

Brief Report

Kimochis Implementation

Olive Crest Academy

Introduction

The ASCA National Model (2012) calls for the development and implementation of programs that targets students' outcomes including the personal/social arena. Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programming, is a viable, efficient approach, that merits further attention by school counselors and other professionals. Previous studies have depicting the effectiveness and benefits of programming that targets social and emotional learning in school settings (i.e. Durlak et al., 2011; Greenberg et al., 2003; Merrell & Gueldner, 2010; Taylor & Dymnicki, 2007; Zins et al., 2004). Research suggest that children who participate in SEL programming display decreased problem behaviors, academic gains, and overall enhanced SEL skills and mental health (e.g. decreased anxious and depressive symptoms) (i.e. Durlak et al., 2011; Greenberg et al., 2003). Therefore, it appears that SEL programming is a viable option to target the mental health needs of children.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of the Kimochis program in promoting social emotional learning and resilience on a sample of K-12 students.

Method

Design

A quasi-experimental, extended baseline, repeated measures design

was used in this study. The instruments were administered six times: Pre-pretest, Pretest, 3-months, 6-months, and Posttest.

Participants

Eighty-seven (N=87) students (grades K-12) participated in the Kimochis program. For the purposes of this data analysis, data was clustered by grades. Twenty students ($n=20$) comprised the sample for grades K-2; fifty students ($n=50$) comprised the sample for grades 4-6; twenty-one students ($n=21$) comprised the sample for grades 7-8; and fourteen students ($n=14$) comprised the sample for grades 9-12.

The Social Emotional Assets and Resilience Scale (SEARS) is a cross-informant assessment that measures SEL competencies of children and adolescents in the following domains: social competence, emotional competence, social-emotional resilience, coping skills, empathy, problem solving, and self-regulation (Merrell, 2011). Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the SEARS-T ranged from .81-.93.

Intervention

Kimochis is a universal SEL program seeking to increase the social and emotional competencies of children as a form of mental health promotion and problem prevention (Pritchard Dodge & Grimm, 2011).

The Kimochis program is an integrated, strengths-based approach for children that targets five, interrelated, main components:

- 1) **Emotional Quotient (EQ)**- the ability to understand and relate to others in multiple domains, learning primary social skills and friendship skills.
- 2) **Positive Behavior Support**- including conflict resolution skills,

behavioral self-regulation and tolerance.

3) **Communication Skills**

4) **Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)**

5) **Character Education**- refers to the fostering of compassion, empathy, respect, responsibility, and resiliency.

Data Analysis

For this brief report, three separate t-tests were conducted to examine the pre/post-test difference on SEARS-T ratings for grades K-2, 7-8, and 9-12. T-tests were selected due to the small sample size of each grade cluster. However, an ANOVA examining pre/post-test differences was calculated for the 4-6 grade sample because it has a higher sample size ($n=50$).

Kinder-Grade 3

The 20 participants had an average difference from pre-test to post-test SEARS-T of -3.5, indicating the Kimochis program resulted in a significant increase on teacher ratings of student's social emotional learning, $t(19) = -2.69, p = .007$ (one-tailed).

Grades 4-6

A total of 50 students comprised the sample for grades 4-6. A main effect was found on teachers perceptions of students social emotional learning, $F(1, 49) = 26.36, p < .000$. Teachers reported higher scores on the SEARS-T after the completion of the Kimochis program ($M = 17.98, SD = 5.8$) than before ($M = 13.88, SD = 5.94$) starting of the program.

Grades 7-8

The 21 participants had an average difference from pre-test to post-test SEARS-T of -8.1, indicating the Kimochis program resulted in a significant increase on teacher ratings of student's social emotional learning, $t(20) = -6.11, p = .0001$ (one-tailed).

Grades 9-12

The 14 participants had an average difference from pre-test to post-test SEARS-T scores of -2.29, indicating the Kimochis program resulted in a significant increase on teacher ratings of student's social emotional learning, $t(13) = -2.18, p = .024$ (one-tailed).

Discussion

Even though, this preliminary analysis is not in-depth, initial data seems to suggest that teacher's perceptions of students' overall social-emotional skills change between pre and post-test. Indicating, teachers evaluated students as having higher levels of social-emotional skills after the completion of the Kimochis program.

As research suggested SEL competencies could help prevent future mental health and behavioral difficulties (Dymnicki et al., 2013; Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013). Limitations of this study are related to the study design (lack of control group) and selection (pre-selected groups). Future research would benefit from the use of a true experimental design with a randomly assigned control group, and direct measures of social-emotional competence.