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ABSTRACT

This qualitative work analyzes selected major literature on self-esteem from the standpoint of urban youth education. It defines and describes elements of self-esteem, and links self-esteem to self-worth, learners' social environmental cues, teacher attitudes, and other variables. At-risk youth carry the additional burden of internalizing disapproval based on behavior associated with race and poverty. Stressing the importance of self-esteem of minorities to academic achievement, this work suggests specific classroom strategies for building positive self-esteem in at-risk students. To improve the self-esteem of students, teachers must first consider their own self-esteem, because teachers with high self-esteem are more effective teachers. The teacher who is committed to enhancing self-esteem must develop a classroom environment that promotes self-esteem in an atmosphere of positive social values. Strategies that enhance cooperation and social responsibility also build the self-esteem of urban minority students. Research supports the contention that the academic achievement of minority students can be increased significantly if educators focus on positive self-esteem. (Contains 60 references.) (SLD)

SELF-ESTEEM AND URBAN EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative work analyzes selected major literature on self-esteem from the standpoint of urban youth education. It defines and describes elements of self-esteem and links self-esteem to self worth, learners' social environmental cues, teacher attitudes and other variables. At-risk youth carry the additional burden of internalizing disapproval based on behavior associated with race and poverty. Stressing the importance of self-esteem of minorities to academic achievement, this work suggests specific classroom strategies for building positive self-esteem in at-risk students.

Self-Esteem and Urban Education

By Vernon G. Smith

Introduction

In the quest for excellence in education, educators have explored many factors that may or may not contribute to the quality of educational attainment among students. Some assert the quality of education can be raised with more financial resources. Others tout staff development and new methodologies that will meet the needs of children. Still others believe that achievement is diminished by poverty, racism, sexism, and personal abilities, such as the lack of what is traditionally seen as intelligence. Some argue that social problems that undermine and limit children's ability must be solved, if all children are to learn as desired. Yet another group is convinced that the way children seem to feel about themselves is the determining factor as to whether they will be able to learn effectively. What is the answer? All of the above seem to influence the educational process, yet "there seems to be a difference between children who are successful in school and those who aren't, but not all the difference can be attributed to intelligence or social indices" (Bean, 1992c, p. 2).

This qualitative work analyzes major literature on self-esteem and

urban youth. It explores the variable of self-esteem: (a) defining the concept, (b) noting its impact on student performance, and (c) stressing the critical need for self-esteem being addressed in working with children in inner city schools, especially minority children. Based on the analysis of critical literature and the author's own experience, specific, practical classroom strategies for the teacher are offered that are designed to increase self-esteem, mold positive attitudes and build confidence through classroom experiences.

What is self-esteem?

In the late 1980's Heath and McLaughlin's work in troubled neighborhoods in three major metropolitan areas of the United States revealed "puzzling cases of successful children whose home and community lives should have foretold disaster but who had somehow survived -- who had not been destroyed by their environments" (p. 2). On the other hand, Bean (1992c) points out that "many children have the right indices to be successful in school, but aren't" (p. 2). He has chosen to describe this discrepancy as the presence or absence of self-esteem.

Teachers for years have observed both situations in their classrooms. When children seem to transcend their environment, teachers attribute it to high motivation. When children do not feel good

about themselves and do not do well in school when one would expect them to do so, teachers have tried to help them by motivating, encouraging, praising, smiling, touching, and giving approval to help them to develop confidence through classroom experiences. However, if we are to achieve excellence in education, a more focused look at what causes this unpredictability of behavior or performance must occur.

Bean (1992c) stated that self-esteem is about the way people feel, yet he said it is not just feeling "good"; it is about being satisfied. According to him, children feel satisfied as a result of having done enough of the things that fulfill their needs and wants. He noted that the things children do (behavior) or say (reflection of thinking) are not self-esteem, but are expressions of it. He argued that self-esteem is unconscious and affects everything one does, especially when one's emotions are involved.

Bandura (1984) said self-esteem is the way a person feels, possesses, and desires self-respect, as well as self-acceptance, personal worth, competence, strength, achievement, adequacy, mastery, identity, independence, freedom, prestige, status, recognition, attention, dignity, and appreciation.

Reasoner (1982) defined self-esteem as the feeling of self-respect. He included five characteristics of self-esteem, namely: (a) a sense of

security, (b) a sense of identity or self-concept, (c) a sense of belonging, (d) a sense of purpose, and (e) a sense of personal competence.

Johnson (1992) in her guide for persons interested in conducting workshops designed to foster positive self-esteem described self-esteem "as a personal judgment of your own self-worth" and adds that "it is based on how you believe your abilities and skills to be" (p. 2).

Sparks and Stinson (1991) in their paper, "Promoting Self-Responsibility and Decision Making with At-Risk Students," talked about the need to help at-risk students believe in themselves. In describing self-esteem, they used such descriptive terms as "a sense of self-worth," "feel worthwhile," and "believe in yourself."

In a guide developed by the Instructional Materials Laboratory of the University of Missouri-Columbia, the question is asked, "What is self-esteem?" It stated: self-esteem forms a solid foundation on which to build success in life. It is a basic component of personality and has a major impact on interpersonal relationships (1987, p. 1). The guide also used such descriptive terms as "favorable self-regard," "self-respect," and " self- acceptance" to describe self-esteem .

Beane and Lipka (1986), noting the confusion over the terms "self-concept" and "self-esteem," defined self-concept "as the description an

individual attaches to himself or herself "(p. 5), but go on to state "self-esteem, on the other hand, refers to the evaluation one makes of the self-concept description and, more specifically, the degree to which one is satisfied with it, in whole or in part" (p. 6). Self-esteem judgment, they asserted, is based on values or value indicators such attitudes, beliefs, or interests. To understand the difference and the interdependence, they gave the example of an adolescent who "might describe himself as a good student (self-concept), but may wish to change that (self-esteem) because he wants to be accepted by peers who devalue school success (value indicator)" (p. 8). In summary, they say self-concept and self-esteem are distinct dimensions of the broader area of self-perceptions, the former being description and the latter being evaluation. This distinction in terms will be retained.

The Conditions and Arenas of Self-Esteem

Bean (1992c) in his book, The Four Conditions of Self-Esteem, identified four feelings that everyone experiences. They are (a) the sense of connnectiveness, (b) the sense of uniqueness, (c) the sense of power, and (d) the sense of models.

Bean explained the four as follows:

Sense of Connectiveness. Children must be able to gain

satisfaction from the people, places, or things they feel connected to.

Children with a high Sense of Connectiveness:

Feel they are a part of something.

Feel related in important ways to specific people, places, or things.

Identify with a group of people.

Feel they belong to something or someone.

Feel they are important to others (p.29).

Sense of Uniqueness. Children must acknowledge and respect the qualities and characteristics about themselves that are special and different, and they must receive confirmations from other people that those qualities and characteristics are important.

Children with a high Sense of Uniqueness:

Feel there is something special about themselves.

Feel they know things or can do things that no one else knows or can do.

Know that other people think they are special.

Are able to express themselves in their own unique way (pp. 30-31).

Sense of Power. Children need to have the competence to do what they must, the resources required to effectively express their competence, and the opportunity to use their competence to influence important circumstances of their lives.

Children with a high Sense of Power:

Believe they can do what they set out to do.

Feel confident they can handle, one way or another, what is put before them to do, including things that might be risky or challenging.

Feel they are in charge of their own lives, overall, despite having to depend on others some of the time.

Feel comfortable when they have a responsibility to fulfill.

Feel others can't make them do things they don't really want to do (p. 32-33).

Sense of Models. Children need to be able to refer to human, philosophical, and operational models to help make sense of the world. They use these reference points to set their own goals, values, personal standards, and ideals.

Children with a high Sense of Models:

Know people they feel are worthy of being emulated.

Feel confident that they can tell right from wrong and good from bad.

Have consistent values and beliefs guiding and directing their actions in different situations.

Can depend on prior experiences to help them avoid being intimidated by new ones.

Feel a sense of purpose and know, more or less, where they are headed (pp. 34-35).

Raising self-esteem involves helping children who are having difficulty feeling one or more of these four feelings to feel them more often and more intensely. Bean (1992c) further explained that these conditions operate in three arenas: the (a) personal arena, (b) the interpersonal arena, and (c) the group arena. Children's feelings are internal and thus in the personal arena. We, therefore, infer children's feelings from their behavior. The other two arenas are external. Direct one-to-one interaction is called the interpersonal arena. Any time two or more individuals are engaged in an activity having a common objective for all of them, they are operating in the group arena. Most of the children's school experience occurs in group situations.

Value of and Impact of Self-Esteem

Both adults and children drift through life, not knowing who they really are or where they are going, according to Johnson (1992). They depend on other people to give definition to their lives with compliments and praise, and wait to be told what to do or when to feel good about themselves. She noted:

> sometimes it is difficult for us to really get to know ourselves. Why? Because the process of mentally looking closely at yourself -- called introspection -- requires some quiet concentration and a lot of honesty. Yet, in order to determine what direction you want your life to take, you need to know your likes, dislikes, skills, strengths, weaknesses, and values" (p. 3).

The interest in knowing and understanding oneself can be traced back several centuries, but such interest has heightened during the latter part of the twentieth century. Educators and others have suggested that our youth are caught up in an "identity crisis" and that peer pressure has become the number one influence in the lives of our young. In 1902, Cooley espoused that the self is actually a "looking glass self," that is, we come to view ourselves as we believe others view us -- we function on feedback from others. This theory is refined and supported by Sullivan

(1953).

Theorists (Rogers, 1951; Lecky, 1945; Allport, 1955) have recognized the power of the perceived self. Some (Kelley, 1962; Mead, 1934) report that self develops almost entirely as a result of interaction with others, stressing the powerful influence of the environment. Others (Gergen, 1971; Hamachek, 1978) assert that while environment looms over the individual, the individual plays a larger role in determining the self by screening experiences and sometimes even transcending environmental cues.

Self-Esteem Influences Behavior

Self-esteem is revealed in behavior. Bean (1992c) noted that "we can not 'see' feelings directly, but we can observe the effects of feelings in how children act and what they say. Things children do or say are not self-esteem, but are expressions of it" (p. 7). People who believe that they can achieve exhibit high self-esteem by trying and probably succeeding. In contrast, people with low self-esteem fail because they do not even bother to try. They think, Why attempt if I am going to fail anyway?"

Some studies of self-esteem suggest a persistent relationship between self-perceptions and a variety of student school-related

behaviors (Wylie, 1961, 1979; Purkey, 1970; Rosenburg, 1979). Bean (1992c) asserted that if we take self-esteem seriously, we have to believe it has an important relationship to how well children learn. Experience teaches us that self-esteem affects academic achievement, participation in class and other activities, and completion of school, among other student behaviors.

Bean (1992c) tied self-esteem to feeling "satisfied," and suggested that people do things to make themselves feel good when given the opportunity. He suggested that:

> Children who presume they are going to do well on an important test are more likely to take time from playing or watching TV (fun activities) to study (non-fun activity).
>
> They do so because they anticipate that by studying they will do well on the test, thus experiencing a high degree of satisfaction with themselves (a feel-good experience they can count on) (pp. 15-16).

Bean, noted that the goal of working on self-esteem in the classroom is to enable children to experience a high level of satisfaction from learning activities, citing two sets of factors that limit one's ability to feel good. The first, he said, has to do with "internal"

limitations such as the lack of talent, competence, motivation, or specific skills. He identified the second set as "external" limitations, such as the lack of resources and opportunities, or the presence of parental or teacher control which prevents children from doing things that they are competent to do. He stated:

> Children with high self-esteem don't experience too many internal limitations although they may run into external ones. Children with low self-esteem have internal limitations that result in their perceiving external ones even when there are none, what we often call having 'irrational fears' " (p. 17).

He sums up this discussion with the thought that "self-esteem enhancement must work along two paths at the same time" (p. 18).

When children can't find a way to feel good, they will try to feel less bad. Bean (1992c) described this as a "secondary motive," noting that when this motive becomes manifested in behavior it usually results in failure for children or discomfort for those around the children, especially teachers and parents. He gave the example: "Some children who feel they can't be successful at a learning task will begin to perform distracting behaviors to seek attention from others (including the teacher), which will make them feel less bad (isolated, lonely, and

powerless)" (p. 17).

In a study done by Mintz and Muller (1977), cited by Myrick (1989), fourth and sixth graders increased self-concept. This success was correlated positively with achievement. Another study (Scheirer & Kraut, 1979) also provided evidence that self-concept influences academic achievement.

Enhancing self-esteem has become a priority of the Scarborough School System in Scarborough, Ontario. Emphasis is placed on self-esteem because it has been observed to be a better predictor of academic success than intelligence. Using the the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Inventory to appraise growth in self-esteem, Scarborough measured significant increases in student self-esteem in grades three, six, and eight. Students interviewed attributed the growth to teachers placing trust in students, taking time to explain things, and saying nice things about their work -- all behaviors that say "you are important."

How students feel about themselves affects every aspect of their experience, socially and academically. However, students may see themselves one way socially and another way academically. This knowledge should motivate educators to make special efforts to enhance students' self-concept and self-esteem, especially in the academic arena .

Self-esteem based education is needed to improve academic achievement and increase student retention.

Importance to Minorities and Inner-City Children

Price (1992) stated that "millions of Americans, a disproportionate number of them minorities, are going backward, losing hope, finding it increasingly difficult to share in the American dream" (p. 212). Jones and Watson (1990), pointed out that a number of causal variables interact to increase attrition and risk among particular demographic and socioeconomic populations, noting that:

> schools are an umbrella system or organization from which discrimination and differential treatment are often meted out. Subtle forms of discrimination can serve to undermine student's self-esteem and ultimately facilitate attrition. As a result of the social stratification in society, teachers and administrators may inherit a reality that creates an aversion to high-risk, low-income and minority students. This internalization is then reflected in their attitudes and behaviors toward those students. . . . Such negative behaviors can lead to low aspirations and low self-esteem. And low self-esteem can in time cause students to "cooperate" with

systemic forces and participate in various forms of antisocial behavior (p. 2).

Noting that attrition and risk are costly to the individual and to society, Jones and Watson (1990) stressed that strategies for intervention must be developed and implemented at various levels. At the institutional level they suggested academic support services, social support services, and financial committment to high-risk students. To reduce risk at the community level, they noted that businesses and community-based organizations have formed partnerships with educational institutions. Based on Jones and Watson's findings and my many years of working in the classroom and community with youth, I urge all urban educators to reflect heavily on this section of this article and utilize the specific strategies given at the latter part of this article. Thirty-one years of experience has convinced me that one can positively affect youngsters who have low self-esteem to mold their self-concept and build their self-esteem.

Suggesting that black young people are in general at risk, Abasto and Abasto (1991) noted that this is due to a number of factors. They describe the black youth's dilemma as follows:

First of all, Black youth who are having problems lack a

> sense of connectedness to other people, the society and history. The difficulty lies because they do not see a place or purpose for themselves in the world that seems inviting, challenging and attainable Their lives are unstable due to poverty. Their communities are often filled with drugs. The images they see are often either ones with which they don't want to identify or influence them to behave self-destructively (p. 17).

Black youth also lack a sense of uniqueness, according to Abasto and Abasto. Young people need to feel that they are special, but often they don't because they lack a feeling of self respect. Some have parents who call them ugly names. Schools they attend send out negative messages. Television and the movies leave them with negative images. "They may grow up without being able to develop a sense of specialness except in very limited arenas" (p. 17).

Abasto and Abasto point out that young black people also lack a sense of power. They feel invisible and powerless, rather than feeling that they can have some impact on the world.

Many people feel young Black children's value systems are in jeopardy. Once strong in their relationship with God and Christ, today's

youth barely know of their existence, thus their values seldom take on the characteristics of God. According to the Abasto and Abasto (1991), "They need to be taught right from wrong. Without a belief system to guide them, they will not know how to relate to themselves or other people" (p. 18). They note that Black families, who are no longer able to function in terms of traditional responsibilities, are finding it more and more difficult to help their children develop a sense of identity, specialness, or a sense of values.

The Census Bureau in 1992 reported that roughly 50% of Hispanics ages 16 to 24 dropped out of high school; this was up from the 1990 figure of 30% (General Accounting Office, 1994). Cardenas, Montecel, Supik, & Harris (1992) noted that youth from non-English language backgroups are 1.5 times more likely to leave school before high school graduation than those from English-language backgrounds. Similiarly, other researchers (Chapa & Valencia, 1993; Reyes & Valencia, 1993) have found that Latino children are disproportionately represented in grade retentions, school suspensions and dropout rates.

Cervantes (1988) citing Seligman (1975), Sue (1983) and Moritsugu & Sue (1983) made the point that the lack of self-actualizing power affecting minorities in the United States has been associated with learned

helplessness and poor self-concept, since the academic efforts of minorities seem to be limited more by their minority status than by the scholastic activities themselves. Anderson and Safar (1967) proposed that Hispanics and American Indians acquire feelings of inferiority by living in a society that promotes discrimination and negative perspectives towards North American native cultures.

Citing the studies of Anderson and Safar (1967), Cervantes (1988) suggested that ethnic minority children develop low self-esteem because of societal prejudices which are likely to be internalized. In 1971, Sarason argued that the acquisition of a college education frequently produces stress and conflict for minority students which contributes to attrition. Cervantes added that, in addition to stress, a number of individual and systemic variables (e.g. low self-esteem/self-concept and the experience of racial-ethnic biases of educational institutions) contribute to academic underachievement.

Cervantes stated that under-representation of minority students in colleges and their high drop-out rate seem to be related to a lack of self-esteem which, in turn, is associated with high levels of stress. Factors contributing to the lack of self-esteem include discrimination, prejudice, lack of power, and de facto segregation.

Academic standardized tests contribute to the development of low self-concept/self-esteem. Most minority students from lower socio-economic status (SES) groups do not have impressive testing credentials (Astin, 1982; Powers, 1984). This is no coincidence if you look at the development of the academic standardized tests (Owens, 1986). Doing so will reveal that the testing for academic admissions began in the 1920's, when the College Board hired psychologist Carl Campbell Brigham to develop standardized testing. One must keep in mind that Brigham considered the arrival of Blacks to the U.S. as "the most sinister development in the history of this continent" (1923, p. xxi). He felt, further, that the weaken state of the white race was the direct consequence of the abolition of slavery, that Blacks should be stopped from mixing freely with Caucasian people, and that intelligence testing would serve as one instrument for orchestrating and maintaining that barrier.

Olmedo (198l) proved that the use of standardized achievement tests has served as a barrier for many qualified ethnic minorities. Needless to say, low achievement scores have a direct and negative impact on self-concept and since high academic achievement is valued by most, such scores would have a direct and negative impact on self-esteem.

Poverty, discrimination, and racism are other important variables that impact the academic achievement of minorities and thus, their self-concept/self-esteem. This combination of poverty and discrimination compromises the development of study habits, and the acquisition of knowledge, and serves as the reason for academic underachievement among minority students, according to Cervantes who cites Hernandez (1973). Racism has caused some to assert that minorities are socially and intellectually inferior to Euro-Americans (Jensen, 1972; Thomas & Sillen, 1972). Thus, the poverty, discrimination, and racism that minority students experience in the U.S. contribute significantly to academic underachievement by affecting self-concept, spawning stress in their lives, and limiting academic success.

Madrazo-Peterson and Rodriquez (1978) asserted that many minority students believe they are out of place in school. They feel the effects of social isolation and segregation (Ruiz, 1973). In 1993, the Indiana Commission on the Social Status of Black Males conducted hearings in several cities with large African American populations. During the hearings school officials repeatedly reported the underachievement of African American male students and noted the their high drop-out rate (Smith &Pernell, 1994).

The drop-out problem begins early in the educational process and rate for minority students is substantially higher than for others (Rumberger, 1983; Steinberg, Blinde, & Chan, 1984; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1978). Thornburg, Hoffman, and Remeika (1991) pinpointed among other educational "at risk" symptoms, the high dropout rate among Blacks and other minority youth. Proportionally, nearly twice as many Black and Hispanic students as Euro-American students drop-out of school before entering college (Stang & Peele, 1977). For them to continue to face social and economic barriers would understandably produce feelings of alienation and isolation, resulting in low self-concept/self-esteem. For one to know or feel that he is illiterate, or to think he is ignorant or dumb, certainly diminishes one's self-concept/self-esteem.

Enhancing Self-Esteem: Teaching Strategies

Price (1992) concluded that the issue in not whether to boost self-esteem, but how and towards what end. As we look at strategies which teachers can use to help improve self-esteem of their students we must address the topic of teacher self-esteem. This is a must, since children's relationships with their teachers are intense, ongoing, and have emotional consequences. Teachers who don't feel good about themselves and are not satisfied, are not prone to be helpful in developing high self-esteem in

their students. Teachers who are comfortable with themselves and view what they are doing as worthwhile tend to be more accepting, warm, fair, and non-judgmental with their students. They create an environment of acceptance, listen empathetically, build trust, and promote warm relationships that lead to high student achievement. In general, teachers with high self-esteem are more effective teachers (Instructional Materials Laboratory, University of Missouri - Columbia, 1987).

Bean (1992a) in Cooperation, Social Responsibility & Other Skills stressed the point. He asserted that teaching is a personal business. Because of this, the teacher's personal qualities influence what he or she does and the outcome in a child's learning and satisfaction. In addition, every teacher's teaching methods, instructional styles, communication patterns, and activity selections are influenced to a considerable degree by the teacher's beliefs, values, personality, prior experience, and feelings of comfort and satisfaction.

Bean added that teachers' awareness of their own styles and the effects of these styles will give them information about how they influence the climate in their classrooms. Wise teachers will assess their styles and develop strategies that align classroom practices which make them comfortable with good, effective teaching methods. The

bottom line, however, is that teachers must keep in mind that classroom climate is affected by the high and low conditions of self-esteem within each teacher. This position is supported by McMillan's (1976) review of 124 dissertation abstracts which concluded that teacher behavior was more significant as compared to instructional techniques in creating positive student attitudes.

In addressing strategies to enhance the self-esteem of students, Beane and Lipka (1986) warned that we must first identify which component part of the broader area, self-perception, needs attention and always be sensitive to the dangers of inferring self-esteem on the basis of values held by anyone other than the learner. They noted that when we simply tell a gang leader that he ought to feel good about himself, we may be reinforcing anti-social values. In other words, for some children we need to help them clarify their self-concept. Others may need help to re-evaluate their value-base, as we work to improve self-esteem.

To enhance self-concept, the description an individual attaches to himself or herself, Beane and Lipka (1986) stated that we must do one or more of the following:

1. Help clarify or sharpen the content of the description.
2. Help individuals develop an accurate self-description.

3. Suggest new dimensions that might be added to the description.

4. Encourage self-descriptions that are based on reality.

5. Encourage individuals to think in depth about self-concept.

6. Help individuals to see themselves as others see them.

7. Encourage individuals to continually reflect upon their self-description in terms of clarity, accuracy, breadth, and depth.

8. Help individuals discover the sources of and influences upon the self-concept (pp 8-9).

Beane and Lipka (1986), defined self-esteem as the relative value one attaches to the self-concept or the degree to which one is satisfied with it. They stated that to enhance self-esteem means to do one or more of the following:

1. Improve self-evaluation skills as a basis for evaluating the self-concept

2. Encourage individuals to develop a sense of their own personal worth.

3. Help individuals reflect on their self-esteem and the values on which it is based.

4. Encourage individuals to think of themselves in positive terms.

5. Help discover reasons why the individual is unhappy with any

dimension(s) of the self-concept.

6. Help find ways to improve dimensions of self-concept with which the individuals are unhappy.

7. Help individuals examine sources of and influences on self-esteem (p. 9).

Beane and Lipka (1986) further suggested that we can not speak of enhancing self-esteem without realizing that we must also enhance values or value-indicators. They refer to the following:

1. Help clarify values or value indicators.

2. Encourage the development of values.

3. Promote the process of valuing (Raths, Harmin, & Simon, 1978) through encouraging consideration of alternatives and consequences of choices, promote analysis of lifestyles to determine if values are being carried out, and offer opportunities to act on the basis of values held.

4. Help individuals examine the sources of and influences on personal values or value-indicators.

5. Encourage individuals to "think" and improve thinking skills (p. 9).

Bean (1992b) in his book, Honesty, Perseverance & Other Virtues,

summed it up when he stated:

> teaching about virtue, enhancing self-esteem and building character in children are closely related. One cannot be done apart from the others. The methods used for doing any of these things are useful for doing the others . . . . Teaching virtues is the method; enhancing self-esteem is the context; and building character is the outcome (p. 9).

The remainder of this chapter will offer, in light of the above, strategies and activities to clarify self-concept, establish positive values, and improve self-esteem.

It is imperative that a teacher who is committed to enhancing student self-esteem look at the climate of his/her classroom. It is in the classroom in a group arena that the child has the most experiences, whether negative or positive, while in school. The level of cooperation, the tone, the level of affection, the humanitarian spirit among other factors will affect the child's self-esteem. Bean (1992a) in his book, Cooperation, Social Responsibility & Other Skills, offered a list of major ingredients in classroom climate that will occur in different proportions. The list is summarized as follows:

Rules, positive ones, that control behavior.

General standards and expectations, explicit and implicit, that set acceptable boundaries for behavior.

Moral and ethical principles that are discussed in the classroom.

Activities constructed that positively meet the children's self-esteem needs.

Cultural orientation of the community and the families from which children come, especially as their beliefs and values influence children's behavior and performance in the classroom.

Mood throughout the school that promotes cooperation and social responsibility. This has to do with the administrative practices and regulations, as well as the leadership style of administrative personnel.

Teachers' personal qualities, attitudes and abilities. These are difficult to study. At the same time they are most influential on the overall climate.

Bean (1992a) added that as a teacher, you must be able to control those factors you can influence. These include rules, standards, expectations and you, yourself. The factors may be influenced by the classroom teacher if the structure of the school and its relationship to

the community permit it. That varies from place to place, he observes.

The Instructional Materials Laboratory of the University of Missouri-Columbia in its publication, Self-esteem, summarized some pointers recommended by several authors (Canfield & Wells, 1976; Huitt & Pattison, 1980; Stixrud, 1987).

1. Try to instill in them the belief that they CAN develop competence and that it's okay to make mistakes.
2. Stop using red markers to highlight mistakes. Use them instead to point out things the students did right.
3. Focus on the process of learning, not the product of grades.
4. Reduce comparison and competition among students, emphasizing cooperation instead.
5. Provide a climate of warmth, attention, and emotional support, giving positive feedback often.
6. Use praise to describe the accomplishment rather than the person; i.e., accomplishments should not be the measure of a student's worth.
7. Accept all efforts and contributions non-judgmentally.
8. Help create opportunities for students to verbalize their own worth and talk about their successes.

9. Encourage student responsiveness and involvement in the learning process.

10. Accept the fact that changing self-concept is a slow process and takes time.

11. Try to create an environment of mutual support and caring where students feel safe to express themselves.

12. Use "respectful" discipline-- discipline that maintains a high level of respect for students, recognizing that fear and punishment are not effective motivators for learning.

    a. Discipline the child in private; do not humiliate a child in front of the class.

    b. Let the child know that he/she made a poor decision, not that he/she is a bad person.

    c. Whenever possible, let the consequences be known ahead of time.

    d. Make sure that the consequences are appropriate to the child's poor decision.

    e. Try to maintain consistency in discipline, so that the child knows what to expect.

13. Do whatever you can to maintain or build your own self-esteem,

such as forming a teacher support group (Instructional Material Laboratory, University of Missouri-Columbia, pp. 2-3).

McCarty (1989), cited by Myrick (1989), identified the following twelve adult behavioral styles which enhance self-esteem in children:

1. Really listening to children.
2. Cutting down on advice giving.
3. Talking with, rather than to students.
4. Trusting students.
5. Allowing a wide variety of choices.
6. Allowing a wide variety of opinions.
7. Consistent, regular, small praise and positive notice.
8. Positive notice for the approximation of the desired behavior.
9. Sharing adult inner feelings, problems and worries and your process of coping with and solving them.
10. Taking students seriously.
11. Sharing the tasks and responsibilities.
12. Allowing students to have the real consequences of their choices instead of no consequences or massive consequences (p. 23-24).

Canfield and Well's (1976) book, 100 Ways to Enhance Self-Concept in the Classroom, is an excellent resource for self-esteem building

activities. Following is a short list of activities adapted from the book.

1. Have your students make a list of things they have done that they are proud of. This can be a large group activity where things are written on the board, or a small group activity in which pairs of students tell each other the things they are proud of.

2. Create a special bulletin board titled, "THINGS I'M PROUD OF" to display student accomplishments.

3. Write a simple class newsletter, making sure there is some news about each member of the class.

4. Pair up students who are competent in a given area with students who are having trouble with that area and let them help each other. (One who teaches also learns.) This can be especially effective in reducing prejudice in the tutee and building confidence in the tutor.

5. Have students draw pictures of themselves doing something that makes them feel good about themselves.

6. Ask students to write letters describing themselves to pen pals they have never met. Have them focus on things they like about themselves.

7. Divide the class in pairs. Instruct the students to share as much

information as possible about themselves. After five minutes have the students introduce each other to the class (preferably in a circle).

8. Have your students write out on cards some biographical information that describes them but does not make it too obvious who they are. Include such things as hobbies, talents, major trips they have taken, and so on. Collect the cards and read them while the class attempts to guess who is being described.

9. Construct a "magic box" which can be a box with a mirror placed so as to reflect the face of anyone who looks inside. Tell the class to look inside and discover the most important person in the world. Discuss.

10. At the end of the day, have students briefly share with the rest of the class the successes they have experienced during the day. Look for successes to be pointed out to the child with extremely low self-esteem.

11. Have students draw a coat of arms depicting significant events in their lives, happiest moments in the past year, things they are good at and three words that they would want on their epitaph. Display.

12. Instruct students to make a collage entitled "Me." Using construction paper or cardboard, have them cover it with pictures, words and symbols that are representative of them -- things they like to do, things they own or one day will own, places they've been, people that they admire, and so on. Display.

Johnson (1992) also outlined a procedure to foster positive self-esteem which is summarized below:

1. Have students conduct a self-appraisal.

2. Have students compliment themselves.

   Note: There is a difference between bragging ("My essay on Poe was the best in the class.") and self-praise ("Hey, I really did well on that essay on Poe. It's much better than my last essay.") The person who brags compares himself/herself to others in a way that deprecates or belittles them. Self-praise recognizes personal strengths and praises self for a job well done.

3. Help students clarify their values.

4. Alert them that their values will be challenged.

5. Empower them to defend their values with assertiveness.

Supporting cooperative learning as a powerful influence on self-esteem, Bean (1992a) in Cooperation, Social Responsibility & Other Skills

identified seven basic strategies or techniques for enhancing cooperation and social responsibility. They are listed and summarized below:

1. Student-teacher cooperation

   Emphasize the chores and duties you already have in the classroom.

   Have some cooperative tasks that can only be done at recess, lunch or after school.

   Use children as much as possible to do things you might ordinarily do yourself.

   Think of cooperation as a two way street.

2. Team building

   Create ways for children to work together in teams to accomplish a variety of tasks.

3. Variety of group interaction

   Explore the wide variety of curricular areas where cooperative learning can occur.

   Give children things to do in groups or pairs.

4. Parent/Classroom interaction

   Extend the web of cooperation to the home and community as much as possible.

Bring parents and community into classroom activities.

5. Community resources

Have the children engaged with the community in some way.

Use the community to supplement what children learn about cooperation and social responsibility in the classroom.

6. Friendship groupings

Group children in cooperative activities which allow children to work with their friends and extend the range of their friendships.

Give homework assignments to learning teams living in close proximity.

Encourage parents to support relationships among classmates by invitations and allowing their children to visit others.

7. Peer and Cross-age tutoring

Low connectiveness children benefit from relating to others in structured one-to-one relationships.

Tutoring programs raise the climate of helpfulness in a school or classroom.

Social skills which lead to social acceptability play a key role in

self-esteem building. A note-worthy curriculum for developing social skills is found in the Reach Out to Schools Social Competency Program in use in the Boston area. Krasnow (1993) described it as a 40 lesson elementary school curriculum that teaches children and their teachers to build positive, supportive relationships in the classroom. It is organized around three units: (a) creating a cooperative classroom environment, (b) building self-esteem and positive feelings, and (c) solving people problems.

The program calls for four full days of teacher training in the skills and concepts of the curriculum, but more so, a commitment to year long instruction for all students within the classroom by the classroom teacher. Recognizing the need for a team approach, the program provides a series of workshops for parents to introduce them to the skills and concepts of the program.

The curriculum is implemented 15 minutes two times a week during the entire school year by regular classroom teachers and students meeting together in an open circle. The curriculum initially provides a structured format to facilitate the teaching of social competency skill in elementary school classrooms and a safe context for the ongoing discussion of issues important to the class. From this core foundation, teachers and students

are encouraged to apply the concepts to their areas to the classroom, and to the entire school. Although some adaptations are made for grade level differences, all skills are taught in all grades K-6, and a common language is developed across the grade levels for all students in the school. This format gives students the opportunity to learn and practice all the skills throughout their elementary years and increases the likelihood that they will access these skills as the challenges they face in middle and high school escalate. As with all programs that make a positive difference, the principal plays an important role in implementing and supporting the program.

This program is based on the understanding that improving the nature and quality of classroom relationships is the key to increased social and academic success. It ties in directly with Bean's Sense of Connectiveness.

Conclusion

This article has attempted to increase understanding of what we call self-esteem and how it affects academic achievement and general success of our young. Attention is placed on minority, low-income and high risk children. The primary purpose, however, is to strongly recommend that professional development be designed, implemented, and

continued to help teachers develop an expertise in working with minority students. Minority students' rate of achievement can be increased significantly if we focus positively on their self-esteem. Doing so will lead to a more self-actualized society.

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