RESILIENCY: An Annotated Bibliography

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Educational achievement gaps among racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups persist, along with rising consciousness that the most important challenge in education today is to remove these gaps, recognized as early as kindergarten and developing quickly in the first three years of school (National Task Force on Minority High Achievement, 1999).

Helping youth tap into their innate capacities for developing into healthy, capable adults is the focus of a growing body of research on resiliency that shows promise for eliminating achievement gaps. This bibliography includes selections from a wide body of literature about fostering resilience in urban students.

For additional resources, consult the annotated bibliography on pages 121–127 in Resiliency in Schools: Making It Happen for Students and Educators by Nan Henderson, Mike M. Milstein, and Douglas A. Parker, available full text at http://books.google.com/books.


This research examined the role of motivation and instructional strategies on the achievement gap for middle and high school students. Researchers concluded that students need frequent feedback, off-campus field trips to widen their experience base, instruction that is relevant and emphasizes student interaction, and “close teacher supervision.” The publication includes an extensive review of achievement gap literature on four primary levels of influence: society, schools and their communities, family, and the classroom.


In this review of resiliency and youth development research from over the past 20 years, Benard focuses on the roles that families, schools, and communities play in “supporting, and not undermining” children’s biological drive for normal human development. She defines resilience as innate; our circumstances and experience can enhance or hamper our ability to bounce back from difficulties.

Benard identifies several key findings of resiliency research, including the untold power of teachers and schools to transform students’ lives by developing caring relationships, establishing positive and high expectations, and providing opportunities to participate and contribute. She describes how schools and communities can foster student resiliency.


In this article the author suggests that focusing on social-emotional competence / habits of mind and the five foundations (academic confidence, work persistence, work organization, getting along, emotional resilience) leads to increased effort on schoolwork and improved student achievement.


This book describes a six-tiered program that merges composition theory and psychological clinical practice to help writers develop fluency. The program moves participants through motivation, imagination, fluency, control, and audience to writing resilience.


This article describes what teachers of students with learning and attention problems can do to foster motivation, self-esteem, and resilience in these students. Brooks suggests that demystifying for children their learning strengths and areas of difficulty equips them to advocate for themselves as they negotiate school.


Drake suggests that Montessori education meshes with the ten factors that are associated with resilience: empathy, effective communication, sense of self-worth, sense of community, setting realistic goals, learning from mistakes, developing a social conscience, making decisions / solving problems, self-discipline, and a home-school alliance.


This study examines an eight-year project in Plainfield, New Jersey, that engaged highly disadvantaged urban students in writing to connect them to positive values and to develop resilience despite “unrelenting stressors” in their personal lives.
Researchers found that when schools promote social and emotional learning (SEL) skills, academic achievement also increases.


This article examines a study of men and women with reading disabilities and the conditions under which people with reading disabilities develop high literacy levels and resilient self-concepts. The implications for the classroom include allowing students to follow their passions in selecting reading materials and teaching them critical analytical skills.


Freiberg examines the attributes of families, students, schools, peers, and communities that foster resilience among inner-city youth. He cites resiliency factors at one inner-city elementary school that contribute to adaptability; with community support, students develop autonomy, social competence, problem-solving ability, and “future focus.”


The authors provide a manual of sorts for schools, which provides an overview of the foundations of resiliency, including “Resiliency and Schools,” “Resiliency and Communities,” “Resiliency and Mentoring, Support, and Counseling,” “Resiliency and Youth Development,” “Resiliency and Families,” and “Resiliency and the Brain.” In addition to summaries of resiliency research, the authors provide practical applications of the research, examples of successful programs and practices, and stories of individuals’ resilience in the face of adversity.


Hoffman relates the success stories of 10 inner-city students who, in an environment that fostered creative thinking and learning, persevered in spite of extreme difficulties in their personal lives.

This report suggests that it takes resilient teachers to foster resiliency in students. The authors describe qualities of a professional community that nurtures teachers’ resiliency: shared norms and values, reflective dialogue, deprivatization of practice, collective focus on student learning, collaboration (and the requisite time to promote it), physical proximity, structures for communicating, trust and respect, and supportive leadership.


From the College Board website: “This report describes the scope of the shortage of academically very successful Black, Latino, and Native American students and examines its implications from the perspective of the changing demographics. The results of ongoing efforts to improve academic outcomes for minorities are assessed, as well as strategies available for addressing the high achievement issue. The report concludes with a series of recommendations for action aimed at a variety of societal participants.”


In this qualitative research study, the authors document educational strategies and practices in the Unity Project, which aimed to change relationships between teachers and students and between schools and communities through strong and equitable school/family/community partnerships. The authors describe a variety of platforms that were used to identify practices related to resiliency, family and community involvement, effective literacy practices, cultural continuity, professional development, expectations, and aspirations for children’s education.


This research brief discusses what was learned from classroom teachers to develop the Pedagogy to Improve Resiliency Program (PIRP), which helps educators foster the educational resiliency of English language learners. Strategies described include (a) offering opportunities to develop close relationships with students, (b) increasing students’ sense of mastery in their lives, (c) building social competencies as well as academic skills, (d) reducing stress in children’s lives, and (e) generating school and community resources to support the children’s needs.

This research examines resilience in the classroom as well as components that decrease the risk of academic failure among Hispanic students, such as teaching to students’ strengths and promoting meaningful classroom dialogue.


Rolla describes a structured narrative writing intervention that was used to improve students’ transitions to high school by helping them develop more effective “learning stories.” The author suggests that the process is adaptable to other transitions as well (elementary to middle, high school to college, etc.).


This article defines resiliency as “the set of attributes [competence, belonging, usefulness, potency, and optimism] that provides people with the strength . . . to confront the overwhelming obstacles they are bound to face in life.” This book outlines how school can foster traits of resiliency for students through faculty and community collaboration, and by analyzing data to support authentic experiences.


The author presents a passionate case for urgency in moving schools from a reactive stance to a proactive one, building academic competence and resilience through early intervention and prevention programs in the process.


Thomsen applies resiliency theories to character education, multiple intelligences theory, service learning, and violence prevention. The author posits that opportunities for meaningful participation, setting/communicating high expectations, providing caring and support, teaching life skills, increasing prosocial bonding, and setting clear and consistent boundaries builds resiliency and mitigates risk factors.


This book is a part of the Research in Educational Diversity and Excellence series. Its authors summarize recent research, perspectives, and practices in resilience, including identification of obstacles and developing solutions that promote “rebounding” rather than “succumbing.”

This book provides practical activities developed for use in social studies, language arts, or life skills curricula that foster aspects of resiliency such as insight, independence, relationships, initiative, creativity, humor, and morality.