Discussion Contributions

In addition to reading and writing, a strong assessment plan should include speaking and listening activities. This is good for our course goals because there are so many great papers to read that one person could not read them all and have time to think about the evidence in the papers. We will use jigsaw learning techniques to allow us to cover a broad range of research evidence while keeping the reading load for each person to a manageable level. Toward this end, we will use discussion boards either on Blackboard or Google Docs or email. You and your group members will choose a platform on which you will respond to the article summaries and think about how you might use research evidence to support your work with youth. This document outlines a set of decisions you will want to make with your assigned group members and criteria that makes for a strong contribution to the group discussion.

Decisions to make

1. We know that individuals will learn more if they have to talk with others and listen to different perspectives about the topics being discussed. We also know that discussions can take many different forms. As a group, please decide how you would like to discuss the readings and their use as well as how you will document your efforts for evaluation. Share those decisions with the instructors. Some possibilities include:
   a. Working entirely asynchronously—participating in discussions only by adding written comments to a discussion board that responds to the content of others’ article reviews and/or the guiding questions.
   b. Meeting virtually on a platform like Zoom, Skype, or Group Me and find a way to summaries that discussion for grading.

2. The content of your discussion can be captured in a variety of ways. Please build a structure for your weekly contributions so that these might be useful to you as you complete the midterm and final projects. Below are some options, but we are open to other creative solutions as well.
   a. Appoint someone to take notes who will record the gist of what people say. Be sure to indicate with initials or names who made what contribution so that individual grades can be generated.
   b. Build a schedule so that each person is responsible for taking notes on the discussion from week to week as a means of helping everyone have the opportunity to “hear” and not just listen to the conversation.
   c. Build a document that is added to by group members weekly. Listening and speaking would entirely take a written form, and the group would not formally meet.
   d. Record and share Zoom meetings or discussions on other types of platforms. (Be aware of whether these will be publicly controlled with the platform or if you can control who has access to such recordings.)

Evaluations of the discussions

When the discussion details are interesting, you will see LaMarr and I add information to the conversation as we review your discussion summaries. Grades, however, will focus exclusively on whether you have made weekly contributions to the discussions. That said, we know that strong discussions evolve over time and have a number of components that foster meaning-making. Please try to practice these skills as you respond to one another.
   a. Label the ideas that you find interesting in the work others generate and give reasons for your thoughts.
   b. Describe some of the things that you can do with the research evidence and/or how you might share what you are learning with middle school students and their families.
   c. Find ways to integrate findings from different studies to draw general conclusions.
   d. Consider the research evidence and compare that with examples from the lives of actual youth you know (lives in progress).
   e. Compare the research evidence with the stories you detect in media representations of middle school students (media depictions of adolescence).
   f. Look for evidence of logical fallacies in research and in the arguments people make. Find ways to correct one another on those ideas.