REL Appalachia Ask A REL Response

College and Career Readiness, Educator Effectiveness
November 2018

Question:

What practices or strategies can educators use to promote or develop a culture of high expectations for students?

Response:

Thank you for your request to our REL Reference Desk regarding evidence-based strategies for promoting high expectations for students. Ask A REL is a collaborative reference desk service provided by the 10 Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) that, by design, functions much in the same way as a technical reference library. Ask A REL provides references, referrals, and brief responses in the form of citations in response to questions about available education research.

Following an established REL Appalachia research protocol, we searched for peer-reviewed articles and other research reports on high expectations. We focused on identifying resources that specifically addressed practices or strategies that educators can use to promote or develop a culture of high expectations for students. The sources included ERIC and other federally funded databases and organizations, research institutions, academic research databases, and general Internet search engines. For more details, please see the methods section at the end of this document.

The research team did not evaluate the quality of the resources provided in this response; we offer them only for your reference. Also, the search included the most commonly used research databases and search engines to produce the references presented here, but the references are not necessarily comprehensive, and other relevant references and resources may exist. References are listed in alphabetical order, not necessarily in order of relevance.

References

McGuigan, L., & Hoy, W. K. (2006). Principal leadership: Creating a culture of academic optimism to improve achievement for all students. *Leadership and Policy in Schools, 5*(3), 203–229. Abstract retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ819642; full text available at https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Wayne_Hoy/publication/248906380_Principal_Leadership_Creating_a_Culture_of_Academic_Optimism_to_Improve_Achievement_for_All_Stu

dents/links/57445e8a08ae9f741b3d910c/Principal-Leadership-Creating-a-Culture-of-Academic-Optimism-to-Improve-Achievement-for-All-Students.pdf

From the abstract: "Since the Coleman Report (1966), educational researchers have tried to identify school properties that make a difference in student achievement and overcome the negative influence of low socioeconomic status. We theorized that academic optimism was a latent construct that enhanced student achievement and that enabling school structure provided a mechanism to achieve academic optimism. Forty suburban and rural elementary schools in Ohio provided the sample for this study. Data were collected from the faculty in each school and the hypotheses and model were tested and supported using correlation, regression, and factor analyses."

Reynolds, M. C. (2004). *Ten strategies for creating a classroom culture of high expectations*. Atlanta, GA: Southern Regional Education Board, High Schools That Work. Retrieved from https://www.sreb.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/04v03_ten_strategies_0.pdf

From the introduction: "To help students meet rigorous course standards in academic and career/technical classrooms, each teacher must establish and maintain a learning environment that supports and motivates students to do their personal best. Classroom management is so much more than a set of appropriate rules and consequences. There is a skill set of strategies that teachers and principals can use to create focused and productive classrooms that help students achieve higher levels of performance. Principals and teachers can implement self-assessment and staff development programs built around the following 10 strategies."

Rubie-Davies, C. M., & Rosenthal, R. (2016). Intervening in teachers' expectations: A random effects meta-analytic approach to examining the effectiveness of an intervention. *Learning and Individual Differences, 50*, 83–92. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Christine_Rubie-Davies/publication/305823514_Intervening_in_teachers%27_expectations_A_random_effects_meta-analytic_approach_to_examining_the_effectiveness_of_an_intervention/links/57e97b5108aef8bfcc961a19/Intervening-in-teachers-expectations-A-random-effects-meta-analytic-approach-to-examining-the-effectiveness-of-an-intervention.pdf

From the abstract: "Experimental studies within the education field are rare. The current study used a random effects meta-analytic approach to examine the effectiveness of a teacher expectation intervention across different schools, grade levels, socioeconomic levels, ethnicities, and gender in terms of student mathematics achievement. Teachers were randomly assigned to intervention and control groups, and through professional development workshops were trained in the practices of teachers who have high expectations for all students. The intervention related to three key areas: grouping and learning experiences, class climate, and goal setting. No matter which grouping variables were employed in the random effects meta-analyses, effect sizes in mathematics achievement for the students whose teachers were part of the intervention group compared with students with control group teachers were large, ranging from r=0.61–0.87.

The usefulness of the instructional strategies that formed the basis of the intervention is discussed in light of the relevant literature and the educational implications are presented."

Rutledge, S., Cohen-Vogel, L., & Osborne-Lampkin, L. (2012). *Identifying characteristics of effective high schools: Report from year one of the National Center on Scaling Up Effective Schools.* Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University, Peabody College of Education, National Center on Scaling Up Effective Schools. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED538011

From the abstract: "The National Center on Scaling up Effective Schools (NCSU) is a five-year project working to develop, implement, and test new processes to scale up effective practices in high schools that districts will be able to apply within the context of their own unique goals and circumstances. This report describes the activities and findings of the first year, specifically, from fieldwork conducted in four case study high schools in one of its partner districts, Broward County, Florida. The findings from this fieldwork inform a joint team of researchers, designers, and district educators toward promising practices around which an innovation will be built in the same district in years three, four, and five of the Center's work. The report is divided into ten sections. After an introduction, Section II presents eight essential components of effective high schools drawn from a comprehensive review of the high school reform literature (e.g., Dolejs et al., 2006; Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, & Porter, 2006) and two others that emerged from the analysis of the fieldwork data in Year One. Section III details the research design, describing the sample selection, data, and three-stage approach used to analyze the data. In Section IV, the authors present case summaries of each of the four sites, referred to herein as B101, B102, B103, and B104 to protect confidentiality. In addition to summarizing the practices through which the essential components were manifest in each school, this section includes structural and demographic features that may be important for contextualizing the findings. In Section V, the authors compare higher and lower value-added schools in terms of the ten essential components and identify the bundles of practices that might explain observed differences. Section VI points to practices that the findings suggest cut across various components to support school success, with particular attention to their major finding on personalization for academic and social learning. The authors also conclude with the next steps for the Center."

Note: Several essential components of effective high schools, described on pages 8–9, have a focus on high expectations, including:

- "Learning-Centered Leadership: Principals in effective high schools engage in leadership that prioritizes student learning. They possess an ambitious vision for learning and hold high expectations for all students and staff…
- "Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior: School personnel in effective high schools take part in a strong culture of learning and professional behavior. This culture is defined by a shared focus on high expectations for students and emphasis on students' academic needs among the administration, staff, and faculty of the school…
- "Systemic Performance Accountability: Schools that exhibit systemic performance accountability have faculty and staff who hold clear expectations for student

performance that reach beyond external accountability pressures. Personnel in these schools focus on student academic outcomes and continuous improvement on explicit performance targets, and implement initiatives to reach those goals…"

Taylor, R. (2010). Leadership to improve student achievement: Focus the culture on learning. *AASA Journal of Scholarship & Practice, 7*(1), 10–23. Abstract retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ883711; full text available at http://www.aasa.org/uploadedFiles/Publications/Journals/AASA_Journal_of_Scholarship_and_Practice/JSP_Spring2010_FINAL.pdf#page=10

From the abstract: "This study on leadership for second order change and improved student achievement represents interview and observational research with 62 leaders at the district and school levels in 10 states. Seven consistent leader action themes emerged across all participants regardless of demographics of the school, demographics of the leader, or position assignment. First and foremost all attributed the positive improvement to the first leader action theme: focusing the culture on learning. The remaining 6 leader action themes supported the accomplishment of the first. These 6 are: make decisions for student learning, stimulate intellectual growth, invest personally in the change, expect collaboration, strategize for consistency, and expect and support data-based decision making."

Tichnor-Wagner, A., Harrison, C., & Cohen-Vogel, L. (2016). Cultures of learning in effective high schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 52*(4), 602–642. Abstract retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1112382

From the abstract: "Purpose: Research indicates that a culture of learning is a key factor in building high schools that foster academic achievement in all students. Yet less is known about which elements of a culture of learning differentiate schools with higher levels of academic performance. To fill this gap, this comparative case study examined the cultures of learning among adults and students in two highly effective high schools and two less effective high schools with similar demographics in a single large, urban school district. Research Method: Using 135 interviews and focus groups with administrators, teachers, and students across four case study schools, the authors analyzed the extent to which various elements of a culture of learning was present within and across schools. Findings: Effective high schools had stronger cultures of learning with distinct structures and practices that distinguished them from the less effective schools. These included frequent opportunities for formal collaboration, shared goals centered on universal high expectations, structured opportunities for participatory leadership, and deliberate supports to help students engage and achieve in academics. Findings further revealed that certain structures were necessary though not sufficient in fostering effective cultures of learning, the active role of school leaders in reinforcing a culture of learning, and high leverage practices that addressed multiple elements of a culture of learning. Implications: This study provides implications for how school leaders can begin to create and improve on school-wide cultures of learning by drawing on the high leverage practices that distinguished the highly effective case study schools."

Additional Ask A REL Responses to Consult

Ask A REL Midwest at American Institutes for Research. (2017). *What research is available on the impact school culture and climate have on student outcomes?* Retrieved from https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midwest/askarel/2017/RDR012_SchoolCulture_July.aspx

Ask A REL Northeast and Islands at Education Development Center. (2017). *What is the research evidence around strategies for improving school climate?* Retrieved from https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northeast/AskAREL/Response/17

Additional Organizations to Consult

College and Career Readiness and Success Center: https://ccrscenter.org/

From the website: "The College and Career Readiness and Success Center (CCRS Center) is dedicated to ensuring all students graduate high school ready for college and career success. The mission of the CCRS Center is to serve Regional Comprehensive Centers in building the capacity of states to effectively implement initiatives for college and career readiness and success. Through technical assistance delivery and supporting resources, the CCRS Center provides customized support that facilitates the continuous design, implementation, and improvement of college and career readiness priorities."

Southern Regional Education Board – High Schools That Work: https://www.sreb.org/about-hstw

From the website: "HSTW was established in 1987 by the SREB State Vocational Education Consortium, a partnership of SREB, its member states, their school systems and school sites….HSTW uses research-proven strategies to help states transform their public high schools into places where all students learn at high levels. The program is based on the belief that most students can master complex academic and technical concepts if schools create an environment that encourages students to make the effort to succeed. Member schools implement 10 Key Practices and Goals for changing what is expected of students, what they are taught and how they are taught. SREB provides member states and sites with staff development, technical assistance, communications and publications, and assessment services."

Methods

Keywords and Search Strings

The following keywords and search strings were used to search the reference databases and other sources:

- "high expectations" AND ("school climate" OR "school culture") AND (foster OR promote OR improve OR develop)

Databases and Resources

We searched ERIC, a free online library of more than 1.6 million citations of education research sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), for relevant resources. Additionally, we searched the academic database ProQuest, Google Scholar, and the commercial search engine Google.

Reference Search and Selection Criteria

In reviewing resources, Reference Desk researchers consider—among other things—these four factors:

- Date of the publication: Searches cover information available within the last ten years, except in the case of nationally known seminal resources.
- Reference sources: IES, nationally funded, and certain other vetted sources known for strict attention to research protocols receive highest priority. Applicable resources must be publicly available online and in English.
- Methodology: The following methodological priorities/considerations guide the review and selection of the references: (a) study types—randomized controlled trials, quasi experiments, surveys, descriptive data analyses, literature reviews, policy briefs, etc., generally in this order; (b) target population, samples (representativeness of the target population, sample size, volunteered or randomly selected), study duration, etc.; (c) limitations, generalizability of the findings and conclusions, etc.
- Existing knowledge base: Vetted resources (e.g., peer-reviewed research journals) are the primary focus, but the research base is occasionally slim or nonexistent. In those cases, the best resources available may include, for example, reports, white papers, guides, reviews in non-peer-reviewed journals, newspaper articles, interviews with content specialists, and organization websites.

Resources included in this document were last accessed on November 14, 2018. URLs, descriptions, and content included here were current at that time.