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The Delta Teacher Efficacy Campaign (DTEC) is a collaboration between The Delta Research and Educational Foundation (DREF) and the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. (DST) funded by a matching grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The three-year campaign is designed to enhance teacher effectiveness and promote learning among at-risk, urban students with the goal of increasing graduation rates.

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The Delta Teacher Efficacy Campaign (DTEC)

Understanding STEREOTYPE THREAT



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OVERVIEW

Research demonstrates that the very existence of a negative stereotype (e.g., “Blacks are not good at academics”, “boys are better at math than girls”) suppresses the performance of members of the negatively stereotyped group (Steele & Aronson, 1995; Aronson, 2002). This phenomenon is known as Stereotype Threat.

Members of negatively stereotyped groups tend to underperform in situations that have the potential to confirm that the “stereotype may be true.” This under-performance is due to the anxiety about confirming the stereotype, which causes negative thoughts, the inability to focus and difficulties with memory (Johns et al., 2008).

Individuals may not be aware of the anxiety or negative thoughts. Stereotype threat can effect members of negatively stereotyped groups such as African Americans as early as age eight and the effects strengthened by middle school in the following ways:

Decreases Grades and Test Scores

Grades can be decreased by 25% and test scores by 39-41 points (Steele & Aronson, 1995; Walton & Cohen, 2009).

Increases Aggressive Behavior

Can spillover and impact self-control and result in aggressive behavior, over-eating, and the inability to focus on subsequent tasks (Inzlicht & Kang, 2013).

Increase Desire To Drop-Out

Perpetuate a cycle of academic dis-identification. The desire to remain in high-school and attend college is depleted (Maase et al., 2010).

Decreased Interest in STEM

Decreased persistence to pursue math and science or to remain in fields of sciences, biomedical and behavioral science (Chang et al., 2011; Woodcock et al., 2012).

“Always have a sense of “somebodiness”. . . even in the midst of a world that constantly told you that you were “less than” and not “equal to”. Never feel inferior in the midst of these constant message that are delivered in so many ways. . . You’re as good as anybody.”

– Autobiography of Martin Luther King

INTERVENTIONS

Best practices reveal that stereotype threat can be inhibited, decreased, and in some cases removed. These practices may be implemented by educators, community programs, mentors and coaches to implant a sense of in spite of negative messages. Intervention practices are not limited to but include the following:

Belongingness

Through students feeling connected and developing a sense of academic belongingness, motivation increased. Results were increased GPAs and grades (Walton et al., 2012).

Affirmations

Writing value and goal affirmations resulted in higher grades in core courses. Students improved the following year with a 25% increase in grades (Sherman et al., 2013).

Growth Mindset

Developing a mindset that ability or intelligence is not inherent but developed through education and hard work. Interventions on mindset increased results on state test (Dweck, 2006; Aronson et al., 2009).

Role-Models

African American participants exposed to positive role models (video, pictures) increased exam scores in core courses (Marx et al., 2009).



“Man often becomes what he believes himself to be...If I have the belief that I can do it, I shall surely acquire the capacity to do it even if I may not have it at the beginning.”

– Mahatma Gandhi