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SEL: Educating the Heart and the Mind – a Hard Sell

Abstract

Over the last decade a hopeful approach to school change has emerged known as Social and Emotional Learning. This approach, advocated out of schools like Harvard, Columbia, and Yale, to name a few, is gaining momentum among our nations better informed educators. The basic premise behind the move is that we must teach to the heart and the mind of our children to ensure they develop the skills necessary to succeed in social and academic contexts in life. In a school climate which hinges upon student academic outcomes for funding and advancement, selling this much needed approach is challenging. Much resistance is seen across the nation from teachers, principals, and school districts. Some believe the backlash of NCLB has thrown our educational system out of balance with too much emphasis placed on academic learning to the exclusion of social, emotional, physical, and mental health education. We are a country tied to the test, we are in need of educational programs and approaches that nurture kindness, generosity, and gratitude just because it is the right thing to do.