

Ty Ankrom's Here's What I Think ...

The report cards for the state's school districts were released last week and the findings raise more questions than they answer.



The authors wrote about observing two fifth-grade teachers whose students performed at a high academic level.

One technique that the teachers employed was encouraging their students – a racially and economically diverse group – to embrace other cultures.

Schools are graded on six components: achievement, progress, gap closing, graduation rate, K-3 literacy and prepared for success.

But do the report cards truly measure what is taught in schools?

Yes, it's important for students to achieve a certain reading level by the third grade in order to advance but there are other ways to measure achievement.

In this month's issue of *Educational Leadership*, Elizabeth Bondy and Elyse Hambacher write that students need to know that their teachers care about them and one way to do this is through culturally relevant critical teacher care.

This term, "coined by Mari Ann Roberts (2010), is a way of thinking about caring for students as a moral imperative, a way to not only offer warm support, but also take steps toward justice for historically underserved children."

The teachers "recognized that focusing on academics alone wouldn't be sufficient to prepare their students for flourishing lives; learning to respect another's perspective, communicate in different social settings, and persevere in the face of challenges were just as significant as academic performance."

A similar view is the basis of social-emotional learning. Susanna Palomares, an author who has written extensively on the subject, said that strong social-emotional competencies lead to academic achievement.

"Children who are socially and emotionally competent – who manage their own feelings well and who recognize and respond effectively to the feelings of others – are at an advantage in every area of life, whether with family and peer relationships, school, sports or community and organizational pursuits. Children with well-developed social and emotional skills are also more likely to lead happy and productive lives and to mas-



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ter the habits of mind that will assure them personal and career success as adults" (www.inner-choicepublishing.com/resources_SELcompetencies.5.html).

Neither area – social-emotional learning or cultural relevance – are measured by the state but they may be a better indicator of personal growth and future success.

"If your emotional abilities aren't in hand, if you don't have self awareness, if you are not able to manage your distressing emotions, if you can't have empathy and have effective relationships, then no matter how smart you are, you aren't going very far," said Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence: Why it Can Matter More Than IQ*.

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