

4. Welcoming and Social Support

- a. *School Transitional Environment Project (STEP)*: This is designed to (a) reduce exposure to high risk circumstances and increase exposure to developmentally enhancing conditions, (b) reduce adaptive demands imposed by school transitions by reorganizing the regularities of the school environment to reduce the degree of flux and complexity, and (c) increase resources for students during this time by restructuring the roles of homeroom teachers and guidance staff to provide greater support. Participants were 1,004 students in 4 STEP schools and 761 in 4 non-STEP schools. Results showed that participation was associated with: more favorable school experiences (Perceived Climate Scale); more positive student adjustment; lower levels of school transition stress; greater school, family, and general self-esteem; less depressive and anxiety symptoms (CDI, CMAS); less delinquent behavior (Delinquency scale of the YSR); higher levels of academic expectations; more favorable teacher ratings of behavioral adjustment; and better grades and school attendance.

For more information, see:

Felner, R.D., Brand, S., Adan, A.M., Mulhall, P.F., Flowers, N., Sartain, B., & DuBois, D.L. (1993). Restructuring the ecology of the school as an approach to prevention during school transitions: Longitudinal follow-ups and extensions of the School Transitional Environment Project (STEP). In Jason, L.A., Danner, K.E., & Kurasaki, K.S. (Eds.) *Prevention and School Transitions: Prevention in Human Services*. New York: The Haworth Press,.

- b. *The School Transitions Project*: This Project sought to offer a cost-effective, secondary prevention program for high-risk elementary school students undergoing an unscheduled school transition. The primary goals were to boost high-risk transfers' academic achievement to at least the average level of non-transfer students and to promote transfer students' classroom social adjustment. It was done in 20 inner-city, parochial elementary schools in Chicago. Schools were matched in size and ethnicity. One member of the pair was randomly assigned to either the experimental or control group. All transfer students initially received an orientation program, some received no further intervention, others were provided tutoring at school, and others were provided school tutoring plus parent tutoring. School tutoring was conducted twice weekly by project staff. In the school plus home tutoring condition, parents were trained in tutoring techniques and use of special academic materials. Evaluations were conducted each year for the first three years. In general, those involved in the tutoring program (either at school or at school and at home) made significant academic gains compared to controls. During the first and second year, gains were made in reading, spelling, and mathematics. However, during the third year, significant gains were found only in reading and spelling. Participants also showed significant improvements in coping skills and decreases in social withdrawal and inattentiveness -- especially those in the school and home tutoring conditions where parents were highly involved.

For more information, see:

Jason, L.A., Weine, A.M., Johnson, J.H., Danner, K.E., Kurasaki, K.S., & Warren-Sohlberg, L. The School Transitions Project: A comprehensive preventive intervention. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 1, 65-70.

- c. *Child Development Project (CDP)*: This is a multi-year, comprehensive school-change program that aims to help elementary school children feel more attached to the school community, internalize the community's norms and values, exhibit behavior consistent with norms and values, and reduce their involvement in drug-use and other problem behaviors. The program strives to strengthen tendencies to be caring and responsible, motivation to learn, and higher-order cognitive development. It includes parent involvement activities, staff training, school-wide community building activities, and a cross-grade buddy program. The intent is to integrate children into a school community in which the members are mutually supportive, concerned about one another's welfare, and interested in contributing to the life of the community. Outcomes show that children do see their classrooms as caring communities and that the more they do, the more their social, ethical, and intellectual development are enhanced. They show an increase in pro-social behaviors in grades K-4, and decreased delinquency in schools with the highest level of implementation.

For more information, see:

Battistich, V., Schaps, E., Watson, M., & Solomon, D. (1996). Prevention effects of the Child Development Project: Early findings from an ongoing multisite demonstration trial. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 11, 12-35.

Battistich, V., Solomon, D., Kim, D., Watson, M., & Schaps, E. (1995). Schools as communities, poverty levels of student populations, and student' attitudes, motives, and performance: A multilevel analysis. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32, 627-658.

For project information, contact:

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