

Value Concordance and Discordance

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Core values form the foundation for decision making and personal choices in a variety of situations. Awareness of one's own values and those of others sets the stage for good communication. Some people find that they share values with those around them—a situation that is labeled value concordance—while others discover that their most fundamental values are more unique, resulting in value discordance. In either case, awareness of values sets the stage for building better relationships. In no arena is this more important than in education, where everyone must come together to support student success.

This report presents findings from students and SCOE employees who used Seity's tool to identify their core values between June 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021. A total of 459 students and 475 SCOE employees met the criteria for inclusion in this report. A majority of the students (77%) were in the Come Back Kids program when they selected their core values, while most of the employees (81%) worked at SCOE or were affiliated with a school or program other than that attended by the students.

Concordance

The analysis revealed that employees and students have a relatively high degree of value concordance. The four values chosen most often by students are compassion, fun, kindness, and freedom. For employees, the four most popular values are compassion, faith, fun, and kindness. This general trend towards value concordance suggests students and employees have multiple opportunities to build and maintain positive relationships with each other.

Many students and SCOE employees share the core values of compassion and kindness. Behaving in a manner consistent with these values, and publicly acknowledging acts of compassion and kindness, can build environments that facilitate learning and the development of positive interpersonal relationships. The importance that many students and employees place on compassion and kindness provides a building block for positive relationships if both groups see the shared value carried out in behavior, and publicly acknowledge acts of compassion and kindness.

Many students and employees also share fun as a core value and should respond well to activities that include elements designed to promote play, humor, and light-hearted socialization. They should be highly receptive to classroom activities, professional development trainings, and other programming designed with this principle in mind.

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Discordance

There are also consistent differences between students and employees. Members of both groups often endorse spirituality as important, but employees are more likely than students to identify values associated with spirituality as core. The two groups differ even more in their endorsement of freedom and self-control, which are much more likely to be selected as core values by students in the Come Back Kids program than by students in other programs or by employees. Conversely, employees are more likely than students to endorse optimism as a value.

Respect was prominent as a core value among students. Employees can use respect as a motivational factor and boost student engagement by providing classroom activities that provide opportunities for students to exercise, and be recognized for, self-control. In all activities, employees should communicate respect for students and establish classroom norms that support it. Team building activities can also highlight the importance of mutual respect.

Overall, employees embraced optimism to a greater extent than students. Those employees who see optimism as a core value will naturally display more affinity with students who share their positive vision of the future. Another aspect of optimism—feeling confident of success—is important to employees but may be a challenge for students striving to establish their sense of competence and identity. Acknowledgement of the struggles that adolescents and young adults face in completing this developmental task will help bridge the gap between students and employees. Activities that bolster self-confidence will also support students as they face challenges to competence and identity.

Limitations

The more frequent selection of respect by students in the Come Back Kids program than by students in other programs points to a limitation of this report: More information is needed regarding students in other SCOE programs to determine whether the findings can be generalized to all programs, or if they apply only to particular schools or to students with specific developmental backgrounds. It may also be the case that the values selected by SCOE employees vary, depending upon such factors as their position within SCOE, whether they work at SCOE or a school setting, etc.

Even though many students and employees share one or more core values, some individuals have core values that are unique and not shared with others. It is important to recognize this, acknowledge and respect the differences that often exist between individuals, and structure learning and work environments to accommodate all students and employees regardless of their values.