

The Other Three Rs

A model that focuses on excellence, presented by Robert J. Sternberg, focuses on the traditional three Rs, Reading, 'Riting and 'Rithmetic, Sternberg adds three others, Reasoning, Resilience, and Responsibility.

Reasoning

Reasoning is a broad term that encompasses the comprehensive set of thinking skills that a person needs to be an engaged, active citizen of the world.

These skills include:

- Creative thinking to generate new and powerful ideas.
- Critical and analytical thinking to ensure that the ideas (your own and those of others) are good ones.
- Practical thinking to implement the ideas and persuade others of their value.
- Wise thinking to ensure that the ideas help build the common good.

Reasoning complements knowledge by enabling students to use that knowledge well. To demonstrate reasoning, we can present stories to students that introduce students to scientific reasoning.

Resilience.

- Resilience refers to persistence in achieving goals despite the obstacles life places in our way. Some children grow up with many obstacles strewn across their paths; others have relatively smooth roads to travel. Either way, everyone encounters roadblocks sooner or later; the question is how you surmount them.
- Resilience involves:
 - Willingness to defy the crowded in your thinking and actions-to take the road less traveled.
 - Willingness to surmount obstacles in trying to achieve your goals.
 - Passion in your pursuits-going for your goals with drive, motivation, and personal involvement.
 - Self-efficacy – belief in your ability to achieve your goals. When we tell students about our experience we have had in our lives, preferably when we were their age, and discuss how we got through those challenges. We then encourage students to share their own challenges and how they have coped with them. We can discuss what constitutes better and worse coping mechanisms, and how people can decide to employ better ones.

Resilience is an important component of academic excellence. Students that have an incremental view of intelligence, who believe they can modify their intelligence, perform better when faced with challenges than do students who believe that intelligence is a stable, fixed entity.

Responsibility

Responsibility covers the ethical and moral dimension of development. Four components are particularly important:

- Ethics: distinguishing right from wrong.
- Wisdom: forging or following a path that represents a common good and balances your own interests with those of others.
- Care: genuine understanding of and empathy for other's well being that goes beyond an intellectual sense you *should* care.
- Right action: Not only knowing the right thing to do, but doing it.

We teach responsibility by modeling it, by providing case studies, and by challenging students with situations that require them to develop their own unique and personal sense of responsibility. We read biographies of people who have shown wisdom and positive ethical values in their own lives such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela.

Students can contemplate their own lives and how they have taken opportunities either to work for a common good or to be selfish and look out only for their self interest. The great leaders of society, and of communities and families, are inevitably those who care about and for others not just about and for themselves.

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