

PDIG 2018

Project Description

As soon as the participating schools confirmed dates when we would be able to meet with them, we arranged to discuss our presentation and workshop elements. On February 6, 2018, we met together and talked about the specifics of how we would give our research findings in the morning, while in the afternoon we would do collaborative activities to get teacher feedback and ideas regarding ABAV plans.

On February 27, we shared the drafts we made for our presentation. We also talked about including quotes from the research participants and the equipment we would need (projector, whiteboard or blackboard, etc.). We set up the order of presentation of the results (parents, children, teachers). We invited the Assistant Director General and the Coordinator of Complementary Services for the school board to attend either of the two presentations.

On March 8 we met to practice our presentation and give each other suggestions.

On March 19 we went to Mary Gardner Elementary School to give our presentation. The Coordinator of Complementary Services attended for the morning session. During the day, teachers made comments that are worth noting. "They (the children) need to see the consequences of bullying. There needs to be follow-up." "[Doing this work] comes from a place of passion – these are MY kids – they're in my heart." "People want the structure but also flexibility – but above all, communication." "We're here to support and help, but we're within the confines of a timeframe and needs." "The balance between sharing and confidentiality can be hard." "We're accountable to parents because we need to be able to explain to them why we use a particular strategy." "Relationship is basic and affects how each situation is dealt with." "There needs to be adaptability in the strategies." The group of teachers recommended that there needed to be specific training regarding bullying and balancing children's and parents' needs for school staff, such as secretaries, because they are often the first line of support within the school. The school team was informed that a report and summary of the day's activities would be sent to each participant in the workshop.

On March 25 we met as a team to review the presentation, and adjusted the format to meet the needs of the other school.

On April 6 we went to Heritage Elementary School to give our presentation. The Assistant Director General sent his regrets. When it became evident from our discussion that food was an important social facilitator for both the children and the adults in the study, teachers made suggestions regarding how this new understanding might work to help form relationships with families. A teacher noted that there were gender differences in how children deal with bullying, for example, it is socially appropriate for boys to get angry but not show sadness when they are bullied. Another teacher pointed out that a child can only ask for help if they feel comfortable or safe with someone. It was mentioned that sometimes at interviews parents will share their challenges and become very vulnerable, but there is not enough time to address the issues that come up, leaving both teachers and parents feeling frustrated. A teacher said that providing extra-curricular activities (ECA) for each child should be a goal, even if it is something outside the box; she mentioned the success of the school's Knitting Club as a good example. Specific ideas to reach out to parents were generated, for example, having the students make videos regarding an anti-bullying concept to post on the school's Facebook page. The teachers felt that for any ABAV

program to work, there needs to be: 1) accountability, 2) one leader for the school who can be a resource person for the program, and 3) the program needs to be integrated into the daily curriculum, with consistent use of the same vocabulary across all sectors of the child's environment (home, school, bus, etc.). It was also felt that a 'one size fits all' approach was not working, and that developmental understanding needed to be addressed in any ABAV preventative program. The school team was informed that a report and summary of the day's activities would be sent to each participant in the workshop.

Project Goals

We wanted to share the findings from our research project that took place over two years (2014-16) with the participating school teams. Although the principals had changed since we had been at the schools, both of them seemed very appreciative of the project findings and the workshop activities. We believe that our five goals were met: 1. Increase their awareness of resilience research based on Photo-Interviews with marginalized populations; 2. Introduce parental and school personnel perceptions of resilience for at-risk children; 3. Hear the voices of at-risk children and their perceptions of resilience; 4. Introduce the practical implications of the study findings; 5. Participate in active discussion groups regarding the implementation of ABAV plans using these new understandings.

Project Outcomes

Several teachers emailed feedback on the workshops.

I truly enjoyed the day we spent, reviewing the Team's findings and observations. It was like taking a trip down memory lane, "back in time" with our former students and their families. It was interesting to hear [the researchers], reiterate our words, spoken & recorded, several years ago. It was validating to hear that The Team sees our daily challenges in & outside of the classroom, once the children go home. I enjoyed [the afternoon] activities the most, toward the end of the day. The activities were collaborative and we were able to really view/ discuss our priorities vs. the realities at [our school]. [These] activities started a process of thinking ... on how we view our career and how we can move forward despite the obstacles we face.

I enjoyed listening to the ladies as they spoke passionately about working with our students, in particular the few home visits they did. In moving forward, the information will help built initiatives for our future activities/events with reference to anti-bullying.

It was wonderful to see how your project had a positive impact on this cohort of students. As we mentioned at the meeting, it would be wonderful to hear how these students are doing now. Were there long -term impacts? Your findings reaffirmed for me the importance of the "extra-curricular" activities in children's lives. Moreover, the most striking piece of information generated from your study was the importance of the library to these children. I think that we could definitely put our library to more use in the future, even in the most simplest of ways, by inviting the students in at lunch to relax and have free reading time. Some children need more "calm" moments in their life where they have the power to choose (a book) and space to relax. I would definitely love to read any and all of the recommendations that are generated from your study. Knowledge=more power/ways to help and intervene with our students in the future.

I would simply like to say that the events that took place throughout the day were very insightful. I particularly enjoyed the discussion on empowering students by allowing them to be the gatekeeper of their homes. It was truly an eye opening testimony when we discussed how the students warmly received someone into their home. I could really grasp how students were keen on mending their home-life and school-life together as one global entity. I found myself asking why there isn't a more vivacious effort to incorporate students' livelihoods in their daily education. In my opinion, students that are keen on sharing their homes with their educational institution will become prone to feeling more like a valuable stakeholder in their school. One element from the meeting that I would like to bring to the forefront would be to improve the perspective that parents have about their children's interactions at school. It really seems that some parents confirmed that they do not feel like they have a very clear view about the strategies that we employ at our school on a daily basis. For example, it was mentioned during the seminar that parents were not aware that there was an anti bullying program in our school. Expressing this information is paramount to how parents perceive our school. If we make a consistent effort to keep parents in the loop it will greatly benefit the programs that we put into place.

Reinvestment

Using findings generated from the original project on *Perceptions of Resilience for Children with Learning Difficulties Who Have Been Involved in Bullying*, teachers were able to reflect specifically on ABAV practices and programs with these students and discovered important insights. These include the need for adaptability, follow-up, and communication within the constraints of time and confidentiality; relationships being the basis of home-school connections (and the need to address parents' vulnerabilities), the need for basic training for all school staff regarding bullying, the importance of ECA for children's belonging, and the need for: 1) accountability, 2) leadership and 3) integrated programs throughout the child's environment appropriate to developmental needs.

Summary

This PDIG grant allowed researchers who had been at two schools in 2014-2016 to present their findings to the school teams who participated in the project. It also allowed for active discussion regarding these findings, and how they may apply to future ABAV planning. Oral and written feedback from the participants indicated that they appreciated hearing about the findings and were very engaged in seeking for appropriate ways to incorporate their new knowledge regarding resilience for at-risk students into their school programs in innovative ways.