



Strategies to Support a Positive School Climate

Eudaimonia

Eudaimonia, or 'thriving', is about getting to know one's true self and striving to be the best one can be. A student who is thriving is engaged in activities that strengthen their sense of purpose in life. Schools, families, and communities can contribute to students' development of a sense of purpose which, in turn, leads to identify formation and career identity.



Why is it important?

- A strong sense of purpose is linked to feelings of satisfaction, motivation, and perseverance (Cartwright & Holmes, 2006).
- Through personal expressiveness, students can discover self-defining interests and pursuits that help shape their identity (Sharp & Coatsworth, 2012).
- Students who report engaging in a greater number of expressive activities are more likely to report high levels of wellness (Coatsworth & Sharp, 2013).

In Practice

Schools can support eudaimonia by promoting personally expressive activities, building and strengthening personal assets, and establishing partnerships with family and community.

1. Promote Personally Expressive Activities



What can schools do?

Schools can ensure that every student is involved in at least one personally expressive activity by:

- Encouraging students to become involved in volunteer or community-service activities.
- Providing opportunities for students to engage in performance-based activities, such as a sports team, drama club, or a school band.
- Ensuring students have opportunities to participate in the social life of the school. This could include, for example, being involved in student government or taking part in a science fair.

Participation of all students can be supported by gauging students interests and talents and offering activities that align with those pursuits. Furthermore, by offering expanded scheduling (e.g., before school, lunchtime, after school) and removing age-based restrictions, schools can create opportunities for all students to participate.



In the Classroom

The following practices will help build Eudaimonia in the classroom:

- Consider, what are your passions and how did they start? Through modeling one's passions and describing how they were discovered teachers can help students discover personally expressive activities (Waterman & Schwarz, 2013).
- Give students the flexibility to work in areas they are passionate about. Work with each student to document their interests and consider lessons or projects that align with those interests.

2. Build and Strengthen Assets

Developmental assets represent the qualities and conditions that young people need to thrive and succeed, including support, empowerment, boundaries and constructive use of time (Benson & Scales, 2009). Schools should ensure that every student is receiving support to build and strengthen their foundational assets.



What can schools do?

Schools can take steps to support student asset development, which can support thriving. This could include:

- Exposing students to a variety of curricular arrangements, including team teaching, cooperative instruction, opportunities for exploratory learning and literacy initiatives (Scales & Taccogna, 2000).
- Providing opportunities for student voice, which may consist of students giving their input regarding issues at school and in providing solutions to those concerns.
- Encouraging participation in structured after school activities to develop assets related to positive peer and adult relationships (Scales & Taccogna, 2000).

By creating environments that shape a nurturing school culture that is equal parts challenging and caring schools can broadly impact student asset development.



In the Classroom

Educators can support developmental relationships by engaging in actions that encourage students to become motivated to thrive and work towards achieving their full potential, such as:

- Demonstrating care and providing encouragement when needed.
- Offering support by guiding students to achieve their goals.
- Holding students accountable and pushing them to do better.
- Sharing power and providing opportunities to lead.
- Inspiring students by introducing them to broader possibilities and experiences.

3. Establish Effective Partnerships with Family and Community Developmental

School-community partnerships can provide opportunities for students to apply leadership and problem-solving skills in real world environments. These opportunities also serve as a way to interact and bond with other students and adults.



What can schools do?

Consider how your school could implement the following community-based practices:

- Connect with community-based groups that encourage positive youth development, for example the YMCA, boys and girls clubs and parks and recreation groups (Scales & Taccogna, 2000).
- Provide opportunities for guest speakers from a wide variety of community partners and, if possible, arrange on-site visits for students.
- Collaborate with multiple organizations for varied collaborations, including mentorship programs, job shadowing and volunteer opportunities.
- Allow for family involvement and encourage parental participation in community-based initiatives and events to reinforce their importance.

References

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