

Kids Need Interpersonal Skills at School



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In my last post, I wrote about providing kids with opportunities to problem-solve and to engage in socializing without the use of technology. In this post, I want to continue to explore the idea of the differences between generations and what our children's generation will need to develop the soft skills that are necessary for success in their futures.

One of my roles as a school principal is to oversee hiring for my school. Now job applications are collected online. Tools like Indeed and ZipRecruiter make it easy to apply to many jobs with just a few clicks of the mouse. One job posting typically brings in hundreds of applications. Earlier in my career, job postings would solicit only 15 to 20 applications. Most job applicants were qualified for the job. Today, many people look for jobs casually with a shotgun approach to

submitting job applications. At times, when I reach out to applicants, there's never a 100% guarantee they are even waiting for my call or my message.

When I do find those applicants who are qualified and responsive, I can usually tell fairly quickly whether or not they will be a good fit personality-wise. Things like confidence, general attitude, and true experience are revealed pretty quickly. However, it is important to ask probing interview questions that get to whether or not applicants have developed the soft-skills and interpersonal skills they will need to be successful in the workforce. In classrooms across our nation, teachers are sharing that kids are lacking these soft-skills with a much higher frequency as the school year progresses. Many kids are no longer self-motivated. They struggle when asked to work in groups. Often, students approach interactions with education staff and peers with a strong sense of entitlement.

Teaching Kids Essential Interpersonal Skills

Certainly, there are kids in the classroom who still possess these skills. They come to school ready to learn, ready to socialize, and ready to follow school expectations. But in a classroom of 30 students 20 years ago, you may have had one or two students who entered the classroom with a skills-deficit. Today, there are more likely 12-15 students who still need to develop one or more of those highly important abilities. Schools are doing some important interventions to help kids learn these skills on the

fly, during content instruction:

Engaging kids in group work with structured roles
Project-based learning to help kids identify and solve problems

Service learning to make the content projects more community-based and relevant

Providing culturally relevant lessons and content to grab students' interest and help make connections

Goal setting and monitoring with students to help foster a mind towards the future and self-motivation

How Parents Can Help

As the parent, you can take the lead on helping your child with the school's staff develop these soft skills! During parent meetings and conferences, ask about what opportunities the kids have at the school to build social, emotional, and leadership skills.

Examples include:

Partner with your child's teacher(s) to address times when your child falls short. Advocate for your child, but make sure you work with other adults to help your child learn when they make mistakes.

Sign your child up for extracurricular activities that will require teamwork and interaction. These may include sports, martial arts, reading clubs, or youth service teams.

Make sure your time at home is well-balanced between opportunities to learn and interact and an appropriate amount of screen time.

