Implementing School-Based Mental Health Promotion Interventions

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Ollscoil na hÉireann, Gaillimh
Overview

• Promoting mental health in the school setting
  ➢ the case for action

• Evidence of effectiveness
  ➢ impact of social and emotional learning on educational objectives

• Focus on implementation
  ➢ opportunities and challenges
Mental Health Promotion in Schools

- Schools are one of the most important settings for promoting the mental health of young people (WHO, 2001)
- Schools provide a socialising context that has a significant influence on:
  - positive youth development
  - sense of connectedness with family, community and broader society
  - reaching children who experience mental health problems
- School as a setting – a systems approach
Mental Health Promotion in Schools

- **Building academic success on social and emotional learning**
  - promote academic, emotional and social competence
  - reducing school drop-out rates
  - reducing a range of negative health and social outcomes

- **Teaching and learning of skills, attitudes and resources that are valuable for life**
  - communicate effectively, work as a team member, resilience in the face of difficulties, problem-solving, coping strategies, sense of control/efficacy

- **Role of education in addressing social and health inequities**
Social and Emotional Wellbeing

• Increasing focus on social and emotional wellbeing
  » Emotional intelligence (Salovey and Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 2005) - skills of understanding our emotions
  » Emotional literacy (Steiner and Perry, 1990) - ability to identify, manage and communicate how we feel; Weare (2004) "...and respond to the emotions of others in ways that are helpful"
  » Focus on teaching and learning of personal and social skills for young people (Institute for Public Policy Research, Margo et al., 2006)
  » Social and emotional learning (CASEL, 2004, 2010)
Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

Essential skills for social and emotional learning:

- **Self-awareness** - know yourself and others - identify feelings, be responsible, recognize strengths
- **Self-management** - manage emotions, understand situations, set goals and plans, solve problems creatively
- **Social awareness** - care for others - show empathy, appreciate diversity
- **Relationships skills** - communicate effectively, build relationships, negotiate fairly, refuse provocations, seek help
- **Responsible decision making** - act ethically, appropriate social norms, respect others
Promoting Positive Mental Health

- Conceptualisations of positive mental health (Keyes, 2002; Huppert, 2005; Ryff et al., 2006)
  - Hedonic - subjective well-being and life satisfaction
  - Eudaimonic - positive functioning, engagement, fulfilment and social well-being
- Keyes’ concept of ‘flourishing’

  Abilities to develop psychologically, emotionally, intellectually, socially and spiritually
Evidence of Effectiveness
Systematic Reviews of School-based Mental Health Promotion Programmes

- Lister-Sharp et al. (1999)
- Harden et al. (2001) EPPI- Centre
- Greenberg, Domitrovich & Bumbarger (2001)
- CASEL (2003)
- US Mental Health and Substance Abuse (SAMHSA - [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov))
- Implementing Mental Health Promotion Actions Database (IMPHA & Dataprev)
- Tennant et al. (2007); Adi et al. (2007), NICE (2007); Payton et al. (2008); Durlak et al. (2011)
Conclusions from Effectiveness Studies

- Mental health promotion in schools, when implemented effectively, can produce long-term benefits for young people, including emotional and social functioning and improved academic performance.

  - traditional topic based health education approaches are of limited value (knowledge only programmes have minimal effects on behaviour)

  - competence enhancement approach - skills
School ecology as a focus of intervention

Comprehensive programmes that target multiple health outcomes in the context of a co-ordinated whole school approach are the most consistently effective strategy

• Barry, Clarke, Jenkins & Patel (2012) WHO evidence review in LMICs.
Whole School Framework (JCSH, 2010, British Columbia)
Weare & Nind (2011) – review for the EU Dataprev project. *Health Promotion International, Special Issue Vol 26*

- Review of 52 systematic reviews and meta-analyses of mental health interventions in schools (46 universal interventions)
  - positive effects on social, emotional and educational outcomes
  - few examples of adverse effects
  - higher risk children benefit more
  - family and community involvement
  - high quality implementation - clarity, intensity and fidelity
Effectiveness of programmes

• Weare (2004) “procedures that teach social and emotional competence can result in gains that are absolutely central to the goals of all schools. Gains include improved school atmospheres, more effective learning, better behaviour, higher school attendance, higher motivation, higher morale of students and teachers, and better results for students and schools” (p13)
CASEL - evidence based support for social and emotional learning (SEL)

- **Improved attitudes toward school**, better sense of community (Schaps et al., 2004) and higher academic motivation (Johnson and Johnson 2004)

- **Positive school behaviours** - more prosocial interactions (Johnson and Johnson, 2004), fewer absences and suspensions (Christenson and Havsy, 2004) and reductions in aggression, disruptions and interpersonal violence (Greenberg et al., 2004)

- **Improved outcomes on school dropout and non-attendance** (Wilson, Gofredson & Najaka, 2001)
CASEL - evidence based support for social and emotional learning (SEL)

- **Enhanced school performance** in terms of improved maths, language, arts and social studies (Brown et al., 2004) and better problem solving and planning (Greenberg et al., 2004)

- Durlak et al. (2011) – review of effect sizes from 207 SEL interventions
  - 11% improvement in achievement tests
  - 25% improvement in social and emotional skills
  - 10% decrease in classroom misbehaviour, anxiety and depression
CASEL Technical Report on the impact of social and emotional learning (Payton et al., 2008)

Three scientific reviews - 317 studies involving 324,303 school children aged 5-13 years

- Strong and consistent support for the value of SEL programmes implemented by school staff
- Effective in both the school and after-school setting and for students with and without presenting problems, rural/urban, racially and ethnically diverse groups
- The effects remained over time
CASEL 2008 Technical report on the impact of social and emotional learning

- Across the studies evaluating academic outcomes, students scored **11 percentile points higher on standardized achievement** tests relative to peers not receiving the programme.

- Only when delivered by school staff did students’ academic performance improve significantly.
Focus on Implementation

- Implementation is variable and affects outcomes (Durlak 1998; Durlak & DuPre, 2008)

- Implementation Science (Fixsen et al., 2005; Greenhalgh et al., 2006)

  effective interventions x effective implementation = positive outcomes
Variations in Implementation

Brink et al. (1990) *Health Education Research* 6, 353-362

diffusion of a tobacco prevention curriculum in Texas

- Outcome evaluation – negative findings
- Process evaluation – assessed levels of implementation
  - 89% of school districts received the materials
  - 45% of teachers
  - 29% used the materials
  - 17% delivered the intended amount
Variations in Implementation

“There is a crack in everything, that is how the light gets in”

Leonard Cohen
Implementation Matters

  - meta-analyses of 500 studies
  - mean effect sizes were 2-3 times higher when interventions are carefully implemented

- feasibility and practicality of the intervention
- focus on quality of implementation
- systematic implementation research
The Implementation of Health Promoting Schools (Samdal & Rowling, 2013)

Researching implementation in school settings

- Focus on process rather than package
- Theory-driven research
- Emphasis on ecological analysis
- Common language
- Resources and tools
- Collaboration and coordination
- Multidisciplinarity and multi-method research
- Participation between practitioners and researchers
- Attention to detail

➢ Capture the complexity of the school system
Figure: The School Setting as a Complex System: Components and Interactions
(Dooris & Barry, chapter in Samdal & Rowling 2013)
An evaluation of the *Zippy’s Friends* emotional wellbeing programme for primary schools in Ireland

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Zippy’s Friends

**Aim:** Training children to cope with everyday adversities and negative life events

- Learn skills to deal with everyday problems
- Develop a wide range of coping strategies
- Identify and label feelings
- Focus on positive strengths and abilities
- Think for themselves
- Work cooperatively as a class group
An evaluation of the Zippy’s Friends emotional wellbeing programme for primary schools in Ireland

- Cluster RCT (N = 730 pupils and 42 schools)
- Outcome Measures: structured scales, child participatory workshops, Draw-and-Write technique
- Implementation Measures: Teachers’ weekly reports, class observations, review sessions
- Case studies of school context

March 2010
Summary of main findings

- Successful programme adaptation to Irish designated disadvantaged primary schools
- Significant positive effects on children’s emotional literacy, coping skills, hyperactivity and teachers’ relationships with the children
- Improvements in emotional literacy (total scores, empathy, social skills), reduced hyperactivity scores were maintained at 12 months post-intervention follow-up
- Child participatory workshops - improved vocabulary for articulating feelings; Draw & Write technique – more active coping strategies
- No significant effects for children in the “well below/below average” range -> additional support for children with specific emotional literacy and behavioural needs
Twelve months follow-up (Clarke, 2011 Doctoral thesis)

- **Programme Fidelity** – high fidelity (over 90% implementation) positive impact on emotional literacy; low fidelity (less than 75%) no improvements in emotional literacy

  ➢ greater fidelity and better quality implementation leads to better outcomes

- **Positive impact on the Teachers** – increased awareness of children’s emotional wellbeing

- **Limited impact on the whole School** - lack of whole school awareness

  ➢ need for whole school training and parental involvement
The specific contexts of schools participating in the study - contextual factors impacting on local implementation

Two schools – large urban multi-cultural school in an area of multiple disadvantage; smaller mono-cultural rural school on the border region with Northern Ireland

Case study - views of teachers, parents and key community informants
  • different levels of parental involvement
  • socio-economic and cultural factors in the local community
  • community histories and local politics
  • different stages of ‘readiness’

Unique school culture within which programme implementation occurs
• Complex interaction of factors operating at the classroom, school and wider community level

• School culture, environment and **whole school practices**
  - readiness for change (Bumbarger & Perkins, 2008)
  - strategies for school organizational change

• Contextual factors in the local community (Wanders et al., 2007)
  - teacher-parent relationship
  - impact of economic and social factors on parental involvement

• Understanding the organisational and cultural contexts of schools is critical for implementation and sustainability (Rowling, 2008)
Focus on Implementation

• High quality programme delivery

• Establish a supportive implementation system
  - engagement of school management, teachers, parents and students
  - teacher training, resources, organizational support

• Sustainability - organizational and system-level practices and policies that will ensure the long-term impact
Key Messages from Effectiveness Studies

- **Adopt a whole school approach**
  - Health Promoting Schools – principles & process
  - comprehensive evaluation framework of process, impact and outcomes

- **Engage school staff**
  - integrated approach- central to the school’s core mission
  - policy support, training, capacity development

- **Focus on implementation**
  - dynamic change in complex systems
  - not just about ‘plugging in’ discrete programmes
Challenges & Opportunities

- **Partnership** - integrating efforts to promote social and emotional learning of young people with the school’s educational mission of academic learning
- **Leadership** and management
  - over-crowded curriculum
  - adopting a whole school approach in practice
- **Implementation** support infrastructure
  - training and support - both pre- and in-service
  - content and competence → teaching methodologies
  - supportive policies and collaboration across the education and health sectors
Useful Sources

- Payton et al. (2008) The positive impact of social and emotional learning for kindergarten to eight-grade students: Findings from three scientific reviews. CASEL [www.casel.org](http://www.casel.org) or [www.lpfch.org/sel](http://www.lpfch.org/sel)
Useful Sources


