

Creativity

Vs. Underachievement

LOOKING AT CREATIVITY THROUGH THE EYES OF TRAUMA

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I WILL:

- use my talents for good
- see things from more than one perspective
- use principles to solve problems
- learn all I can
- look for new ways to be a person of character

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Approaching a need, a task, or an idea from a new perspective

By Jodi Landers

All children are creative in different ways. Some love to paint and draw, perform athletically, play an instrument, argue a case, or figure out the best way to hide the fact that their parents hurt them. Creativity is an innate gift that varies from child to child, depending on how it's been cultivated. It's not pleasant to think about, but abuse does shape creativity. Neglect shapes creativity. Ultimately, our experiences shape what we think and who we become. Underachievement is a child's inability to creatively approach a situation or task with the confidence that he or she will be successful. Children who underachieve often do so as a result of traumatic experiences, whether they happen once or are ongoing. Educators who are unaware of a child's trauma history or its impact may aggravate the situation by holding a child to unrealistic expectations or misinterpreting the child's symptoms as indicative of bad conduct. Symptoms of trauma can be misinterpreted as behavior problems because they often manifest as aggression, irritability, or hyperactivity. Some children internalize their trauma and appear moody, depressed and anxious. What is viewed as "laziness" in the classroom, may be depression and what is viewed as "attention-seeking" may be anxiety. If a student is incessantly trying to get someone's attention, there's a reason, and it's not necessarily because they're spoiled at home.

While school-wide protocols such as training and mental health support need to be in place to help students who have experienced trauma, classrooms are where the real magic happens. Teachers have the expertise in conveying content through creative processes. For children of trauma, focus on getting *READY* to learn. Middle and High School students are often expected to have readiness skills, because we assume they've been taught. For anyone, readiness to learn includes a sense of safety, the ability to manage feelings, and the ability to negotiate and navigate in the world. Think about when you were learning to ride a bike

LOOKING AT TOLERANCE THROUGH THE EYES OF TRAUMA

or learning to drive. You needed all of these things in order to be successful. And, in my experience, an effective role model was paramount. Mahatma Gandhi said, “Be the change that you wish to see in the world.”



Schools and classrooms are the world to most children, and the only positive world if they're coming from a home filled with fear and pain. Model what you want to see from your students.

There are a myriad of strategies available online to achieve these in your classroom.

Take a look at these websites:

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/alted/conference/07-1022trauma.pps>

<http://www.opi.mt.gov/pub/pdf/IndianEd/TeachTraumatizedKids.pdf>

http://www.nasonline.org/educators/HCHSII_SupportiveStrategies.pdf

For students, the results of underachievement reach beyond the educational setting, often leading to deviant behaviors in the community, fewer opportunities in life, and difficulty earning a living. We can't control the future of our students, but we can certainly influence it.

Remember, if you keep doing what you've been doing, you'll keep getting what you've been getting.

Peace-

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References:

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Doe.mass.edu