

Life Skills Program Launched for Free Nationwide

The Community for Education Foundation has launched the “Overcoming Obstacles Gifting Initiative,” offered to districts free of charge.

By B.A. Birch



More than 2.5 million students in New York City, Atlanta, Indianapolis, Jersey City, and Los Angeles have benefited from [the Overcoming Obstacles Life Skills Program](#). The program is designed to help educators teach communication, decision making and goal setting skills, aimed at [giving middle and high school students the skills to be successful in life](#).

Overcoming Obstacles was developed by the nonprofit Community for Education Foundation in 1992. And now, after a new \$10 million “[Gifting Initiative](#),” the [curriculum materials](#), [training](#), and [ongoing support](#) are available free of charge to school districts across the country.

Erin Capone, executive director of Community for Education Foundation, said:

“Overcoming Obstacles has been [recognized nationwide](#) for its positive impact on students’ grade point averages, attendance rates, classroom behavior, personal development, and family relationships.

“However, many schools lack the resources necessary to implement this important curriculum.

“With the program now available to schools at no cost through the Gifting Initiative, Community for Education Foundation is tirelessly working with educators across the country to bring Overcoming Obstacles to their districts, and we will continue until every school has access to this successful life skills program.”

The Overcoming Obstacles Life Skills Program has coined “Relevant skills” as the “fourth R of education”. These “relevant skills” include time management, problem solving, conflict resolution, study skills, and most importantly, self-respect and respect for others.

These aspects are aimed to help students learn more about selecting colleges, researching scholarships, financial responsibility, interviewing skills and more. Harold G. Levine, president of the board of directors of West Sacramento Early College Prep school and dean of the University of California, believes it is time to start asking what makes a school great.

At the Sacramento Bee, Levine asked what educators in public schools should focus on. He believes that, alongside the more traditional answers like college-going skills and high performance on state tests, [we should also look to engage students in a deep engagement in meaningful learning](#).

“Research shows quite clearly that every day spent in school gives a child or young adult a further leg up on the very things that make life as an adult rewarding: better income, better health, more civic engagement.

“By a kind of reverse logic, the opposites are clearly detrimental to individuals and to our society: more poverty, sick people with high-cost medical needs, and ill-informed citizens unable to engage in the basic processes of a democracy.”

The West Sacramento Early College Prep, a 6-12 public charter school, was designed to serve students from low-income families, students who would be first-generation college-goers, students with a poor history of academic achievement and kids whose language at home is not English.

“The school provides careful, frequent, and detailed guidance and mentoring by the students’ teachers. And of equal importance, the teachers constantly promote the use – in the classroom and in their students’ work – of the core skills of inquiry, careful reasoning, the use of data to support conclusions, and the art of scientific argumentation.”

Students at West Sac Prep are passing the mathematics and English language arts portions of the California High School Exit Exam at a higher rate than the statewide average. The attendance rate is more than 97 percent, with the school is currently recording a zero dropout rate.

But officials are also noting improved results in the attitudes surrounding student learning:

“Students can tell you what science project they worked on last semester and provide the evidence for what they learned; they can relate their English assignment to their computer assignment to their science assignment and address the cross-learning that has occurred for them; and they can and do engage in deep discourse with one another and their teachers about today’s issues and how they and their families are affected by them.

“All of our juniors have a plan for the next stage of their lives once they have completed high school. All will be college-ready if they choose that path.”

<http://www.educationnews.org/k-12-schools/life-skills-program-launched-for-free-nationwide/>