Engaging African American Girls in School

What really matters most?

What does School Engagement do?

A student’s investment and effort directed toward learning is the primary predictor of academic achievement, grit, and life outcomes. When engagement is high, it leads to higher grades, higher test scores, fewer discipline infractions, reduced disruptive behavior, and lower dropout rates from school.

Our Project

African American girls in middle school participated in an intervention (Gaters of Hope) that focused on principles of African American heritage. It promoted ethics and cultural identity, belonging, and personal and community empowerment. We tested the effect of these concepts on school engagement.

Beliefs and Academic Competence

African American girls need to believe in their capabilities. It is critical that they believe they can do well in school. Students who believe they can do the work and expect to succeed are more likely to report higher academic and social engagement. It gives rise of personal control.

African American girls need to hear messages from adults that affirm the belief they will succeed. The message becomes internalized and can uplift negative thought patterns such as stereotypes.

Academic Beliefs

Socially Connected to Others

The girls in the intervention group received affirming messages from adults at the time they were most needed. The girls developed a sense of belonging with the other group members that was maintained after the intervention ended.

Cultural Identity

The African American girls need to connect to their cultural identity and heritage to give them a sense of who they are and what they should value. They need to understand the value of their heritage. They need to value their ancestors.

Cultural Identity via Humanism

When African American girls see themselves as cultural members of society, they are more likely to engage with a sense of pride in their ethnic identity.

ENGAGEMENT

SOURCE


More likely