

Ecological Model Example

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METHODS

Qualitative Data Collection

Adult interviews and focus groups focused on identifying both outcomes and the processes that generated them. They lasted between 45-90 minutes depending on the availability of the participants at each school. To facilitate triangulated perspective on important areas of interest, there was substantial overlap across adult protocols. At the schools not included in the first year's pilot evaluation, a low-structure approach was used with the following questions scaffolding the discussion: "Where would I see evidence of Hi-Five succeeding? What would I see?" "Who or what contributes to any Hi-Five successes?" and, "How do the following contribute to Hi-Five's successes (with specific components of the hypothesized ecology discussed)?" At the schools participating in the evaluation for a second year the focus was sharpened, with more discussion of outcomes and process in the context of specific ecological components. Student focus groups were similar in both years, lasting one class period with protocols focused on identifying outcomes and gaining perspective on what led students to become more or less engaged with the programming. In both years, additional informal and follow-up interviews were conducted with various adult constituents who volunteered their time.

In addition to the interviews and focus groups, the same researcher observed various environments related to the programming and school (academic and non-academic), as well as aspects of each served school's community. [PROGRAM] presentations of the [CURRICULUM] material were observed at each school, and small-group meetings for targeted "at-risk" students were observed at four of the six served schools. In each, the

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observer noted the following: activities engaged; the coordinator's teaching approach, behavior management skills, and personal engagement with the children; the students' behavior and engagement with the lesson/meeting; physical facilities/resources and the general learning environment; and, where applicable, teacher engagement with the programming. To provide context within which to consider the [PROGRAM] lessons, academic classes were observed; additionally, observation of non-classroom environments included lunch, transitions between classes, recess, and dismissal. In these environments, observations focused most strongly on student behavior, teacher approaches to discipline, and application of [PROGRAM]/[CURRICULUM] skills and approaches in general. Informal observation of the non-school community usually involved a tour of the area around each school guided by [PROGRAM] staff. Finally, parent-focused events were observed at several schools in 2000-01 and 2001-02.

FINDINGS

An Ecological System of School-Based Violence Prevention and Social Skills Education

Through the presentation of qualitative data in response to statistical findings, we have sought to develop a broad, methodologically integrated picture of [PROGRAM'S] coordinators as catalysts for a process of change within the schools they serve and school staff as conductors and potential magnifiers of that effect. Our depiction of this dynamic is supported by both quantitative and qualitative findings that indicated a stronger effect for "Coordinator Efficacy" than "Environmental Receptivity and Support" and a stronger effect for the combined predictor, "Overall Programming Conditions," than for either individual predictor. Where coordinators were more effective the outcomes were more impressive. However, regardless of coordinator efficacy, no major outcomes were

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evident where teachers' and administrators' engagement with the program was severely lacking.

Figure 1 illustrates our understanding of the ecological system created by the partnership between [PROGRAM] and each served school, a potentially self-reinforcing process of school engagement and outcome production. We see the coordinator entering the existing, fundamental school system comprised of administrators, teachers, and students. Into this system, the coordinator introduces [THE CURRICULUM], [A TARGETED SERVICE], personal energy, and all aspects of the programming described above. As indicated by the bi-directional arrows, we found that the effects of this skill and energy initiated a process that connects every constituent in a potentially reciprocating process that can produce compounding benefits for the school. [PROGRAM] and school staff can support and guide students' growth, and, in turn, student outcomes can reinforce teachers' and administrators' support for the program. The coordinator can introduce energy and skills into the system, and teachers and administrators can, in turn, guide and support the coordinator's efforts to tailor services to the schools' needs. The school's environment can conduct the energy of this process fluidly (School One) or even magnify it (Schools Two & Three); it can also impede the flow (Schools Four & Five). If this system is considered the engine driving outcomes at each school, School Six's example suggests that merely teaching the classes fails to even turn the engine over.

Figure 1

Ecological Model Depicting Infusion of Energy and Skill into School through Hi-Five Coordinator

