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.

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, Knack, 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).

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 curricula. 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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References

References are available from the author upon request.