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Heroes of the Pit

Further Information
This poster and further information is
available at <http://www.theibsc.org/>

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Introduction

Could teaching boys about newness and uncertainty encourage them to value the experience of challenge? The objective of the *Everyday Hero* program was to encourage boys to be their own hero and dare to take the initiative when feeling unsure.

Research Context and Participants

The research participants were 19 seven to eight year old boys in my Year 3 Form Class at Dulwich Prep London. The project took place in the first term of the school year when the boys were adapting to new teachers, new friends and new learning.

The Research Action



REFLECTION

"I think we need to set new targets and have our weekly meetings again."

ENCOURAGEMENT

"You learn to have courage by people encouraging you."

MISTAKES

"When we picked our target, I kept on remembering when I was doing it, it's okay, we can make mistakes."



Key Findings and Discussion

The boys enjoyed novelty and newness throughout. Uncertainty was a more challenging experience. Three themes emerged as having impacted on the boys' ability to respond positively to it.

Permission to Make Mistakes

The boys said that what helped them adapt to uncertainty during challenges was the perception that it was okay to make mistakes. The impact of having received a certificate which explicitly stated they had permission to make mistakes and still be totally brilliant appeared to have been reassuring.

Structured Reflection

A process of specifying what went well, what was helping and identifying progress seemed to encourage the boys to recognize positive aspects of their experience and engender a confident approach to persevering.

Community of Encouragement

In this environment, the boys appeared highly responsive to the encouragement of others and identified it as a motivating factor when feeling unsure. Many boys linked receiving encouragement to feeling a sense of courage themselves.

Research Question

How might an *Everyday Hero* program encourage Year 3 boys to respond courageously to new and uncertain situations?

Conclusions

The findings suggested that elements of the program contributed to the boys responding positively when faced with uncertain situations.

- The *Learning Pit* was a powerful vehicle for discussing uncomfortable feelings around challenge.
- Open dialogue about experiences appeared to strengthen a feeling of trust within the classroom which was boosted further by the boys encouraging one another.
- Having permission to make mistakes meant failure seemed to be less of a worry and the boys were more willing to take a risk or persevere when things were difficult.
- Although most of the boys viewed this as a positive, adaptable response to uncertainty, they differed in their attitude towards whether courage could be learned or not. This indicates an interesting direction for future research cycles.

Key Readings

- Bennett, J. (2017, June 24). On Campus, Failure Is on the Syllabus. Retrieved August 10, 2017, from The New York Times website: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/24/fashion/fear-of-failure.html>
- Brown, B. (2012) *Daring Greatly: How the courage to be vulnerable transforms the way we live, love, parent and lead*. New York: Gotham Books.
- Nottingham, J. (2017). *The Learning Challenge: How to Guide Your Students Through the Learning Pit to Achieve Deeper Understanding*. London: Corwin Press (SAGE Publications).



Data Collection and Analysis

The boys were given Pre and Post Programme Adaptability Questionnaires. A variety of qualitative data were collected and scrutinized for key learning moments as well as patterns in responses. These were categorized into groups which were then organized into a framework of key findings.



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