REL Southwest study: Understanding the role of noncognitive skills and school environments in students’ transitions to high school

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Background

This study investigated how school climate and social-emotional factors relate to three measures of successful grade 9 transitions:

Freshman grade point average

Course failures

Attendance
School sample

3 majority Hispanic and White districts
2 majority American Indian and Hispanic districts
1 majority Hispanic district
1 majority American Indian district
1 White, Hispanic, and American Indian district

12 total high schools
Student sample

27% American Indian
48% Hispanic
25% White

9% English learners
10% Special education
59% Low income
2,995 grade 9 students completed surveys.

93% Response rate across participating high schools.
Structural equation modeling was used to look at relationships between student and school climate factors.
Student factors

Study habits
Parent involvement
Self-efficacy
Academic perseverance
These student factors had statistically significant and positive associations with...

Grade 9 GPA

- Study habits
- Parent involvement
- Self-efficacy
- Academic perseverance
These student factors had statistically significant associations in the expected direction with...

Grade 9 Absences

- Study habits
These student factors had statistically significant associations in the expected direction with...

Grade 9 Course Failures

- Study habits
- Parent involvement
- Self-efficacy
- Academic perseverance
School climate factors

- Sense of belonging
- Student respect
- Future orientation
- Teacher support
These school factors had statistically significant and positive associations with...

Grade 9 GPA

- Sense of belonging
- Student respect
- Future orientation
- Teacher support
These school factors had statistically significant and positive associations with...

Grade 9 Course Failures

• Sense of belonging
• Future orientation
• Teacher support
These school factors had statistically significant and positive associations with...

Grade 9 Absences

- Sense of belonging
- Future orientation
3 factors were associated with all three grade 9 outcomes

- Sense of Belonging
- Future Orientation
- Study Habits

- Grade 9 GPA
- Grade 9 Absences
- Grade 9 Course Failures
For more details about the study, download the full report available on the REL Southwest website:

This video highlights the key findings from REL Southwest’s report *Understanding the Role of Noncognitive Skills and School Environments in Students’ Transitions to High School*.

The video describes how New Mexico students’ perceptions of academic supports, high school transitions, and school environment correspond to high school success, particularly for American Indian and Hispanic students. In addition, the conclusion provides practical takeaways for school, district, and state education leaders.
Questions?