The 5 C's of Positive Youth Development

Research has shown that when a program is designed to include opportunities for positive youth development, then students are more likely to thrive and build resiliency.

A positive youth development environment will help students build these personal traits: Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character and Caring.

We should focus on positive youth development if there is a need to promote or foster bonding; resilience; social, emotional, cognitive, behavioral and moral competence; self-determination; clear and positive identity; belief in the future; recognition for positive behavior and social involvement; and/or positive social norms.

Competence

- This focuses on helping students build a positive view of their actions. We can help build academic competence by showing students that they can master skills by allowing them to use the skills in activities they enjoy, such as cooking to practice math. And, because they will likely be working in teams, take advantage of opportunities to guide them toward positive conflict resolution.

Confidence

- This means providing opportunities for students to feel a sense of success. We want them to develop a more positive sense of self-worth and self-efficacy. Design the out-of-school environment so they have opportunities to create something they can show off and be proud of. For example, let them make a favorite recipe to share with their family or grow the largest vegetable in the garden.

Connection

- For students to be successful, they need to develop positive connections with one another, with their family members, with school leaders and with their community. How about making that garden a community garden, or having students work on art pieces that tell a story about their community and can be presented in an art show?

Character

- Students must develop respect for societal and cultural rules and have standards for their behaviors. They must develop a sense of right and wrong and live with integrity. Set up the environment so students design the classroom norms. Facilitate conversations as necessary to reinforce positive behavior rather than focusing on negative behavior.

Caring

- Students need to develop empathy, or compassion, for others. This means being able to see things from another person's perspective and caring about another person's struggles. Consider setting up a community service project that focuses on a topic of interest to students, such as homelessness.

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