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Early Risers' Skills for Success

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August, G.J., Lee, S.S., Bloomquist, M.L., Realmuto, G.M., & Hektner, J.M. (2004). Maintenance Effects of an Evidence-based Prevention Innovation for Aggressive Children Living in Culturally Diverse Urban Neighborhoods: The Early Risers Effectiveness Study. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 12(4), 194-205.

Abstract :

Program Description

Early Risers' Skills for Success is an American intervention program in keeping with a preventive approach and intended for students at high risk of developing behavioural disorders. The intervention was focused on teaching strategies aimed at improving student academic achievement and their competency in terms of social skills and control of aggressive behaviour. The program was conducted over a consecutive two-year period during which it was applied on a weekly basis during the summer months. Students were involved in the interventions for 22 days during the first year and 24 days during the second year. The program also provided interventions with parents in order to get them involved in the program by helping them improve their parenting skills.

Assessment

A group of researchers from the University of Minnesota and North Dakota State University assessed the program as part of a longitudinal study conducted over a three-year period. The purpose of this assessment was to see to what extent the acquired social skills and control of aggressive behaviour, along with academic achievement improvement were maintained one year after the program ended.

The sample consisted of two cohorts for a total of 327 primary school students (kindergarten or first grade) from underprivileged environments and with externalized disorders. These students were recruited from ten neighbourhood schools associated with two community centres (Pillsbury United Communities: PUC). The students were divided at random into three groups according to three levels of intervention: 1) no intervention (control group), 2) intervention with students and 3) intervention with students and parents.

The assessment tools have revealed details on child academic competencies (reading and arithmetic) as well as child behaviour as perceived by their teachers and families. All of the assessment tools were administered during each year over the three-year course of this study, i.e. the two-year period during which the program was applied and one year after the program ended. Quantitative analyses were conducted to assess program effectiveness.

Description of Results

Results have shown that at the end of the program after the two-year period, children made significant improvement in their social competencies and school adjustment compared to the control group. However, no significant improvement was noted in academic achievement.

At the end of the third study year, the results were inconclusive with respect to how well control of externalized behaviour and school adjustment had been maintained. Improvement of social skills was the only competency that had been maintained. However, the researchers report a decrease in externalized behaviour in children who had scored highest at the onset of the study. Analyses have also demonstrated a significant correlation between the level of participation in the study and the results obtained when social skills, externalized problems and school adjustment were assessed.

The researchers have recommended further investigation into the strategies that would promote greater participation of study subjects during future assessments of this program.

Links :

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Key Words :

Externalized Behaviour, Aggressiveness, Social Competency, Academic Competency, Parenting Skills, School Adjustment, Guidance, Underprivileged Environments, Behavioural Disorders, Prevention, At-risk Students, Educational Inequalities, Longitudinal Study, Primary School, Elementary School

Monitored Countries :

United States