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### Fostering Resilience In Youth Through Positive Youth-Adult Relationships

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# Fostering Resilience in Youth Through Positive Youth-Adult Relationships

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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. Resilience, as defined by Ann Masten (2001), is the “phenomena characterized as good outcomes in spite of serious threats to adaptation or development.” 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 the functioning of at-risk youth.

Data from self-report rating scales were used in the current study. These rating scales include the BASC-3 Behavioral and Emotional Screening System (BASC-3 BESS) and the Student Support Card.

Twenty-four 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students participated in the Kaleidoscope Connect Program in the 2016-2017 school year. Of these twenty-four students, seven 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students were flagged as being “at-risk” on the BASC-3 BESS. This project examined how the close adult relationships of these seven students compared to the rest of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in the program.

## Why is Resilience Important?

Promoting resilience in a school setting can help decrease at-risk behaviors such as truancy, substance use, and suicidal ideation/attempts. Resilience may also help reduce the risk of adolescents experiencing mental health conditions when faced with new challenges (Lee et al., 2021).

With an increase in mental health needs during the pandemic, students who previously relied on school staff as a supportive adult have been at a disadvantage during and since the remote learning period. It is important to reestablish those healthy, supportive relationships, especially with the increase in mental health and social-emotional/behavioral concerns since the start of the pandemic.

## Method

- *Kaleidoscope Connect*: This curriculum is comprised of seventeen lessons that are approximately 45-60 minutes long. Each lesson focuses on different areas related to resilience, 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 behavior and emotional strengths and weaknesses of students ages 3-18. The 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.
- *Red Rule of Five Survey (Student Support Card)*: This self-report survey identifies the protective and supporting factors of close adult relationships in the student’s life. Examples of items are listed in Table 1.

## Results

The results indicate that 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students who were classified as being “at-risk” had significantly fewer supportive adults in their lives (2.86 on average per student) compared to those students who were not “at-risk” (6.53 on average per student). Furthermore, three of the students classified as being “at-risk” reported only having one supportive anchor, whereas only one student who was not classified as being “at-risk” reported having one anchor.

On the Red Rule of Five Survey, students classified as being “at-risk” rated their anchors lower on nine out of ten prompts regarding protective and supportive factors than their peers. These supportive factors related to opportunities the anchor provides, the skills they teach, and the expectations their anchors have of them.

## Results (Cont’d)

Table 1.

Red Rule of Five Survey Questions	7 <sup>th</sup> & 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade (%)	At-risk 7 <sup>th</sup> & 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade (%)
Notices and reminds me of my unique talents, intelligences, and reminds me of them often	82	75
Expects me to achieve in school and in life	85	65
Lives in a way that if I follow their example will make me a better person	86	65
Gives me opportunities to have new experiences and learn new things	84	65
Effectively coaches/teaches me the skills I need to be successful in life	84	60
Compliments me when I do the right things right	77	55
Listens to me and learns about my world, my views, and my ideas	77	60
Makes time for me, all the time, no matter what else is happening	49	55
Would do whatever it takes to protect me from harm	74	50
Often puts my needs ahead of their own	51	45

## Recommendations

- Help youth build positive, meaningful connections with supportive and caring adults in the school setting and community.
- Teach students self-care and stress management techniques to help overcome challenges.
- Encourage involvement in extracurricular activities to boost morale and help build positive peer relationships.
- Provide support for parents and families through resources and referrals to support personnel and school staff.
- Help students recognize and appreciate their own strengths and capabilities to bolster self-confidence.
- Reach out to students who had difficulties adjusting to life during the pandemic.
- Assist students in identifying their goals and provide support as they work toward achieving these goals.

## References

Lee, J. A., Heberlein, E., Pyle, E., Caughlan, T., Rahaman, D., Sabin, M., & Kaar, J. L. (2021). Study protocol for a school-based single group pragmatic trial to promote resilience in youth: Building Resilience for Healthy Kids, *Contemporary Clinical Trials Communications*, 21(100721), 2451-8654, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.conctc.2021.100721>.

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