

Establishing & Supporting Resiliency

Resiliency research is the study of how some students despite stressors in their lives, manage to adapt, and in some cases, thrive. Some examples of these strength based approaches are those recommended by Wolpov et al, including strategies that assist students in becoming empowered, independent, self-confident, able to help others, and able to maintain connections.

The goal of these strategies is:

- 1) **Social competence:** The ability to establish and sustain positive, caring relationships, to maintain a sense of humor, and to communicate compassion and empathy.
- 2) **Resourcefulness:** The ability to critically, creatively, and reflectively make decisions, to seek help from others, and to recognize alternative ways to solve problems and resolve conflicts.
- 3) **Autonomy:** the ability to act independently and exert some control over one's environment, to have a sense of one's identity, and to detach from others engaged in risky and/or dysfunctional behaviors.
- 4) **Sense of purpose:** The ability to foresee a bright future for oneself, to be optimistic, and to aspire toward educational and personal achievement.

Berliner and Benard conclude that the traits that “make up an individual’s resilient nature, are fostered or reinforced by **caring relationships that are trusting, compassionate and respectful; high expectations that are explicitly communicated and adequately supported; and meaningful opportunities for engaging in valued family, school and civic activities**”

This research confirms that the more we **communicate our genuine concern** for the **safety, well-being, and academic and personal success of our students**, the more likely we are to succeed in meeting their needs. This is true for all students, regardless of background or severity of past social or personal conditions.

The study results suggest that a student’s educational resiliency can be upgraded by **instructional strategies** that help **foster close relationships, build social and academic competencies, value diversity, and provide other necessary support**. In most of the classrooms observed, however, teachers relied on whole class systematic drills designed to help students prepare for state-mandated tests rather than encouraging cooperative, multicultural learning.

From: Collier, Catherine, *Separating Difference from Disability*, 5th Edition, (2011)
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