



mental health matters

Lincoln Public Schools • LPS Social Work Program, Department of Student Services • 5901 O Street • Lincoln, NE 68510 • (402) 436-1688

– Fall 2009 –

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

More information on mental illness in youth and classroom accommodations:

See: LPS

DocuShare:
School Social Workers;
Mental Health Resources for Building Staff/Teachers

LPS Social Workers website:
Mental Health Matters Winter 2009-Resilient Classrooms; Educators Can Make a Difference

“Resilience research gives us a scarce commodity these days: **Hope.**”
-Dennis Saleebey

“Resilience: A self righting capacity for healthy growth and development even in the face of challenges.”
-Dennis Saleebey

Student Behavioral and Mental Health Problems On the Rise: What’s a Teacher To Do?

Frustration often arises as teachers try to get students to improve their behavior. Sometimes the challenges of classroom behavior management seems to take priority over instruction. Resiliency research offers a perspective which provides opportunities for teachers to change things they have control over to positively impact student behavior and success. Even vulnerable, at-risk students can learn and be successful when classrooms have the characteristics of resiliency.

(Resilient Classrooms: Creating a Healthy Environment, Beth Doll)

All Children Can Be Successful in classrooms where.....

1. Students see themselves as competent and effective learners
2. Students set and work toward self-selected learning goals
3. Students behave appropriately and adaptively with minimum of adult supervision
4. There are caring and authentic relationships between teachers and students
5. Students have ongoing and rewarding friendships with classmates
6. Families know about and strengthen the learning that occurs in the classroom

STUDENTS SEE THEMSELVES AS COMPETENT AND EFFECTIVE LEARNERS

See Mental Health Matters Winter 2009 issue on Lincoln Public Schools Social Work website.

STUDENTS SET AND WORK TOWARD SELF-SELECTED LEARNING GOALS

These students consider learning to be their responsibility and therefore can take credit for their successes and respond to failures by revising goals, making new plans or strategies. Goals promote self-determination by focusing student efforts on activities that support the goals and away from goal-irrelevant activities. Goals energize students to participate actively since their relevance is evident. Students with goals are more likely to ask for help because doing so gives them additional control over the task and their ultimate success. Students can identify and solve problems that interfere with their goals. Students who are autonomously motivated remember what they learn better than those who are motivated by external benefits or threats.

How to encourage academic self determination:

- Help students identify incentives for their learning without undue emphasis on a test
- Give practice, feedback and instruction in academic goal setting, decision making, problem solving and self-evaluation
- Allow students to help determine their own rewards for success
- Guide student goals toward specific performance standards (Number of math problems to be completed vs. nonspecific goals like “Do your best.”)
- Aide students in setting short-term or proximal goals vs. long term goals
- Teach children how to think rather than what to think
- Have students recognize the successes of their classmates on achieving goals
- Emphasize the process of learning rather than the products of learning
- Posters that guide students through task completion
- Board reminders of due dates
- Post steps for how/when to ask for help
- Relate content to students’ everyday life
- Ask for justification of responses to promote active student learning
- Require effortful activity during instruction
- Give flexible assignments that allow for student choice
- Build student learning communities through explicit instruction in cooperative learning skills
- Provide explicit, scaffolded instruction in learning strategies
- Use self and peer evaluations and feedback to plan ways to improve performance
- Involve students in choosing how they will learn, their pace and evaluation standards
- Support students in gradually assuming more responsibility for decisions related to their learning
- Share with students how an activity is personally meaningful and will address their learning goals

STUDENTS BEHAVE APPROPRIATELY AND ADAPTIVELY WITH MINIMUM OF ADULT SUPERVISION

Students respond to the teacher and the lesson, stay actively engaged, interact effectively with peers and move efficiently through transitions. Ultimately self control enables students to act in ways that are less attractive in the short term in order to meet the long-term goals they have set for themselves. In resilient classrooms, students are taught to manage their own behavior with the help of classroom routines that cue appropriate behavior.



Steps for Self Control for Students

- Know the rules and standards of behavior
- Notice in the moment when it is time to follow a rule
- Notice whether or not you are following the rule
- Stop, think and make a conscious decision to follow the rule (and do it)
- Evaluate your rule-following behavior and take steps to improve

How to encourage behavioral self control:

- Involve students in setting and promoting the rules
- Give direct instruction on school rules
- All school staff use consistent and familiar terms
- Use visuals of school rules
- Teach signals adults will use to remind students when it is time to follow a rule
- Teach students how to make decisions about their behavior
- Teach students to keep simple records of their rule-following behaviors
- Remind students to stop and think before acting
- Teach simple delay routines to allow for behavioral decisions (“first count to five”, “say to yourself, what is the rule here?”)
- Teach students how to resolve arguments
- Teach problem solving
- Lead students to identify self regulation strategies used by story characters
- Carefully manage classroom routines
- Supervise carefully
- Systematically manipulate antecedents and consequences
- Hold classroom meetings for discussion of behavioral progress and brainstorming for improvement

CARING AND AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

Teacher-student relationships are warm, engaged, and responsive, characterized by high demands and high expectations and provide the class with structure and clear limits. They are also emotion based experiences that occur in ongoing interactions. Students share some power over the quality of the relationship and its expression.

How to encourage effective teacher-student relationships:

The Teacher

- Uses active listening
- Spends time with students doing something of their choice
- Uses classroom meetings
- Shares personal stories
- Shows unconditional positive regard
- Treats all students fairly
- Lets students know what they like about them
- Gives specific genuine compliments
- Believes all students can succeed
- Is willing to help students
- Enjoys students
- Has a positive sense of humor
- Can laugh at him/herself
- Is willing to acknowledge their mistakes
- Is willing to apologize
- Can have fun with class

STUDENTS HAVE ONGOING AND REWARDING FRIENDSHIPS WITH CLASSMATES

All children in a class have supportive peer friendships and know how to resolve conflicts to the satisfaction of all involved. (Research has shown that although conflict is normal for peer relationships, in healthy interactions most students can overlook minor conflicts and find ways to resolve all conflicts so friendships are maintained.)

How to encourage effective peer relationships:

- Provide frequent opportunities to have fun working and playing together (Incidental activities are as effective or more effective in fostering friendships as are groups/activities with the explicit purpose of teaching social skills.)
- Periodically rearrange working groups
- Teach higher achieving or more socially competent classmates to coach less skilled classmates
- Acknowledge and discuss challenges timid students face
- Classroom use of children’s books on friendship, bullying, grief/loss, etc.
- Classroom meetings
- Cooperative and collaborative learning activities
- Cooperative games
- Engage students in selecting and conducting whole-class service activities for school/ community
- Encourage peer helping, compliment giving, problem solving
- Teach appreciation of differences
- Intervene with any bullying

- Provide opportunities for each student to demonstrate their positive traits/knowledge/abilities
- Do not allow “put-downs”
- Recognize students’ use of thoughtfulness and kindness toward one another

FAMILIES KNOW ABOUT AND STRENGTHEN THE LEARNING THAT OCCURS IN THE CLASSROOM

When home and school share a relationship and communicate effectively, their educational goals and values will be more similar and students will more readily internalize this shared value. Student achievement is influenced more by what parents do at home to support their children’s schooling than by what parents do inside the school building .

How to Encourage Home-School Relationships:

- Inform parents about effective, complementary home-based practices that support their children’s classroom work through “classroom tips” in newsletters, phone calls or personal notes sent to parents
- Let parents know how important it is for them to convey high expectations, set firm but reasonable standards for effort and performance and enforce rules for homework routines
- Let parents know that they don’t need to know how to do the homework as much as being cheerleaders for their students and supporting them in diligence and persistence in the face of challenges
- Assign students to interview their parents and report back on their parents’ knowledge of daily routines and practices of the classroom
- Assign students to interview their parents on parents’ topic of expertise/interest
- Have students gather parents’ suggestions for modifying classroom practices so that they are more family-friendly
- Use a variety of communication strategies to reach all parents
- Adjust communications to different languages and cultural expectations

Many interventions have the potential to affect several resiliency characteristics simultaneously.

Find out the characteristics of resiliency in your classroom:

See Beth Doll’s “Classroom Map” questionnaire; on docushare - www.LPS/schoolsocialworker/ or [Resiliency in The Classroom: Creating A Health Classroom Environment.](#)