Exploring Alternative High Schools: Does Emotional Intelligence Matter?

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Explaning Alternative High Schools: Does Emotional Intelligence Matter?
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The impetus for this research study was the closing of Wavecrest, an alternative high school in Holland that was opened in 2006 and closed in 2014.

**About Wavecrest**
Wavecrest educated students who had not been successful in traditional public schools. This closing created a void for the students who attended Wavecrest to reach their fullest educational potential.

**Background**
The research team joined with dedicated community members working towards exploring the creation of a career focused school model that will provide students the opportunity to earn their high school diploma. By utilizing theories about emotional intelligence, holistic learning and providing out-of-school learning experiences, these youth will develop into adults that are able to contribute to their community and beyond.

**Teacher responses**
- Unfair image of students
- Issues of truancy / absences
- Family unity
- Motivation to learn in students

**Student responses**
- Wavecrest felt like a family
- Engaged and motivated learning (live interaction) preferred over E-2020 learning
- Future plans / goals
- Small class / school

**Benefits of an Alternative High School**
- Providing a different educational structure for under-resourced youth
- Helping youth earn a high school diploma
- Facilitate transitional services into the community
- Preparing the next generations’ work force
- An increase in community tax payers

**Objective**
- Provide youth with a career focused education
- Utilize emotional intelligence, holistic learning, and out-of-school community based projects for students to earn their high school diploma
- Research and gather data about under resourced youth and their education

**Literature Review**
A comprehensive review of the literature was conducted to illuminate issues of alternative education.

**At Risk Students**
- Drug and alcohol abuse, single parent households, poverty, teen pregnancy, slow learners
- Self esteem
- Dropout ages
- Preferable class structure
- Family lifestyle
- Why go to another school

**Teachers As Mentors**
- Counselor vs. mentor vs. friend vs. teacher
- Supportive relationships
- Humanistic approach to teaching
- Positive social and academic outcomes
- Preparing to go into the working world

**Successful Alternative High Schools**
- Self paced programs
- Resilience
- Relationships
- Goal setting

**Class Size:**
- Smaller class = stronger relationships
- More academically engaged

**Emotional Intelligence**
- Dealing with emotions, handling situations
- Increasing resiliency
- Social skills
- Academic success

**References available upon request.**