

Seeking the Faith Quotient

God's Plan for Emotional Intelligence

God has a plan for each of the students in your school or center. He has thought of every detail, every contingency, and every need and planned accordingly. This in-service program is an example of God's planning. In the verse below He tells us to seek first His kingdom and righteousness. Integrating the faith into every aspect of our teaching fits this directive. We seek first His kingdom when we integrate the faith. The promise in the verse is that all of the things we worry about will be taken care of. In this training program we are going to examine the importance of emotional intelligence or emotional health to learning and success. What we will see is that when we integrate the faith and teach children how to love, trust, repent, forgive, be humble, hope, obey and discern we are improving their emotional health which in turn improves their ability to learn. God had a plan for this "cutting edge" educational psychology, way before we could know it was even important.

IQ: intelligence quotient is a term with which we are familiar. IQ tests were developed on the premise that they could predict learning ability and achievement. Intelligence tests have changed since their development in the early 1900's. We now recognize that intelligence involves more than mere rote learning. Intelligence involves several different skills that combine to indicate a person's potential for learning. Intelligence is adaptive, related to learning ability, involves prior knowledge, utilizes the coordination of different thinking processes and is often culture-specific. In other words, children able to change study habits for different learning situations, who have a fast mental processing speed and good memory, who have learned to bank on what they have already learned, and can use these skills along with reasoning and logic will test higher and show more potential for learning. It is important to remember that our brains learn what they perceive to be important to learn, so a child's culture and activities of early years will have an effect on his/her learning.

EQ: toward the end of the 20th century, through the work of Daniel Goleman and many others, we began to understand that success in school and later life was connected to more than just IQ. Emotional quotient or emotional intelligence plays a part in future success, also. Emotional intelligence involves several different skills: self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness and relationship management. Those with strong emotional skills are able to identify and effectively use their own emotions, are able to control their own behavior and adapt to new learning situations, are able to understand the emotions of others and to work well in groups, and are able to use influence and management to develop relationships. Emotional intelligence includes a wide range of skills. During childhood the following are especially important: a sense of hope, coping with stress, understanding and using feelings, regulating behavior, delaying gratification, interpreting social clues, solving problems and learning to empathize with others. These are the skills that make learning easier and make using new knowledge more effective. In simple terms: you can have all the book knowledge in the world but you have to be able to work and play well with others to be able to use that knowledge.

But seek first
His kingdom
and His right-
eousness and
all these things
will be given to
you as well.
Matthew 6:33

A good way to understand the importance of emotional intelligence to success is to think of the inmates in a penitentiary. If each inmate was administered an IQ test you would find scores from every part of a typical bell curve. In other words, you would find those with low, average and high IQ's. Certainly being smart does not guarantee that you will stay out of prison. However, if you were to survey emotional skills for the same inmates you would get a different story. We would not expect to find emotionally healthy people in prison. Likewise, if you were to test people our society considers successful, whether that be in business, education, politics or social circles you would find a range of IQs. IQ alone does not predict success, either in the classroom or in life. It is important that we consider emotional skills when we plan curriculum and activities to teach the children in our school.

FQ: Faith quotient is not a researched learning theory. It is a term I have coined to describe what happens when schools, churches, teachers and parents integrate the faith into the life and learning of children. When we teach children how to love, trust, be humble, repent, forgive, discern, obey and hope we are also helping them to develop the emotional skills they need to make the most of their learning and to give them the best chance of success.

It is no surprise that God has created a perfect learning environment for us through His word and teaching. The skills listed in the previous paragraph are spiritual skills. God places a strong importance on these skills telling us to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. In this passage Jesus is telling us not to worry about our lives; seek the kingdom and the rest will come. If, in our classrooms, we focus only on skills and knowledge and what will be on the standardized tests, we have our priorities in the wrong place. Our first priority is to develop a strong FQ. In doing this we will reinforce the skills necessary for a healthy EQ. And in turn each child's learning potential will improve.

Group Discussion

1. Giving your first impression, how strong of a connection do you feel there is between learning potential and emotional health?
2. Determine a group consensus on a definition of success. In other words, what would a successful person look like and what would his or her life be like?
3. Make a list of five people from history and current times that you would consider successful.
4. Indicate for each person, to the best of your knowledge, who has high or low intelligence, who has strong or weak emotional skills. Do you see a correlation? Why or why not?
5. Of the emotional intelligence skills listed (sense of hope, ability to cope, understanding and using feelings, regulating emotion and behavior, delaying gratification, solving problems, interpreting social cues, and empathizing with others) which do you see most promotes better learning? Which is least important to learning?
6. Do all children, regardless of age, intelligence, family background or cultural influence, have the ability to learn skills of emotional health? Do certain skills have more or less prominence at different age levels or between different genders?

Putting it into practice

Teachers

Teacher observation of student behavior is an informal assessment tool that is very useful in monitoring the emotional and spiritual health of your students. Over the next two weeks, watch the students in your class for evidence of emotional and spiritual health. Make a mental note and record your observations as you are able. Record individual examples but also watch for patterns. Record your observations here and bring them to the next large group discussion time.

What evidence of emotional health (ability to cope, hope, identify and use of feelings, self-regulation, problem solving, interpreting social cues and empathy) did you see in your students?

What evidence of spiritual skills (love, repentance, humility, trust, forgiveness, hope, obedience and discernment) did you see in your students?

What evidence of lack of emotional health did you see that interfered with learning?

What evidence of a lack of spiritual health did you see that interfered with relationships?

Putting it into practice

Administrators

After reading the topic and completing the discussion, give each teacher a copy of "Putting it into practice: Teachers." Brainstorm some possible observations to be sure that each teacher understands what to look for. Encourage the teachers to record their observations, and set a time to meet again and discuss what has been recorded.

For beginning teachers you may need to spend more time brainstorming possible observations. They will understand the concepts but may not have enough experience to recognize the concepts in action.

For experienced teachers who are reluctant to observe, spend some time, without gossiping, talking about past students and how they may fit into the categories discussed earlier. Experienced teachers may not be as in tune to observing as they may have developed particular habits of observation.

Your teaching staff is your class. Spend some time observing them using the observation tool provided for teachers. Think about conflict situations and how members of your staff handled them. This will give you some insights into their emotional health.

Your assignment is to point out the different spiritual skills by practicing encouragement with your staff. Set it as a goal to point out to each teacher how he/she effectively uses a spiritual or emotional skill. Here are some examples:

"I overheard you apologize to your students. You are modeling repentance and teaching them how to forgive."

"I noticed that you frequently guide your students in solving problems instead of just answering questions. That response takes more time but must be more effective in developing problem solving skills."

Assessing learning with follow-up discussion

These questions can be used for a follow-up discussion after teachers have completed classroom observations:

1. Read over your observations. Choose and share the one that was the most enlightening to you.
2. Did you notice a pattern of behavior for individual students or your class as a whole?
3. Choose one emotional skill that you want to work on in your classroom and identify the spiritual skill that will promote the development of that skill.
4. Are there any strengths that you noticed that can be use to support weaker emotional or spiritual skills?
5. Give an example of how a weak emotional skill can adversely affect learning?