The Truth About Self-Esteem (*)
That is why we must be cautious about assenting to the reasonable-sounding thesis that what we need are tougher self-esteem programs that can improve children's self-esteem, increase their learning, and lead to better behavior. Of course, the latter argument would seem to apply only to questionable versions of self-esteem programs that consist of overpraising and nonchalantly praising students for their slightest efforts. That critique suggests that a self-oriented approach may fail to help students believe in themselves because it overlooks the potential for a more moderate self-concept. The associations between self-esteem and its expected consequences are mixed, insignificant, or absent. The evidence that self-esteem influences performance is so often reported to be weak, even less can be said for the causal relationship between the two.

We must immediately add "... if it's something worth learning." You will sift through those anti-self-esteem editorials and arguments with the same care you give to articles about the importance of self-esteem. There is no getting around the fact that most educators who speak earnestly about the need to boost students' self-esteem do not have any feel for the empirical literature as a whole — what the evidence really says and how meaningful it is. People who speak about self-esteem programs are generally happy to think of themselves as innovators rather than as scholars who are trying to understand what produces good results in the classroom. The field seems to have any feel for the empirical literature as a whole — what the evidence really says and how meaningful it is.

Now that the potential movement's preoccupation with the self?

III. THE CRITICS: MISSING THE POINT

...there is little evidence that level of self-esteem predicts the onset of depressive...The attacks on self-esteem programs are often characterized by the same lack of evidence. They are based on an overgeneralization of the evidence that supports the importance of self-esteem programs, the neglect of the evidence that contradicts that claim, and the desire to demonize self-esteem programs.

References are omitted here for reasons of space.