Abstract

Large numbers of America's young people engage in multiple high-risk behaviors that may jeopardize their health and social development. Given the gravity of this situation, many federal agencies and national organizations have called for the implementation of school-based K-12 social competence and health promotion programs. Unfortunately, there is a gap between the comprehensive programs that policymakers are asking educators to implement and the limited scope, duration, and intensity of state-of-the-art health promotion programs that scientists have developed and evaluated. As a result, most schools currently adopt well-marketed programs that lack documented effectiveness. Although this approach is understandable, it is not in the best interest of the students.
effectiveness. Although current research indicates that brief, well-designed, theory-driven competence promotion and health education programs produce short-term benefits, there have been no controlled, longitudinal field studies to evaluate the long-term effects of K-12 efforts. This paper proposes that policymakers and funding agencies support long-term collaborations among educators and scientists to develop and evaluate K-12 comprehensive social competence and health education programs and identifies critical issues that funded projects should address.

Health promotion programs; Prevention; School-based interventions; Social competence programs

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