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### Fostering Resilience in Middle School Students

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# Fostering Resilience in Middle School Students

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## 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

- N=49

	Grade In School	Academic Year	
		2016-2017	2017-2018
6 <sup>th</sup> Graders		13	5
7 <sup>th</sup> Graders		12	13
8 <sup>th</sup> Graders		15	6

### 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.

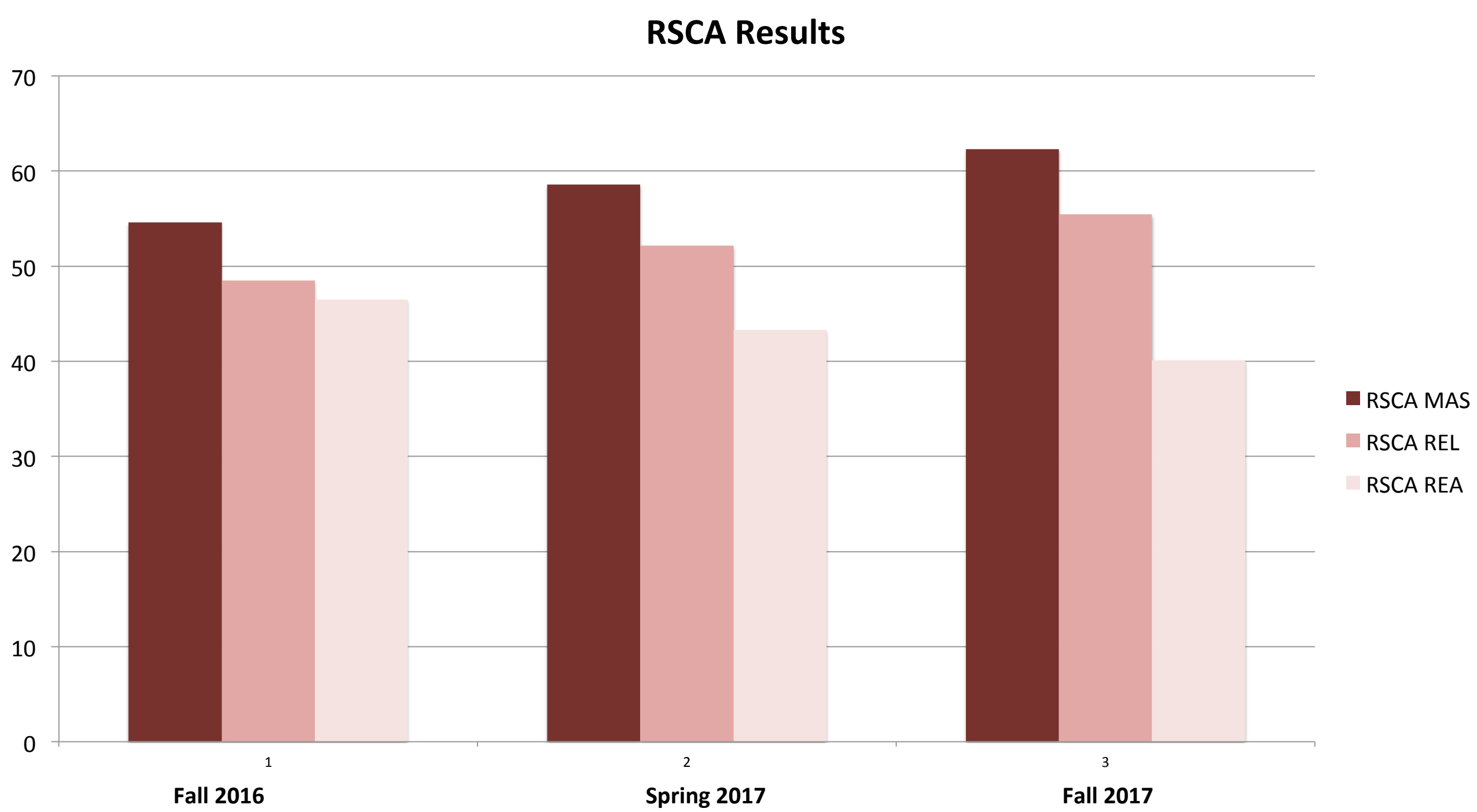
## Method (Cont'd)

### 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. *The Student Support Card* surveys examine the different components of Kaleidoscope Connect. We are specifically interested in the adult support they receive.
- Resiliency Scales for Children & Adolescents (RSCA):*** This standardized self-report measures the attributes of youth ages 9-18 that are important for resiliency. A 5-point Likert scale is used to score the responses, which range from Never to Almost Always. The questions in the scale aim to address three important characteristics:

- Sense of Mastery:** Refers to the opportunity for students to interact with cause and effect relationships in their environment (20 items measuring optimism, self-efficacy, and adaptability)
- Sense of Relatedness:** This score focuses on how the student interacts with their peers (24 items measuring trust, support, comfort, tolerance)
- Emotional Reactivity:** This describes the level of vulnerability and tolerance prior to adverse circumstances in the youth's life (20 items measuring sensitivity, recovery, impairment)

## Results



### Results of Paired Samples t-test

Paired Samples	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. p <.05 (2-tailed)
RSCA MAS T1-T2	-2.333	8.550	1.448	-1.568	32	.127
RSCA MAS T1-T3	-3.867	8.026	2.072	-1.866	14	.083
RSCA REL T1-T2	-1.788	8.184	1.425	-1.255	32	.219
RSCA REL T1-T3	-5.267	7.713	1.992	-2.644	14	.019
RSCA REA T1-T2	1.030	8.586	1.495	.689	32	.496
RSCA REA T1-T3	4.267	7.860	2.029	2.102	14	.054
BESS T1-T2	.710	6.341	1.139	.623	30	.538
BESS T1-T3	1.533	9.899	2.556	.600	14	.558

## Results (Cont'd)

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, “It is easy for me to get upset. “At-risk” students often indicated Almost Always on items included in BASC-3 BESS such as, “I am lonely” and “No one understands me”. These students also endorsed Never on items like, “My parents are proud of me”. At-risk students who had concerning scores were followed up with so that they could receive adequate support for their needs by the school's LCSW.

## Why is Resiliency 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.
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- Lee, T. Y., Cheung, C. K., & Kwong, W. M. (2012). Resilience as a Positive Youth Development Construct: A Conceptual Review. The Scientific World Journal, 2012, 390450. <http://doi.org/10.1100/2012/390450>