



NUI Galway
OÉ Gaillimh



HPRC
Health Promotion Research Centre

Implementing Mental Health Promotion in Schools

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Successes in Integrating Mental Health Promotion in Schools: Policy Agenda

- Growing recognition of the importance of the social and emotional wellbeing of young people (OECD, 2015)
- School is an important setting for promoting positive development of young people
- Increasing focus on social and emotional learning within the educational system
 - building academic success on social and emotional skills development
- Collaboration across the education and health sectors

Successes in Integrating Mental Health Promotion in Schools: Research

- Substantive body of research demonstrating the positive impact of school-based programmes on health and educational outcomes
- Students' mental health and wellbeing (Durlak et al., 2011; Weare & Nind, 2011):
 - enhanced social and emotional skills
 - improved attitudes towards self, school and others
 - enhanced positive social behaviours
 - reduced conduct problems – aggression
 - reduced emotional distress – stress and depression
- Students' educational outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011):
 - improves ability to learn – delivered by teachers
 - to achieve academically (+11 percentile higher on standard tests)
 - skills that enhance capacity for positive development

Successes in Integrating Mental Health Promotion in Schools: Research

- Schools can provide a supportive environment for promoting positive mental health and wellbeing
 - universal and targeted interventions (Weare & Nind, 2011)
 - benefits for children at higher risk (Weare & Nind, 2011)
 - reaching out to families living in poverty and areas of conflict (Barry et al., 2013; Tol et al., 2011)
- *comprehensive programmes that target multiple health outcomes in the context of a coordinated whole school approach*

Successes in Integrating Mental Health Promotion in Schools: Practice

- Efforts to integrate social and emotional learning within the educational curriculum
 - Development of a large number of programmes
 - Articulation of the principles and process of implementing a whole school approach
 - Implementation support structures
 - teacher training and support
 - development of resources
- *supportive policies and whole school practices*
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Gaps in the Evidence Base

- The bulk of the evidence is drawn from highly structured programmes delivered in a systematic way lending themselves to RCT designs
 - discrete ‘packaged’ classroom-based programmes
 - demonstrate positive outcomes for students
- Whole school approach – focus is on effecting systems change rather than discrete interventions
 - emphasis is on the school ecology as a focus of interventions
 - process oriented – flexible, less prescriptive approach to implementation
 - less outcome oriented research

Adopting a whole school approach

Context, content, capacity

- Context – school setting and whole school practices in effecting change; parental and community involvement
- Content- what is to be implemented, programme strategies
- Capacity – how it is to be implemented – skills & resources required



- *shift from discrete programmes to organizational and system-level practices*

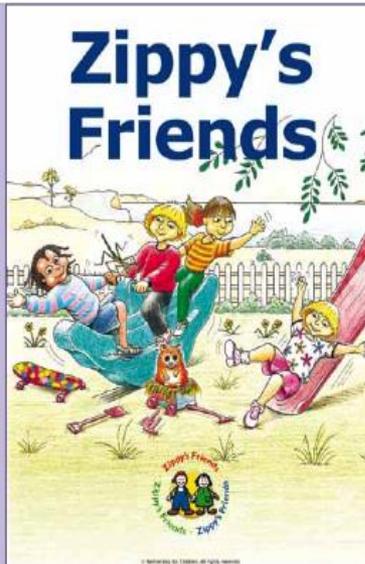
Factors Influencing Implementation

- Characteristics of the intervention
- Characteristics of the implementer
- Characteristics of the intervention recipients
- Delivery system – organisational capacity
- Support system – training and technical assistance
- The setting or context in which the intervention is being implemented

➤ ***complex interaction of all these factors***

(Chen, 1998; Fixsen et al., 2005; Grennberg et al., 2006; Greenhalgh et al., 2005)

An evaluation of the *Zippy's Friends* emotional wellbeing programme for primary schools in Ireland



- Cluster RCT (N =730 pupils and 42 schools)
- Outcome Measures: structured scales, child participatory workshops, Draw-and-Write technique
- Implementation Measures: Teachers' weekly reports, class observations, review sessions
- Case studies of school context

Clarke, Bunting & Barry (2014) *Health Education Research*, 29, 786-798

Aleisha M. Clarke and Margaret M. Barry.

Health Promotion Research Centre,
National University of Ireland Galway.

March 2010



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What works in enhancing social and emotional skills development during childhood and adolescence?

*A review of the evidence on the effectiveness of school-based and out-of-school programmes in the UK
2015*

Aleisha M. Clarke, Silvia Morreale, Catherine-Anne Field,
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Unpacking the Whole School Approach: Need for Further Research

- Understanding whole school practices- organizational and cultural contexts of schools (Samdal & Rowling, 2013)
 - School leadership
 - Readiness for change
 - School context - strategies for organizational change
- Complex interaction of factors -classroom, school and wider community level (Wanders et al., 2007)
 - impact on teachers – attitudes, skills, motivation, wellbeing
 - parental involvement; teacher-parent relationships
 - contextual factors in the local community – social and economic factors

Advancing Evidence Informed Practice

- More comprehensive evaluation approaches
 - assess context, content and capacity
- Systematic implementation research
 - capture dynamic change in complex systems
- Systems research assessing synergistic interactions and outcomes of interventions and systems at different levels
 - *methodologies that will capture the complexity of the whole school system*

Advancing Evidence Informed Practice

Sustainability

- moving beyond short-term discrete programmes
 - strengthening organizational capacity – training, support resources; engagement of school management and staff
 - parental participation
 - involvement of community supports and services
- *embedding organizational and system-level practices and policies that will ensure long term impact*

Challenges for Effective Implementation

- Shift in focus from programmes to systems
 - Strengthening the school's capacity as a mental health promoting setting
 - Partnership approach across health, education, employment and community sectors
 - New research and practice paradigms
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