Abstract

Research has examined the importance of resilience and how its presence can increase the likelihood of positive outcomes for youth. One key factor that has been shown to increase resilience is connection with a supportive and caring adult. The Kaleidoscope Connect Program is one of the few resilience programs that targets this specific factor and investigates how it affects functioning for at-risk youth. The goal of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness of Kaleidoscope Connect with sixth, seventh, and eight grade students in Western Montana, to determine whether students display significant increases in resilience and significant decreases in problem behavior following the implementation of the program.

Introduction

For the purpose of the current study, data is used from self-report rating scales. These rating scales include the Resiliency Scales for Children and Adolescents (RSCA), the BASC-3 Behavioral and Emotional Screening System (BASC-3 BESS), and the Student Support Card. The long-term goal of the research program is to examine longitudinal data. Research targeting resilience is especially significant in Montana, due to its rural composition and its consistent rank as a state with high rates of youth suicide. The current project will help school-based professionals identify problems and intervene early, to ensure that at-risk youth receive necessary adult support.

Method

Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade in School</th>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>N=49</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6th Graders</td>
<td>2016-2017</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th Graders</td>
<td>2017-2018</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Graders</td>
<td>2017-2018</td>
<td>15</td>
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Materials

- Kaleidoscope Connect: The curriculum is comprised of seventeen lessons that are approximately 45-60 minutes long. Each lesson focuses on different areas for student reflection, including risk factors, adult support, and increasing self-confidence.

- BASC-3 Behavioral and Emotional Screening System, Self-Report (BASC-3 BESS): This standardized self-report screening measure is used to assess the needs of students ages 8-18. BASC-3 BESS provides an overall score that can indicate risk for problem behaviors and uses a 4-point Likert scale that ranges from Never to Almost Always.

Results

Students who were flagged on the RSCA as being “at-risk” often scored high on Emotional Reactivity and low on Sense of Mastery and Relatedness. Items that they endorsed as Almost Always included statements such as, “I can feel other people judging me” and “I don’t think things will turn out my way.” These students also endorsed Never on items like, “My parents are proud of me”. At-risk students who had concerning scores were followed up on so that they could receive adequate support for their needs by the school’s LCSW.

Why is Resilience Important?

Resilience factors are crucial in the school environment to decrease negative and dangerous behavior in youth, such as truancy, substance abuse, or suicidal ideation/Attempts. As a school based program, Kaleidoscope Connect establishes a baseline for students that are at-risk and connects them with trustworthy adults that can be their support, which therefore leads to a stronger sense of security in their lives. Decreasing risky behaviors is especially important in Montana, where there are high rates of suicidal behavior, access to lethal means, and an embedded social stigma surrounding suicide.

Recommendations

- Help the teen make connections with supportive adults at school and/or home. Building relationships with a supportive adult can foster resiliency in youth.
- Teach self-care. Instruct youth on how to handle stress, exercise, and meditate to properly cope with life’s challenges.
- Set attainable and reasonable goals for the teen. Having something for the youth to work towards and achieve can develop self-esteem and pride in their work.
- Encourage extracurricular involvement. Getting the teen involved in something they are excited about can boost moral and help develop social connection among their peers.

