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A Social and Emotional Learning Curriculum Recommendation for Nicollet Public School District

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Purpose

The purpose of this literature review, curriculum evaluation and subsequent curriculum recommendation is to provide Nicollet Public School District with an overview of a social and emotional learning Program that meets the current needs of the school.

Methodology

This project consisted of three steps.

- I. Conducting a review of the literature to identify evidence-based curricula addressing social and emotional learning of youth.
- II. Evaluating the curricula based upon six criteria and selecting the curriculum that would best meet the needs of the District.
 - ❖ Through collaboration with the school social worker at Nicollet Public School six criteria for evaluating each curriculum were constructed and clearly defined, as follows:
 1. Cost of the curriculum: Affordable.
 2. Grade range /Academic skills level
 3. Focus of the curriculum
 4. Evidence-based to support the curriculum's efficacy.
 5. Types of activities provided.
 6. Appropriateness for diverse population
 - ❖ Table 1 presents the rating scores for the seven curriculum identified in the literature review.
- III. Describing in detail the recommended curriculum.

Table 1:
Social and Emotional Learning Curriculum: Criteria and Rating Scores

Curriculum	Cost	Grade Range	Focus	Research Based	Activities	Population
Incredible Years	2	3	3	3	3	2
Open Circle	2	3	2	3	2	3
PATHS	2	3	3	3	3	3
Positive Action	2	3	3	3	2	3
Responsive Classrooms	2	3	2	3	2	3
Second Steps	2	3	2	3	2	3
WhyTry?	3	3	3	3	3	3

1 = does not meet the criteria; 2 = meets the criteria to a moderate extent; 3 = meets the criteria to a superior extent

Figure 2:
 WhyTry? Program Analogy “Tearing Off Your Label”



Four Steps to Tearing Off Your Label

1. **Stop Living Up To Your Label. Prove Your Label Wrong**
 - Believe in the real you . . . not the label
 - How has living up to my label effected the past, today, future?
 - When this label is off how will it effect me, my family, friends, school?
2. **Remember: It's EASY to Prove that your Label Is True**
 - Just keep doing the same things over and over
 - To tear off the label you must do something . . .
 - 1. **Different** (and use) 2. **Self Respect** 3. **Desire** 4. **Time** 5. **Effort**
 - When I prove the label wrong why will I have more opportunity and freedom?
3. **Your Label Is From The Past, Today "YOU" Decide To Keep It Or Start . . . "TEARING IT OFF!"**

Imagine . . .

 - You wake up tomorrow and you label is gone, What would be different?
4. **Let "The Real Me" Stand Out So Much That The Past Label MUST Be Torn Off!**
 - What observable behaviors do I need to use more to show how I am bigger and better than a label?

Every Night Ask Yourself:

- What did I do today to tear off the label?
- How can I do more of this tomorrow?

How Much Do I Believe In This Label?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
 It's Staying On! Some It's Coming Off!
 "The Label Is not The Can"

WhyTry? Program: Key Findings

- ❖ WhyTry? is recognized as a “Model Program” by The National Dropout Prevention Center/Network (NDPCN), a national resource for professionals seeking education on a variety of issues that face America’s youth.
- ❖ A variety of research methods have been employed to evaluate the WhyTry? program, including outside experimental studies, research conducted at individual schools and districts and research conducted by individual states in the U.S. as well as in Australia and Canada.
- ❖ Research finding on the efficacy of the WhyTry? Program include: (a) improved academic achievement, reduction in truancy, decrease in aggressive and anti-social behaviors, increase in positive behaviors (Clark & Alvarez, 2010; Glee, 2003, Knick, 2010; Why Try? Research, 2011.)

WhyTry? Program: Description

- ❖ WhyTry? addresses the issues youth face through a curriculum that employs thought provoking analogies that help youth answer the question: *WhyTry?*. The program uses 10 different analogies used to facilitate in-depth problem-solving.
 - See Figure 1 and 2 for two of the 10 analogies.
 - WhyTry? offers music and physical activities that go along with each of the 10 lessons.
 - The WhyTry? encourages creativity among curriculum facilitators, making it possible for the lessons to be altered to meet the unique needs of each student (WhyTry? Curriculum, 2007).



Figure 1:
 WhyTry? Program Analogy “Reality Ride”



The "Reality" Ride

GOAL: Opportunity - Freedom - Self Respect

1. Things that get me in trouble . . .

2. What choices will give me . . .

3. My Challenges . . .

4. What will my "Reality" be when I ride here?
 At Home:
 At School:
 With Peers:
 In Future:

5. "Easy - Fast"

6. "Harder But Worth It"

7. What Problems do I keep having over and over?

8. Who Can Support Me?

9. "You Know You're In The Loop If You Feel"
 Frustrated
 Confused
 Angry
 Scared
 Keep getting same results

10. "Reality" Consequences of Crash . . .

Will These Things Give Me . . .
 Opportunity? Freedom? Self Respect?

References

References are available from the author upon request.



Strengths and Limitations

- ❖ A major strength of this Capstone Project was that significant research exists demonstrating the importance of evidence-based social and emotional learning curriculums. The availability of reports published by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) proved to be an indispensable resource when seeking to understand the role of social and emotional learning in the lives of students.
- ❖ Limitations of the current research on the efficacy of the WhyTry? Program includes the need to expand research conducted with large sample sizes and to include more participants of more diverse backgrounds. In addition, findings promoting the efficacy of WhyTry? need to be replicated with additional age groups and students with a variety of skills levels (Alvarez & Anderson-Ketchmark, 2009).

Conclusion & Recommendation

- ❖ The conclusion of this project is that the WhyTry? Program meets the current needs of Nicollet Public School District at a level that surpasses other curriculums evaluated.
- ❖ This Capstone Project has resulted in a recommendation to Nicollet Public School District that the *WhyTry? Program* be implemented in their school.

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