



What is The Nurtured Heart Approach?

The Nurtured Heart Approach (NHA) is a social emotional curriculum developed for building relationships in which students are intrinsically motivated both academically and pro-socially. With NHA, teacher/student relationships evolve into a mentoring culture in which students become invested and engaged in the learning process.

At its very core NHA creates intense positive relationships within the academic context. While there are many similar programs that promote positive language, NHA focuses on the use of language as the scaffolding to build “inner wealth” through every day interactions. Through first hand experiences of success these relationships provide immense opportunities for social emotional development and building self confidence. On a broader level, NHA shifts classroom culture by actively nurturing positive and healthy relationships thereby creating a safe environment for its students.

The Nurtured Heart Approach began in 1999, as a therapeutic intervention for treating intense and difficult children in family therapy. In the past decade, it has evolved to become the primary approach in an estimated 10,000 schools across the country, in England, Belgium, Israel, Germany, South Africa, and Australia. It is also used as the foundational approach for thousands of residential treatment programs and therapeutic foster care programs across the country. Illinois, Washington State, and Northern California are among the first states to adopt the approach district wide and in their foster care programs.

Why use it in your school?

- 1) Select schools in the New York City School District implemented NHA in conjunction with PBIS in 2007. Using both methods together they found that the need for Special Education in distressed schools fell from 15% to less than 5% in two years.
- 2) Smith Elementary, Virginia, implemented the approach in 2008. After 1 year, they showed a 32% reduction in school suspensions, 83% decrease in administrative/parent conferences. The severity of infractions decreased significantly and overall infractions decreased by 39%. Classroom disruptions decreased by 68% and bus misconduct decreased by 83%. Truancy conferences decreased by 83%.
- 3) Champaign Unified School District, Jefferson Middle School, Champaign, Illinois. The approach was implemented in 2007. Overall reading scores (ISAT) improved 4.6 points and math improved 1.7 points in a 1 year time frame. In 2007, there



were 125 discipline referrals for behavioral misconduct. In the 2008 school year, there were only 21.

- 4) Tolson Elementary School, Tucson, AZ: NHA was implemented school wide in 1999. They had 8x the district average of school suspensions. Special education utilization was 15%. In 2006, special education utilization dropped to 1%. Teacher attrition rates dropped from 50% to 1% saving the district thousands in training and hiring costs. There have been 0 cases of bullying and 0 children referred to outside mental health agencies for mental health screening. Additionally, utilization of gifted and talented programs increased from 1% to over 15%. Only one child has been suspended twice in ten years. Prior to NHA implementation there were 36 suspensions.
- 5) Focus on Youth Therapeutic Foster Care Program, Cincinnati, Ohio: After one year of implementation, they showed 12.5% decrease in disrupted placements for 2006. In 2005, they were at 17.5% disruption rate and in 2006 they were at 6%. Additionally, therapeutic foster care programs in New Jersey, California, and Washington State are showing equally stunning results.
- 6) The Drenk Center, Hainesport, New Jersey: Went from a 25% average foster care placement disruption rate to 0% within the first 2 years of implementation.
- 7) Tucson Head Start Arizona: Within two years of implementing the approach among 80 classrooms in the program, there were 0 children placed on medication for ADHD and no children were referred for ADHD assessment.
- 8) Los Angeles, California: Alternative Day School for adolescent offenders. 90% considered violent offenders. LAPD outreach implemented community based trainings and programs for adolescents and within one year had a 34% decrease in referrals to the school.

What NHA classrooms look like:

- Increased teaching time
- Teachers have a unique influence on children
- Students develop better social skills
- Students demonstrate increased coping skills

The Nurtured Heart Approach™ Fact Sheet



- Results are almost immediate
- Children are more motivated to be successful academically
- Students police each other
- Students have a greater sense of empowerment and personal responsibility

What school administrators can expect to see:

- Shift in school culture.
- Teachers report satisfaction with their ease in the implementation of NHA.
- Teachers who are able to recognize their powerful influence.
- Schools become the center of the community.
- Students demonstrate better social skills and are better prepared for the norms of society.
- Test scores improve as a result of children developing inner wealth.
- Discipline referrals decrease significantly.
- Parental involvement increases as parents witness their children thriving.
- Parents report better flow of communication between parents & teachers.
- Teacher retention improves.
- Fewer children are referred for special education or to the mental health agencies.
- Children begin to generalize skills to other areas of their lives and to classes where this approach is not being used.
- There is significant decrease in crime rates around NHA schools