

Student Achievement, Behavior, & Motivation Talking Points

Faulty Notions About Teaching & Learning

The following are three of the ten faulty notions about teaching and learning identified by Heward (2003) that can negatively impact outcomes for students.

1. Building students' self-esteem is a teacher's primary goal.
2. Students with significant and persistent needs learn more slowly than their typically developing peers.
3. Students must be internally motivated to learn.

The following talking points help to debunk each of these faulty notions.

Debunking Faulty Notion #1: Building Students' Self-Esteem is a Teacher's Primary Goal

Self-esteem is:

- A desirable outcome for students
- An outcome of growing academic achievement and accomplishments
- It is neither necessary or sufficient for learning

Project Follow Through findings suggest that academic success, particularly in foundational skills, plays a crucial role in building a student's self-esteem and self-confidence and can be targeted through specific intervention (Heward, 2003; Adams, 1996).

The over-emphasis on self-esteem may contribute to two kinds of educational malpractice (Heward, 2003):

1. Teachers' failure to correct students' errors.
2. Using instructional materials that enable students to be "right" for the wrong reasons.

Debunking Faulty Notion #2: Students with Significant & Persistent Needs Learn More Slowly

The implication of this faulty notion is that instruction with students with significant and persistent needs, including students with disabilities, should be conducted at a slower pace. However, research shows that slowing the pace of instruction makes things worse, not better. When instruction is presented at a brisk pace, students (Heward, 2003; Carnine, 1976)

- Emit more responses
- Respond with higher rates of accuracy
- Engage in less off-task and disruptive behavior

This mindset often leads to lowered expectations, fewer assignments, and allowing students to participate “when they feel like it.”

Debunking Faulty Notion #3: Students Must Be Internally Motivated to Learn

This faulty notion is based on the misbelief that using “extrinsic motivators” such as grades and verbal praise damages students’ “intrinsic” motivation to learn (Heward, 2003). However, meta-analysis yielded no evidence of detrimental effects of reward on measures of intrinsic motivation (Cameron, Banko, & Pierce, 2001), and providing “extrinsic motivators” is one of the most generally effective and useful instructional tools available.

References

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