

Resilience, What is it?

Resilience, resiliency, who really knows (unless you are an English teacher).

If we can't properly name **it**, **it's** fairly likely we can't easily define what **it** is, or certainly not how **it** ties into our health. But we do generally recognize **it's** important.

Most often we hear the word when we are rebounding from some adversity. 'That basketball player is coming back from an injury and showed real resilience'. Okay, but does the millions of dollars he gets paid help his elasticity? What about the poor Latina student who gets bullied because she wears unfashionable clothes to school, yet shows up every day? Does her fortitude constitute resilience?

We have expanded this term to include chronic stress, not just acute stress which is brought on by adversity. Chronic or ongoing stress could be a school/district leader feeling blamed for everything without enough time in the day to be effective, or a classroom teacher expected to motivate students who lack focus, respect, or discipline. Let's not forget the bus driver transporting these unruly children while navigating traffic or the lunch aid who has no authority to curtail rudeness.

While we may not have consensus on what resilience is, we can likely agree that it plays a role in the major problems facing education. It's difficult to find and keep faculty employed, when there is insufficient preparation for longevity. It is especially complex to help students succeed while lowering the bar to get them matriculated. How about the role of resilience in the nine different types of school violence, especially the catastrophic type that faculty work in constant fear of.

At the core of these issues is an erosion of psychological stability, degrading our ability to tolerate distress. If we find this idea credible, then how do we elevate our capacity for emotional discomfort, so we aren't so guarded, impulsive, destructive or regretful? How do we improve our flexibility, determination, and endurance? These so called 'soft skills' can actually save our life, unless we would prefer to debate whose responsibility it is to teach SEL in the class, which is another option for our limited time and energy.

Let's take the next step in our learning evolution by defining this term with concrete, specific and measurable components, then agreeing how we can use our understanding to solve the big challenges of education.

We will start by breaking resilience down into 9 parts, which consequently can be addressed in the nine months of the school year.

1. Needs
2. Protective Mechanisms
3. Support/ Relationships
4. Adaptability
5. Stress
6. Wellness
7. Skills (SEL)
8. Climate
9. Values

When educators learn how their human 'engine' works (needs), along with the warning lights (protective mechanisms), features, fuel, road conditions and all the other nine factors described above, their car lasts longer and requires fewer repairs.

Prosilience, or the work of generating resilience, is the key to overcoming hardship and thriving under challenging working conditions. District leaders lack the time or resources to do this work alone, but still shoulder the responsibility for our learning communities. With the right partnerships, this burden can be turned into an asset where your faculty feel valued through ongoing support.

Knowing that resilience is a learned trait is empowering to individuals and institutions. We can build stronger individuals, communities and teams for more rewarding and successful organizational outcomes through tools provided by TeacherCoach.” Tim Trow, Assistant Superintendent Gloucester County Public Schools.