

Why Fly That Way: Linking Community and Academic Achievement

In the tapestry of education, the threads of community and academic achievement are inextricably intertwined. A robust body of research has consistently demonstrated that students who are actively engaged in their communities tend to perform better academically. This phenomenon, known as the "community involvement effect," has been linked to a wide range of positive outcomes, including higher grades, improved attendance, and increased college enrollment rates.

The mechanisms underlying the community involvement effect are complex and multifaceted. One key factor is the development of social capital, which refers to the network of relationships and resources that individuals have access to within their community. When students have strong social ties to their community, they are more likely to feel supported and have access to academic and other resources that can help them succeed in school.



Why Fly That Way? Linking Community and Academic Achievement by Kathy Greeley

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Another important factor is the sense of belonging that students develop when they are involved in their community. When students feel like they are part of something bigger than themselves, they are more likely to be motivated to succeed in school and to make positive contributions to their community.

There are a variety of ways that students can get involved in their community. Extracurricular activities, such as sports, music, and clubs, provide students with opportunities to develop social skills, learn new things, and make new friends. Mentorship programs, which pair students with adults who can provide guidance and support, can also have a positive impact on student outcomes.

Community-based learning (CBL) is another powerful way to link community and academic achievement. CBL experiences allow students to apply their academic knowledge to real-world problems and to make a difference in their community. CBL experiences can also help students to develop a better understanding of the social and economic issues facing their community and to develop a sense of civic responsibility.

The evidence is clear: community involvement can have a profound impact on student academic achievement. By providing students with opportunities to develop social capital, a sense of belonging, and the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in school and in life, community involvement can help to level the playing field for all students and to ensure that every student has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Examples of Community Involvement Programs

There are a wide variety of community involvement programs that can benefit students. Here are a few examples:

- **Extracurricular Activities:** Extracurricular activities provide students with opportunities to develop social skills, learn new things, and make new friends. Examples of extracurricular activities include sports, music, clubs, and volunteering.
- **Mentorship Programs:** Mentorship programs pair students with adults who can provide guidance and support. Mentors can help students to set goals, develop coping mechanisms, and make positive decisions. Examples of mentorship programs include Big Brothers Big Sisters and the Boys & Girls Clubs of America.
- **Community-Based Learning (CBL):** CBL experiences allow students to apply their academic knowledge to real-world problems and to make a difference in their community. Examples of CBL experiences include service-learning projects, internships, and research projects.

How to Get Involved

There are many ways to get involved in your community. Here are a few tips:

- **Start by exploring your interests.** What are you passionate about? What do you enjoy doing? Once you have a better understanding of your interests, you can start to look for community involvement opportunities that align with your passions.
- **Talk to your friends, family, and teachers.** They may be aware of community involvement opportunities that you would be interested in.

- **Check out your local community center or library.** They often have listings of community involvement opportunities.
- **Go online.** There are many websites that can help you find community involvement opportunities in your area.

Community involvement is a powerful force that can have a positive impact on student academic achievement. By providing students with opportunities to develop social capital, a sense of belonging, and the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in school and in life, community involvement can help to level the playing field for all students and to ensure that every student has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

If you are looking for ways to get involved in your community, there are many resources available to help you get started. By taking the first step, you can make a difference in your community and in the lives of students.



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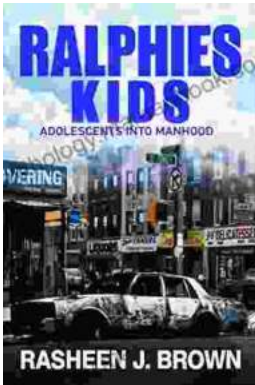
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