

Facts for Families

What Research Suggests to Help Your Student Achieve

Evaluation & Research Department

Our research

Recently, Wake County Public School System's (WCPSS) Evaluation and Research Department studied achievement progress of students who have more than one academic risk factor, such as limited English proficiency, low family income, and/or disabilities.



We compared school and home experiences for students who showed strong achievement progress in school and those who did not. We found practices that teachers and families might use to improve the success of at risk students. Readers are invited to see if the practices might also help other students as well.

Resilient children are better students



Students who showed strong achievement despite experiencing risk factors were more likely to exhibit resiliency, which is ***the ability to overcome difficult circumstances.***

Resilient students are likely to have a sense of purpose, strong motivation to succeed, high expectations, and the ability to take on challenges. One student in our study, for instance, had a fierce determination to come to school every day even though he faced health concerns.

We also found that resilient students are often involved in hobbies, group sports, and other high-interest activities. One student took music lessons at school for many years and was involved in sports as well. Other successful students mentioned church and community activities outside of school.

Children who overcome multiple challenges are likely to have a sense of independence and the ability to overcome and distance themselves from negative circumstances. One student in our study was taken from a traumatic living situation and placed with a close relative. With substantial support and encouragement, she was able to improve her grades after the move, despite her disability as well as her challenging life experiences.



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Successful students also tend to establish positive relationships with adults, make connections with peer groups, and care for others. Many of the students in our study who did well in school reported having good relationships with an adult at school, such as a teacher or a school administrator.

We also noted that resilient children have solid problem-solving skills, such as the ability to connect with supportive people and places and to understand “how they learn.” To support her learning, one girl had tutoring, did homework at school, asked questions at school and home, and worked in groups in the classroom.

How to help your student succeed in school

Talk with teachers and school staff: Build a strong partnership with teachers. Talk with them by phone, e-mail, or in person. Attend as many of your student’s conferences as possible, especially if a teacher has a concern. Work with teachers to build resiliency in your child.



Homework: Homework is an important way for students to practice what they learn in the classroom. It also helps boost their grades. There are many ways to help your child with homework:

- Provide a place for your child to do homework on a regular basis.
- Check on homework completion.
- Limit television viewing and video game time.
- Provide other support to show that your family places a high value on learning, such as asking brothers and sisters to help each other with homework.



Grades matter! Class grades measure student learning differently than achievement tests (such as End-of-Grade tests), and the two do not always match. Check your child’s grades and talk with teachers about how to improve his or her grades.

Low-cost or free activities: Students are more likely to be successful if they’re involved in school or community activities that interest them. There are many affordable or free activities in our community that are intellectually stimulating and can build connections.

Tutors and mentors: Students can get additional support at home or from a tutor/mentor or other support programs at school or in the community. This is particularly important for students who are still learning English. If you need help finding tutoring, ask your child’s teacher, your church, or community groups. Even students who face multiple challenges to learning can be successful in school. By working together, parents and teachers can make a positive difference in a student’s success in school—and beyond.



References

- Baenen, N., Paeplow, C., Ives, S., Reichstetter, R. (2007). *WCPSS students with multiple academic risks: Achievement patterns and school experiences*. Raleigh, NC: Wake County Public School System, Evaluation and Research Department.
- McElrath, M., & Smith, T. (2005). Fostering resiliency in the middle-level school. *Middle Matters*, (13)4, May 2005. National Association of Elementary School Principals.

For more information

To learn more about our studies on effective practices for students with multiple risk factors or other matters related to evaluation and research, visit the WCPSS Evaluation & Research Department online at www.wcpss.net/evaluation-research or call us at 919-850-1863. A Spanish version of this newsletter will be available online soon.

As always, feel free to talk with your child's teacher and other school staff.

Being partners in our students' educational lives helps us all!