ADOLESCENCE IN BRIEF II

Understanding Adolescents' Needs

A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

1. Adolescents need consistent, supportive adult and peer relationships to thrive and manage challenges and stress and engage in deep learning experiences.

2. Adolescents are preparing for adulthood. They seek environments that give them a sense of belonging, help them feel safe, respect their culture and backgrounds, and offer opportunities to explore their own identity.

3. Adolescents seek learning experiences that allow them to leverage their voice and agency and pursue their passions and interests.

4. Adolescents are exploring meaning of the world. They seek to understand their own individual strengths and assets, and their role and responsibility in society.

5. Beyond academics, adolescents need a broader set of services and supports such as healthcare, work based learning, and civic engagement.

Consider this: what can the local community and businesses do to engage students in real-world learning such as internships, apprenticeships, and work-based learning? Are there any opportunities to use virtual and online learning to connect students with peers in other schools or settings? Can students participate in virtual clubs and classes not offered at your school?
FIVE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. **Develop an intentional strategy to leverage cross-sector services and supports**
2. **Prioritize continuity in relationship-building between adult and youth**
3. **Offer multiple opportunities for young people to build positive and diverse peer-to-peer relationships**
4. **Highlight representations of each student’s culture as assets to the learning environment**
5. **Provide safe, caring, and supportive environments where every young person feels a strong sense of belonging**

**Try this:** put structures in place to keep learning about each student’s background, strengths, interests, and needs. Schedule individual and small group conversations. Use insights to plan and adjust practices.

- **Address the holistic needs of adolescents by connecting academic and nonacademic sectors**
- **Provide open-ended problems with multiple viewpoints and issues and allow young people to “wrestle” with them**
- **Engage students in social and emotional skill building with a focus on higher order thinking, self-reflection, responsible decision-making, and self-regulation**
- **Accelerate learning through meaningful and transferable activities connected to real-world issues**
- **Create opportunities for choice and inquiry and allow young people to make decisions and lead**

*Design Principles for Schools: Putting the Science of Learning and Development into Action, SoLD Alliance, 2021*