



The Missing Flow in STEAM is R for Relationships – STREAM

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These days, it seems that much of our educational system has been focused on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). More recently there has been an acknowledgement of the importance of the Arts, and the acronym became STEAM. However, they are still leaving out an equally essential subject that our students need for success in college, the marketplace, and global citizenship: RELATIONSHIPS. The acronym has been missing its flow, it needs to be STREAM!

Most everyone understands the importance of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and the desirability of Emotional Intelligence (EQ) when we choose whom to befriend, hire, marry, and elect to lead us. We want our children to be able to form effective, satisfying relationships. That requires making good decisions, accepting responsibility for one's choices, displaying integrity, showing compassion for others and tolerating the differences that exist among us. Yet how we develop those traits and qualities in our students seems to be eluding us for the most part. We are graduating people from high school (and college) who are not prepared to work collaboratively, speak authentically, listen empathically, or embrace diversity in their workplace. As a consequence, corporate and business employers are finding the need to spend thousands and thousands of dollars on organization development consultants to teach their employees, managers and executives how to work together, how to communicate and how to resolve differences.

Whose job is it to teach relationship skills? Parents, of course, play a huge part in their children's social/emotional development. Was Robert Fulghum wrong when he said, "All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten?" I don't think so. However, the social skills learned in Kindergarten need to be relearned, practiced, and deepened at every grade level and throughout ones' life. Teachers are with their students over 40% of their schooldays week. So like it or not, the development of students' EQ and Social Emotional Learning falls heavily upon teachers. The truth is, however, that most teachers, and parents as well, have no formal training in how to teach the social emotional skills necessary to form successful relationships, communicate effectively and listen empathically. Most of us learned what we know about relationships from our parents and peers.

Some research indicates that as many as 70-80% of us come from what can be considered dysfunctional families. "To say that a family is dysfunctional is to say that it doesn't work: It doesn't provide to a minimum degree what its members need for mental, physical, and emotional well-being. By contrast, a functional family is one that teaches children how to think clearly and act responsibly, to understand their feelings, and relate to others in a healthy way. It equips them with the mental, emotional, and living skills to deal with life as an adult. To the extent that your family failed to teach you these important skills it was dysfunctional." *Getting Love Right: Learning the Choices of Healthy Intimacy* by Terence T. Gorski, M.A., N.C.A.C.

Even if you are someone who has invested in your own personal growth, or been fortunate to have been raised in a functional family, you are probably not well equipped to teach these skills to students. We would no more expect to be competent in mathematics or science without many courses in which we relearned, practiced, and deepened our skill at every grade level. Additionally, we do not expect to teach math or science to students without courses in how to teach mathematics or science. The same holds true for relationships. Relationships have a skill set that can be learned; how to teach it to others can also be learned.

The question remains: Who will teach the children this important subject? Teachers will do the best they can with what they know how to do because that is their calling. This is too important to be left to chance or taught on the side. It is time that we admit that our students and our society are in desperate need of EQ. It is time to invest education resources – training and curriculum for our teachers – to address SEL. People will be happier and the world will be a better place. It is time to put the flow in STEAM, and make it STREAM!