

(9/4/24 District Administrator's Corner Article)

“Happiness really can influence health,” states Edward Diener, professor of social psychology at the University of Utah. “For one, happy people likely take better care of themselves and choose healthy behaviors—like exercising, eating well and getting adequate sleep.” Numerous studies show that happy people can expect to live longer and be more resilient to stress. When we apply this to school, there is no doubt that children respond to positive and uplifting energy and enjoy school more when they are surrounded by happiness.

Research on the happiness of children and adolescents has increased in recent years to prove the connections between happiness and improved physical and mental health. We need our students to feel connected to their classrooms and their teachers. A surprising number of kids say they are not connected to their school and it isn't always the students you'd expect. Being “quietly disengaged” is common and because it makes no fuss, we often don't even see it. There is nothing “wrong” with these kids, but their lack of connection is costing growth opportunities.

Students who do experience school connectedness:

- Like school
- Feel they belong
- Believe teachers care about them and their learning
- Believe that education matters
- Have friends at school
- Believe that discipline is fair
- Have extra activities to participate in with their peers

No child (or adult, for that matter) is going to feel this way every single day...because they're human and subject to human ups and downs. However, we want all River Valley School District students to feel like they fit in and have a safe place to learn. The longer I work in schools, the more I am convinced that education is all about relationships and the key to feeling good about school is connection. All kids need to be encouraged to plug into the supportive community that is school. After all, we could all do with a little more happiness and support along the way.

Mr. Loren G. Glasbrenner
District Administrator