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ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the degree and quality of program implementation and educational outcomes associated with Kentucky's Family Resource and Youth Service Center, a school-based family resource and support program which emphasized increased involvement of families of special needs students and the community with their schools. Twenty centers serving approximately 2,000 students and their families were visited over a 2-year period. Factor analysis identified five factors that accounted for 88.8 percent of the variance in implementation and outcomes. They were: (1) teachers' knowledge/familiarity with the Center; (2) teachers' active involvement with the Center; (3) family and community involvement with the Center; (4) the Center program's mission focus; and (5) teachers' awareness of Center's mission. In general, teachers' active involvement with the Center was the most consistent positive predictor of educational outcomes. However, family and community involvement with Centers was inversely related to educational outcomes, a finding which suggests that putting effort into enhancing community supports and family connection with them is a long-term strategy that may not show results as immediately as involvement with the school. (DB)

Implementation and Outcome Evaluation of Statewide School-Based Family/Youth Services

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Introduction

School-based family resource and support programs assume that socially disintegrative factors that affect families attenuate the ability of children to fully profit from their educational experiences. The primary focus of these programs is to enhance the participation of families in the educational process and to strengthen the capacity of families to enable children's readiness for learning. Broadly, this is to be achieved by empowering families to access a variety of services and resources, and to forge cooperative links among families, schools, and communities. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the degree and quality of program implementation and educational outcomes associated with program participation of a statewide school-based family support initiative.

Method

Program

Kentucky's Family Resource and Youth Service Center program (FRYSC) is an essential component of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA). Modal staffing of centers consists of a coordinator, an assistant, and various adult and student volunteers. Consistent with other family support programs, their general mission is to reach out and establish connections with families and students, schools, and community agencies; and to establish links or bridges among them, particularly to increase

the involvement of families and the community with schools. They are supposed to carry out their tasks by adapting their services and approaches to local characteristics and resources; to, whenever possible, broker or mobilize community resources, rather than provide direct services; and, to empower families to identify and utilize formal and informal resources to meet their own needs. Family Resource Centers (FRC) serving elementary schools and Youth Service Centers (YSC) serving secondary schools proliferated rapidly to 560 centers in the 1995-96 school year.

Measurement

Qualitative and quantitative methods were used to evaluate these programs. The qualitative methods consisted of half-day site visits to centers that included interviews of coordinators, staff, principals, and parents; observation of center operations; and review of center workplans and other materials. Quantitative methods included teacher surveys, and a computerized management information system that permitted coordinators to collect data on who was served, what services were provided, and what outcomes were associated with participation. Outcomes used in this study were teacher pre-post ratings of the performance of student program participants on 18 educational variables, as well as student progress on KERA levels of academic proficiency.

The goal of the qualitative evaluation was to "open up the black box" and specify program operation variables. Initial impressions of patterns and domains of center programmatic activities evolved into the development of Innovation Components Configuration (ICC) maps (Hall & Hord, 1987) with which we were able to reliably summarize domains of program implementation and levels of implementation in each domain. The domains identified were *Needs Assessment, Relationship With School, Relationship With Community, Relationship With Families, Advisory Council Development, Mission* (improving students' preparedness to profit from their educational experience), *Connectedness,* and *Evaluation.* The first and last domains were not used in this study. Table 1 portrays the Relationship With School domain. By dividing the number of points a center received in a given domain by the total number of possible points in that domain, a domain score was derived. Center implementation could be profiled for each domain and an overall implementation score across domains was also derived for each center. (The complete ICC map and teacher survey are available from the first author).

Subjects/Sites

Twenty centers were visited over a two year period. The centers served approximately 2000 students and their families during this time. This number includes only students and families who were registered as receiving targeted services and does not include families or children who attended one-time programs such as Fall back to school programs, or received one-time referrals. The number of centers and students varied for different analyses as indicated in Table 2.

Analyses

A factor analysis conducted on the 6 implementation domain scores and 11 teacher survey items for each center yielded five factors that accounted for 88.8% of the variance in the 17 constituent variables. The factors are: 1) teacher knowledge/familiarity with center, 2) teacher active involvement with center, 3) center family and community involvement, 4) program mission focus, and, 5) teacher awareness of center mission. These served as our independent variables in prediction equations of the relationship of program implementation to the dependent variables, the 18 educational outcomes. For each of the prediction equations, these latent factors were further condensed into an Overall Implementation

Table 1
Center Relationship With School

1. Connectedness
   1. Negative (turf/hostile).
   2. Uninformed (inappropriate or no requests/referrals)
   3. Customers (school personnel make appropriate requests/referrals; starting to be impressed with center capabilities).
   4. Advocate (enthusiastic about center; see it as needed resource/capability of school).
   5. Team (school works collaboratively with center; buys into the family involvement education mission).
2. Principal support
   1. Negative (either micromanaging or turf/hostile).
   2. Laissez-faire
   3. Supportive/customer
   4. Advocate
   5. Involved/collaborative
3. Principal's attitude toward family involvement
   1 Not open to it
   2 Neutral
   3 Appreciates outreach to families
   4. Promotes family involvement
   5. Has track record and strategies for family involvement.
4. Teacher acceptance of parent involvement
   1. None
   2. Some (very little)
   3. Many (somewhat)
   4. Most/all (very much)
5. Teacher interaction with center
   1. Refer to center: (3) all, (2) most, (1) some, (0) none. (multiply "1" by (#).
   2. Drop by center: (3) all, (2) most, (1) some, (0) none. (multiply "2" by (#).
   3. Participate in center programs/activities: (3), (2), (1), (0). (multiply "3" by (#).
   4. Assist in center programs/activities: (3), (2), (1), (0). (multiply "4" by (#).
6. Perceived effects on school performance
   1. Center is not seen as improving student attendance, classroom performance, or student achievement.
   2. School personnel are unsure about the effect of the center on student attendance, classroom performance, or student achievement.
   3. Center seen as important, but school personnel unsure of impact.
   4. Center is clearly seen as improving student attendance, classroom performance, and achievement.

variable. The relative contribution of each of these factors varied somewhat as a function of the specific educational outcome being predicted. Educational outcomes were computed as a "success rate" for each center, which was a continuous variable consisting of percent of students served by a center who improved on a given educational variable, either by changing yes-no categories in the desired direction or by moving to a higher level in a category. We then applied each of these variables to the data for individuals, grouped by center, and weighted by the number of individuals served by the center. Finally, we assessed the relationship between Overall Implementation and changes in student level of academic proficiency on the KERA tests. For this correlation, we restricted our sample to students who, at intake, were in one of the two lower KERA categories of Novice and Apprentice (accounting for about 80% of the cases) and assessed who moved to either Proficient or Distinguished categories.

Results

The multiple correlations between Overall Implementation and educational outcomes are presented in Table 2. For those variables that are stated in negative terms (e.g. risk, tardiness), the correlation is in a negative direction, as would be predicted. The achievement variable (at/below grade level) is coded inversely, so the correlation is positive. That is, the greater the implementation, the better the gains with respect to achievement. All correlations are significant at the $p< .01$ level. Clearly, the extent to which centers have implemented their programs is positively related to educational improvement among participating students.

The results of the regression equations for each the education variables with the contribution of each of the five factors expressed as beta weights are presented in Table 3. Beta weights are standardized regression coefficients: a measure of how much of a change in standard deviations in the dependent variable is caused by one standard deviation shift in

Table 2
Correlation Between Overall Implementation and Educational Outcomes

Educational Outcome	Multiple R^*	N Students	N Centers
Classroom Variables			
Remains on task	.692	927	18
Obeys rules	.679	493	18
Follows directions	.666	654	17
Completes homework	.604	799	18
Completes classwork	.541	640	17
Tardiness	-.519	212	14
Attends regularly	.295	238	17
Peer Relations Variables			
Relates appropriately	.810	489	17
Cooperates	.705	428	17
Participates	.702	281	17
Has friends	.564	222	18
Risk Variables			
Drop out risk	-.662	903	18
At risk for retention	-.623	472	18
At risk educationally	-.555	447	17
Global Variables			
Achieve above/below grade level	-.570	1020	19
Retained previously	.475	200	17
Academic proficiency (KERA)	.401	1770	17
Grades	.336	885	18

*All Significant at <.001

the predictor variable. In general, teacher active involvement with the center is the most consistent positive predictor of educational outcomes (13 out of 18 significant beta wts. in the expected direction). Family and community involvement by centers, perhaps a proxy for the degree to which coordinators' efforts are expended in this area, is often inversely related to educational outcomes (7 out of 18 beta wts. inversely related to educational outcomes).

The correlation between Overall Implementation and the net change on academic proficiency was .401 ($p<.001$), indicating a significant positive relationship between extent and quality of implementation and improvement on KERA scores. Where FRYSC program implementation was less strong, students tended to rise and fall in KERA categorization in equal numbers. Where program implementation quality was stronger, there was a

Table 3
Relationship (beta coefficients) Between Implementation Factors and Educational Outcomes

Educational Outcome	Teacher Knowledge/ Familiarity	Teacher Active Involved	Family & Community Involvement	Program Mission Focus	Teacher Awareness of Mission
Classroom Variables					
Remains on task	-.046	.167***	-.115***	-.068*	-.048
Obeys rules	.065	.189***	-.122**	-.003	-.102*
Follows directions	.003	.180***	-.070***	-.056	-.040
Completes homework	-.090*	.078*	-.135***	-.086*	-.041
Completes classwork	.017	.114**	-.112**	-.018	-.021
Tardiness	-.011	.017	.014	.091	-.159*
Attends regularly	-.015	.056	-.040	.043	.012
Peer Relations Variables					
Relates appropriately	-.016	.204***	-.103*	-.139**	-.164***
Cooperates	.095	.269***	-.020	-.068	-.064
Participates	.144*	.226***	.027	-.055	-.009
Has friends	.185*	.035	-.067	.059	-.035
Risk Variables					
Drop out risk	.093**	-.161***	-.021	.171***	.044
At risk for retention	.032	-.171***	.109*	.037	.123**
At risk educationally	-.029	-.220***	.001	.000	.034
Global Variables					
Achieve above/below grade level	.103***	-.124***	.075	.012	.118***
Retained previously	-.018	-.109	.117	.172	.013
Academic proficiency (KERA)	.051*	-.003	-.008	-.071	.079***
Grades	.019	-.065*	.069	-.128	.075*

Significant at <.05*, <.01**,<.001***

net improvement of about 15% of students moving to a higher ranking. The number of students involved in this calculation was 1771. The factors that made the largest difference in accounting for this finding were Teacher Awareness of Center Mission, Program Mission Focus, and Teacher Knowledge/Familiarity With Center.

Discussion

The ICC map developed for this evaluation grew out of extensive involvement with centers and collaboration with coordinators who helped to develop it. It appears to have captured important components ("active ingredients") of these innovative programs, as does the teacher survey which assesses "market penetration" in the schools. The results provide evidence in support of the premise of family support programs: that addressing the needs of at-risk children and their families may impact on students coming to school more prepared to learn, and thus enhance educational progress. It would appear that an important strategy for these programs is to establish close working relationships with educators and develop coordinated efforts to addressing students' needs. The finding that community involvement is inversely related to educational outcomes may reflect the fact that putting one's efforts into enhancing community supports and family connection with them, rather than spending more time in the school represents a long term strategy that may not show results as immediately as involvement with the school.

As a field study, there are a number of limitations to this evaluation. One is the fact that these are rapidly expanding, full coverage programs that provide a wide variety of wraparound services to self-selected clients. This makes the securing of control conditions difficult and limits the evaluation to a correlational study. However, the strong findings of relationships between implementation and outcome variables is encouraging and suggests the possibility of replicating the essential elements of these programs under more controlled conditions.

Reference

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