adaptED Consultants will help you build a District-Wide Brain-Aware Culture

adaptED is a team of neuroscientists and educators that provide innovative and empowering programming in the form of interactive workshops and seminars, rooted in the foundations of neuroscience and psychology research. By addressing your institution’s unique challenges, we help you develop a brain-based “best practices” so that your educational community can live up to its greatest potential. We work with all stakeholders and have programming that will inspire each:

• Administrators    • Educators    • Parents    • Students

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Fostering the Most Effective Learning Mindset:

Our brains are built to be incredibly adaptive. This is a core principle of neuroscience called Neuroplasticity. Neuroplastic changes are the result of effort and hard work that strengthens and builds the connections between our brain cells. Motivational Psychologists have found that those with an understanding of how our brains can change have a growth learning mindset, acknowledging the scientifically founded principle that intelligence can improve with effort and practice. Those with the opposite mindset (fixed) are more likely to cheat, take few academic risks and abandon tasks in response to initial failure.

adaptED Consultants will guide your team through the basic principles of neuroplasticity to teach them the foundations of how all learning occurs. We will also provide and present simple activities for educators to use when teaching students as young as kindergarten-age the principles of plasticity. When learners understand that their brain is like a muscle that gets stronger with practice, they will work harder, especially in the face of a challenge. Understanding the amazing plasticity of the brain is the core of the classroom culture upon which grit, resilience and intrinsic motivation to learn are built.

Helping Students Manage Stress and Negative Emotion:

The human brain evolved to protect the health and wellness of its owner. Unfortunately this evolutionarily ancient protective potential, can lead to a maladaptive stress response overpowering contemporary learning opportunities. The stress response is governed by a set of structures popularly called the lizard brain. While the lizard brain has been crucial to our survival as a species, its activation initiates a protective physiological response involving the entire body and can have acute and chronic detrimental effects on both the body and brain, damaging neurons and impeding learning.

adaptED Consultants will help your team understand the basic biology of the lizard brain and teach them research-based strategies for using our evolutionarily younger, more uniquely human areas of the brain to “tame” the lizard brain in the classroom. In addition to building a happier and less stressed classroom these self-regulation strategies will also strengthen (via plasticity) the same part of the brain that is required to focus deeply and ignore distractions.

adaptED can help you tame the lizard brain!
Promoting Intrinsic Motivation through Appropriate Challenge and Feedback:

The basic biology of reward and motivation is critically relevant to the classroom. Performance on a variety of tasks can be modulated by varying the type of reward. For example, creative problem solving is hampered by the presence of extrinsic reward. Our evolutionary history reveals the types of motivation that are most effective. In particular, applying appropriate levels of challenge through differentiated instruction and providing opportunity for both autonomy and social learning will harness intrinsic motivation.

adaptED Consultants will give an enlightening and applied overview of the fields of motivational psychology and neuroscience to help educators understand the importance of enhancing intrinsic motivation in their classroom. Your team will also appreciate the critical roles failure, non-evaluative feedback and socially connected learning communities play in boosting learner drive.

Building Empathy and Connection in the Classroom:

Humans are wired to be social and have mirror neuron networks to promote empathy, understanding and social learning. When mirror neuron networks are engaged at school, strong, connected and collaborative classrooms are built. Several studies demonstrate that students who feel emotionally close to their peers and instructors have lower cortisol levels (a physiological indicator of the stress response) and an increase in pro-social behavior. Therefore, building a strongly connected classroom is paramount to good classroom management and peer-education.

adaptED Consultants will help your team understand how the mirror networks in the brain are activated and how to use the physiological response to bonding to create a resilient classroom. We will also give many hand-ons, immediately implementable community building lessons that can be integrated easily into academic content.
Confronting Bias and Boosting Expectations:

Our brains have evolved a set of “shortcuts” to help us efficiently make sense of our world and keep us out of harms way. Unfortunately these programs are full of “bugs”. There is a great deal of room for error in our perception of the world around us. These shortcuts are often referred to as cognitive biases that we are almost entirely unaware of and would likely deny if challenged on them. This has enormous implications for classroom educators particularly in underserved communities. Thankfully, the brain gives us great potential for overcoming our cognitive biases through its incredible plasticity.

adaptED Consultants will help your team understand how their own brains’ shortcuts may be unconsciously affecting their standards and expectations of students. adaptED will also give practical advice to strengthen familiarity and help educators and students engage their more complex, or higher order, regions of the brain to overpower our simpler, more instinctual areas of the brain by practicing certain behaviors and habits in the classroom.

Maximizing Retention by Balancing Time for Focus and Reflection:

The human brain has a remarkable ability to focus on and filter out stimuli from the surrounding environment. The activation of our outwardly focused attentional network is critical for recall of material at a later date. While most educators are familiar with the importance of directed and concentrated focus on incoming information for learning, there is new evidence for an inwardly focused attention network whose activation is necessary for creative expression, complex problem solving, deep cognition and empathy towards others. Neuroscientists now believe that spending time in both attentional networks leads to the most successful learning outcomes.

adaptED Consultants will help your team of educators understand the two attentional networks, when and how they are activated and strengthened and the importance of each in the classroom environment. adaptED will also present a number of practical activities and suggestions to help plan lessons and curriculum that activate both the inwardly reflective network and the outward stimuli attentional network.