your Kids (Also referenced in the Advisory Resources)
- Emphasis on “collecting”

Getting in the Student's face/space

- In a friendly way
- Goal is to develop than nurturing relationship
- Needed before instruction or direction
- Intentional set
- Build as a routine into the daily activity of teaching/learning

Offer student something to 'hold on to'

- Figurative holding on
- Make use of the powerful primers of connection: attention and interest
- Be interested, really listen, see the good, bring positivity

Invite Dependence

- Offer assistance and the sense of working with the student.
- Creates the context in which students are free to request help without any sense of shame for their neediness.

Act as the Compass Point

- Orient the student and act a guide to the world around them (ie. Introduce them to those around them, inform them what is going to happen, interpret what things mean, indicate how to access help. Orient them to their identity: “You have a gift with... You have what it takes to...I can see you will go far with...)
- Emphasis on adults rather than peers as the guide

The Basics

- Invite students into your classroom. Wait in the hallway or class door during class break times.
- Greet by name, convey warmth and interest.
- Consider where to obtain eye contact.
- Elicit conversation (eg. Weekend, sports game, learning activity, school activity, hobbies).
- Review who you are connecting with and who you have not yet connected with

Who do you know?

- Topics might include information about a student's hobby, interests, work, career goals, shared learning preferences
- Associated information that does not count!: (e.g.) names of family and friends, medical or emotional background information
- **ACTIVITY**

Now What?

- Begin to intentionally form relationships with those students you do not know so well or those identified as not known by adults in the school community
- Continue to develop and strengthen relationships with those students that you already know
- Monitor what works for you
- Check-in with colleagues for support as required

Congratulations on getting started to make this a meaningful and relationship-oriented school year!

