Rethinking health promotion in schools: Lessons from the Gatehouse Project

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Overview

- Background
- Results of the Gatehouse Project
- Inside the Gatehouse Project
Different approaches to school and health promotion

- Health promotion/education in schools
- Schools that promote health
- Solution-focused vs problem-focused
Health promotion *in* schools

Transfer of product or program

- focus on single issues - e.g. drugs, sex
- curriculum solutions
  - package - knowledge based, skills based
- short-term, add-on or one-off programs
- not utilise teachers’ professional skills
  - are they implementing programs correctly?
- ignores the context
- sustainable?
Health promoting schools: school as a system

Ecological approach

- focus on the social context
- organisational structure & relationships as well as skills & knowledge
- account for needs, conditions & resources of each school community
- dynamic – change is a ongoing, complex process
- recognises schools have past & future
- interaction between ‘intervention’ & context
From risk focus to resilience - positive youth development approaches

- focus on competencies & environmental change and supports
- yield significant effects on a broad array of outcomes
- have shown encouraging results on academic outcomes
- work equally well for children with and without problems

(Durlak, 2004)
**Curriculum, Teaching and Learning**
- Student centred learning
- Extra curricula opportunities
- Experimental teaching
- Creative and physical activities
- Meaningful learning for students
- Literacy and numeracy
- Career education
- Pre service and in service training
- Experimental teaching
- Creative and physical activities
- Meaningful learning for students
- Career education
- Pre service and in service training

**Cultural and social education**
- Non violent conflict resolution
- Life skills

**Organisation, Ethos and Environment**
- Clean
- Pastoral care
- Resource allocation for health
- Physical activity areas
- Passive recreation areas
- Teachers as role models
- Respects diversity
- Based on social justice principles
- Occupational health and safety
- Shade
- Positive relationships
- Students as decision makers
- Gender inclusive curriculum

**Community Links and Partnerships**
- Health services contribute to school health through: screening, immunisation, education of parents, Expert advice on referral and policy development
- School welfare services
- Alliances formed with health, welfare and local community agencies, physical activity areas
- School community members involved in initiation, development and implementation of school health policies and programs

**Community services**
- Lessons in specialist health areas
- Teacher professional development

**Family support**

**Counselling services**

**Curriculum, Teaching and Learning**

**Organisation, Ethos and Environment**

**Community Links and Partnerships**
Health - Education Interface
An integrated approach
Aim and rationale of the Gatehouse Project

- School-based universal intervention
- To promote emotional well-being & reduce risk behaviours related to this by increasing connectedness in young people
- Focus on risk and protective factors common to health, education and social outcomes
Gatehouse Project

Conceptual framework

© The Conceptual Framework of the Gatehouse Project, Centre for Adolescent Health 1997
Gatehouse project: Promoting emotional well-being in schools

Individual focused approach
- Recognize and normalize emotional responses to life’s ups and downs
- Understanding the link between thoughts and feelings
- Look for alternative possibilities for viewing situations
- Consider and practise alternative possibilities for action

Environment focused approach
- Enhance security
- Enhance communication and social connectedness
- Promote positive regard through valued participation
- Promote positive regard through valued participation
The Gatehouse Project approach

- support engagement & partnership in research
- meet health & education goals
- focus on environmental & individual change
- understand & apply:
  - process of school change, ongoing, complex
  - teaching & learning strategies
  - links between thinking, feeling & acting (CBT)
- develop processes & structures for future action
- integrate strategies with existing practice
What are the key elements of the approach?

- facilitator
- school action team
- local data to review school environment & drive change
- curriculum
- targeted professional development & opportunities for reflective practice
- ongoing process for reviewing, planning, implementing, & monitoring
Stages of the Whole School Strategy

1. Establishment of School Action Team
2. Review current policies, programs & practices in the light of Gatehouse Project Principles
3. Planning evidence-based strategies to enhance security, communication and positive regard
4. Training and implementation
5. Evaluation
This is Doug, he'll be enthusiastic because he doesn't understand how the real world works.

I like to keep my eyes closed the entire time because of my allergies.

This is Alice, she'll leave half off your presentation to take a phone call.

And this is Ted, he gave his two-week notice last week.

This is Wally. He's in a meeting wondering if that's your real hair.

This is Carol. She'll spend the entire meeting wondering if that's your real hair.

Before you energize my team with your proposal, let me introduce everyone.

This is Dilbert. He'll tell you why your idea is impossible.
Engaging & working with schools

- Facilitator or ‘critical friend’

- Align with
  - schools’ local context
  - education/school goals
  - current & changing policies, practices, agendas - education & health
Align with local context: using local data

Students’ perceptions of their school:
  • generate a school profile of risk & protective factors related to connectedness
  • create dialogue, pose questions & explore solutions

Existing records
  • school attendance, suspensions/expulsions, time out room attendance, extra curricular activities etc

Reviewing existing strategies
  • for promoting connectedness, security, communication, & positive regard

Monitor progress
Align with education & school goals

- Integrate strategies with existing practice – what else is going on & how does it join up?

- Understand & apply process of school change to build health promoting practice and culture

- How does this work meet a range of health & educational goals

- Understand & apply process of school change to build health promoting practice and culture
The role of facilitator or ‘critical friend’

guide rather than direct or do
establish relationships & negotiate roles
assist gathering and use of data
support planning and implementation of change strategies
look for opportunities to make links with existing practice and broader context
listen, support, challenge, reflect, enable
keep focus on purpose, process & solutions
make sense of messiness & competing demands
Putting it all together.
What was new about the Gatehouse whole school approach?

- informed by education & health research
- designed to meet health & education goals
- focused on what schools can change - risk & protective factors in school environment
- use of local data
  - for dialogue not diagnosis
  - to prioritise actions
  - to develop context specific responses
- facilitator/critical friend
  - not Technical Assistants/Trainers
  - building relationships, supporting reflective practice
- conceptualised the intervention as a *process of change* not a product or program
Key elements for the individual focus
Teaching for emotional well-being

**Context**
(Environemt-focused approach)

- Classroom climate
- Security and trust
- Communication and social connectedness
- Positive regard through valued participation

**Content**
(Individual-focused approach)

- Skills and knowledge for managing challenges of everyday life

**Engagement & emotional well-being**

**How?**

- Relationships with peers
- Relationships with teachers
- Relationship with learning

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What was new about the Gatehouse approach to curriculum?

- integrated with
  - current curriculum – in English, using text, film etc
  - broader learning context

- teachers were
  - active participants not passively transferring knowledge
  - encouraged to adapt & incorporate basic principles in their teaching practice
  - asked to reflect on pedagogy
    - positive/negative experience of curriculum - content, process, structure, relationships

- not focused on individual knowledge/ attitudes about health behaviours
Evaluation
Cluster randomised controlled trial

16 districts
32 schools

Intervention
12 schools*
1,620
82% response

Control
14 schools*
1,874
71% response

* 4 schools closed or threatened with closure, 2 did not agree to participate
Survey design - student data

Intervention begins

- 1997: Year 8 Baseline
- 1997: Year 8 Wave 2
- 1998: Year 9 Wave 3
- 1999: Year 10 Wave 4

Intervention ends

- 2001: Year 10 Wave 4
- 2002: Post 2ndry school Wave 5

Gatehouse student survey – outcomes

- Socio-demographics

- Social environment measures - students’ perceptions of
  - school engagement, social connectedness

- Health & behaviour outcomes
  - depressive symptoms, deliberate self-harm, substance use

- Educational outcomes
  - completed Year 12, final year score
Implementation and process

Facilitator notes - reflections on implementation

Key informant interviews, annual

School background surveys
  intervention & control schools, annual

Curriculum – teacher use logs, teacher interviews
  implementation & continued use
Findings
School connectedness in Yr 8 and outcomes in Yr 10 & beyond

- Depressive symptoms
- Regular smoking
- Regular drinking
- Marijuana use
- Completed Year 12
- Good tertiary entrance score

Odds ratio
95%CI

Bond et al, 2007 Journal of Adolescent Health
Prevalence of any smoking

Proportion

Control

Intervention

baseline wave 2 wave 3 wave 4
Prevalence of daily smoking

Proportion

baseline  wave 2  wave 3  wave 4

Control  Intervention

0.00  0.02  0.04  0.06  0.08  0.10  0.12  0.14  0.16  0.18
Survey design - student data

Intervention begins

1997
Year 8
Baseline

1997
Year 8
Wave 2

1998
Year 9
Wave 3

1999
Year 10
Wave 4

2001
Post 2ndry
school
Wave 5

2002

Intervention ends

Subsequent surveys
Standardised changes
(Year 8 - 2nd subsequent survey)

Odds ratios

Comparison
Intervention

Analyses adj. for baseline school substance use
Summary of individual outcomes

- No effect on depressive symptoms
- Reduction in prevalence of substance use in intervention students
- Continued decreased risk of multiple health risk behaviours in subsequent Year 8 intervention students
- No change in explanatory mechanisms
Gatehouse schools reported:

Strong sense of partnership in research
  • respected, valued, worked with schools

Valuing of student data
  • from burden & irrelevant to ownership & utility

Useful framework for change
  • opportunity to take risks
  • a lens to review activities & practices

Enhanced capacity for evidence-based change
  • actively seek new research opportunities to continue work

Shift in perception - promoting well-being is ‘core business’ for schools
What changed?

Reflections on Gatehouse 5 years later:

“I think what Gatehouse did at this place that’s had the most long term impact, was it actually forced the teaching staff to look at the way they related to the kids”

(Teacher - Back to Gatehouse)
Summary

Whole school
- conceptualise intervention as an ongoing process of change not a product to be ‘done’;
- facilitating the change process
  - not just training and technical assistance
- bringing an in-depth understanding of educational context not just adolescent health
- assisting schools to integrate this work as core business

Individual focus
- incorporate principles in current curriculum – not new & extra;
- pay attention to learning context
Gatehouse and AHSEP team, funders, website


- Queens Trust, VicHealth, National Health & Medical Research Council, Baker Foundation, Murdoch Childrens Research Institute, Australian Research Council, Catholic Education Office

www.gatehouseproject.com