

Improving Social Skills and Communication to Improve Academic Self Efficacy among Youth

Social and communication skills are a critical component of student success. Students who have social and communication skill deficits often report less competence with academic tasks and lower levels of academic self-efficacy. Therefore, it is important to implement programming that will address these deficits to improve academic achievement and social functioning. The purpose of this project was to implement a 10-week social and emotional learning skill intervention for youth in grades k-5 that have been identified with social and communication skill deficits to improve the students' self-efficacy in academics and teachers' perceptions of academic competence. Overall, this project was designed to support the individual needs of students who are struggling with social and communication skill deficits. These deficits are related to detrimental short- and long-term outcomes including programs with academic achievement, self-efficacy and confidence. In this project, approximately 500 youth in grades K-12, who were identified by their teachers or school officials as needing additional supports, received 10 weeks of social and communication skill instruction via a web-based intervention that involved webisodes related to social interactions, social and communication skill acquisition, and recognizing, reporting and responding to bullying incidents. Results of this project demonstrated the utility of implementing a social and emotional learning program to improve social and communication skill acquisition. Based on a repeated measure multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), youth reported increased levels of academic self-competence, while their teachers reported increased academic competence. Overall, this project demonstrated that implementing a 10-week social and emotional learning curriculum could improve social and communication skill acquisition for a targeted subset youth, while improving academic self-efficacy and confidence. Based on the results of this project, it is recommended that schools consider implementing a targeted social and emotional learning curriculum to improve student outcomes and well-being.