

EDUCATION

Helping Gifted Adolescent Girls Improving Social-Emotional Skills: The Implementation of Affective Curriculum in Small Group Discussions

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Gifted adolescent girls face extra challenges in their social-emotional developmental process. At the same time that they are trying to understand their gifts and talents, the societal mixed messages they receive may put them at risk of internalizing behaviors (for example, depression) and low self-confidence, which can contribute to underachievement at school and mental health problems. Interventions involving small group discussions and other affective curricula have been effective in helping gifted adolescents express emotions and learn about themselves and others. In this study, adolescents in 5th and 6th grades ($n = 173$) from diverse ethnic backgrounds participated in a residential summer camp for gifted students in which an affective guidance curriculum was implemented. Each session was one hour in length, with three meetings during the week. The students were divided into small, gender-specific groups with trained

facilitators leading discussions on topics related to social-emotional development. The participants' opinions about the discussion sessions were collected through a survey at the end of the last session. Of the 86 girls who responded, only 5 did not answer the survey. Of the responders, 56 girls reported that they enjoyed the discussion sessions. Positive responses were as follows: discussions were a good idea ($n = 10$), discussions helped in their lives ($n = 12$), feelings could be expressed ($n = 11$), the girls made friends ($n = 11$), and other reasons ($n = 12$). This study provides evidence that the group intervention may help adolescent girls express their feelings and learn about themselves.

Research advisor Marcia Gentry writes, "Renata has worked with research team members Jean Peterson, Enyi Jen, and me to investigate gifted students' perceptions of an affective curriculum as part of Project HOPE+, funded by the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation. The curriculum is used in small groups with gifted, creative, and talented adolescents from diverse cultures when they attend the Gifted Education Resource Institute's (GERI's) summer residential programs on Purdue University's campus each July."

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