

**Developing Resiliency in Children
A School-wide Program**

JODI GOODRICK

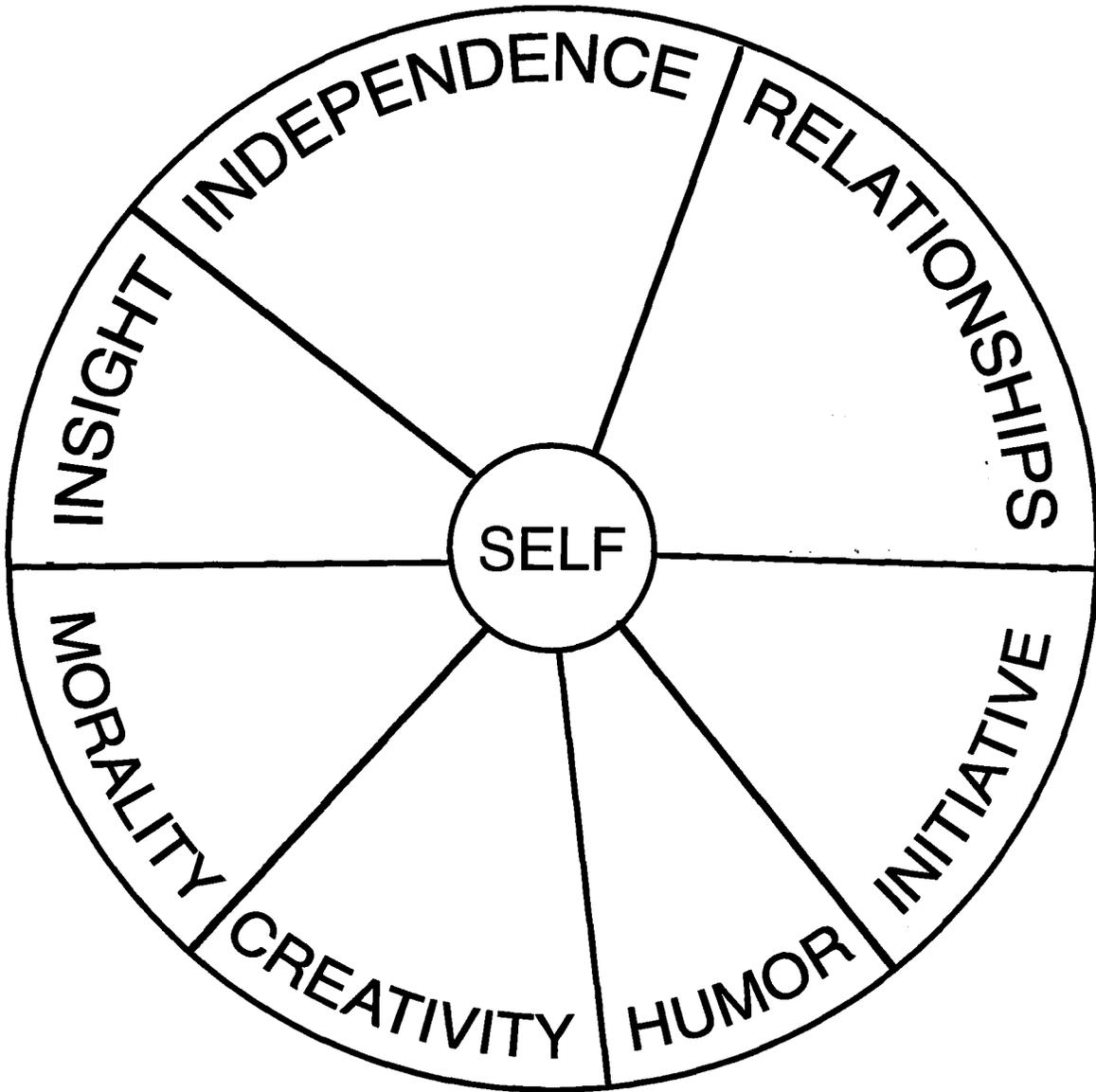
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The Resiliency Mandala



Steven & Sybil Wolin

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ABSTRACT

This research project addresses the area of Resiliency, specifically, “Why do some children in high risk circumstances develop resilience and bounce back from adversity while others fail to thrive? Further, what could educators and schools as a whole do, if anything, to help those that appear to be having difficulty coping with their life situation?”

Initially, I had wanted to develop a ‘program’ to help children develop resiliency traits. However, as I began to study the literature and work on research in this area I discovered that resilience could not be taught through a ‘program’ but rather it was a ‘process’ of empowerment for children to learn from. As a school we determined that we had to restructure to assist kids in their personal development. We were quickly becoming understaffed and unable to meet the demands of all students so we tried to develop pro-active programs aimed at helping all kids. This research first addresses resiliency and what it is and then discusses one’s school’s way to enhance and develop resiliency in students.

As educators we need to understand the stresses that are part of children's lives, we must move beyond a focus on the "risk factors" and problems in order to create the conditions that will facilitate children's healthy development (Benard 1991). The various programs that make up the Lacombe Upper Elementary School program are designed to be pro-active programs that are taught holistically and emphasize self-esteem building. If we are able to enhance self-esteem and competence, then we are able to develop resiliency (Benard 1991).

In the studies that have been done on resilience it is concluded that kids who overcome adversity better than others tend not to seek out formal professional or institutional help. Instead, they turn to people they have grown to trust because they see them regularly, such as teachers, school counsellors, ministers, grandparents, and friends. The research also shows resilient kids have an uncanny ability to make school a refuge from society's ills (Bushweller, Kevin 1995). Increasingly, schools are becoming more important to kids and for different reasons. Schools today have to be more than a place to learn the three R's. In many instances the school is the students second home and increasingly one that is preferable to their own. In order to meet the changing needs of kids we must restructure our schools to promote healthy human development while teaching!

Firstly, we must ask what is resiliency? When discussing my research with both

educators and non-educators I was astounded at the number of people who did not know what it meant in relation to education. Below are a few definitions that I have come across through research. Personally, I believe that resiliency is the ability to bounce back from adverse circumstances and to develop into a healthy individual.

Resiliency:

“The capacity to spring back, rebound, successfully adapt in the face of adversity, and develop social competence despite exposure to severe stress.”

(Rivkin and Hoopman, 1991)

“Is the capacity to ‘bounce back’ in spite of significant stress or adversity.”

(Manghan, Colin et al., Resiliency: Relevance to Health Promotion, Discussion Paper, 1994)

“Describes the ability to manage or cope with significant adversity or stress in ways that are not only effective but may result in increased ability to respond to future adversity.”

(AADAC, A Vision for the Future, 1995)

“Is the ability to recover quickly from illness, change or misfortune.”

(Webster’s Dictionary)

“Is the capability of individuals, families, groups and community to cope successfully in the face of significant adversity or risk. This capability changes over time, is enhanced by protective factors in the individual system and the environment, and contributes to the maintenance and enhancement of health.”

(Manghan, Colin et al., Resiliency: Relevance to Health Promotion, Discussion Paper, 1994.)

“The capacity for, or the outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances.”

(Masten, et al, 1990)

Resiliency is the ability to function successfully in spite of life’s challenging, stressful or threatening circumstances and can be characterized in several ways:

1. Resiliency is dynamic and changeable, not a static condition.
2. Resiliency is contextual or situational, adaptive behaviour in one context may be mal-adaptive in another; or a person may be able to cope and demonstrate resiliency in one situation, and not in another.

3. Resiliency is the result of inherent personality characteristics interaction with environmental factors.
4. Resiliency is not simply a characteristic but a capacity for coping, which becomes evident only when exercised.
5. Resiliency operates on multiple levels, we can talk of the 'resilient' individual, family, community, etc.
6. Resiliency can be learned.
7. Resiliency deals with the balance between risk; stress and adversity, on one hand, and protective factors; the ability to cope and availability of support on the other hand. Although stress and adversity provide an opportunity and context in which to develop resilience, the focus of the resiliency concept is on the development of positive functioning and supportive resources at the individual, family, peer group and community level.

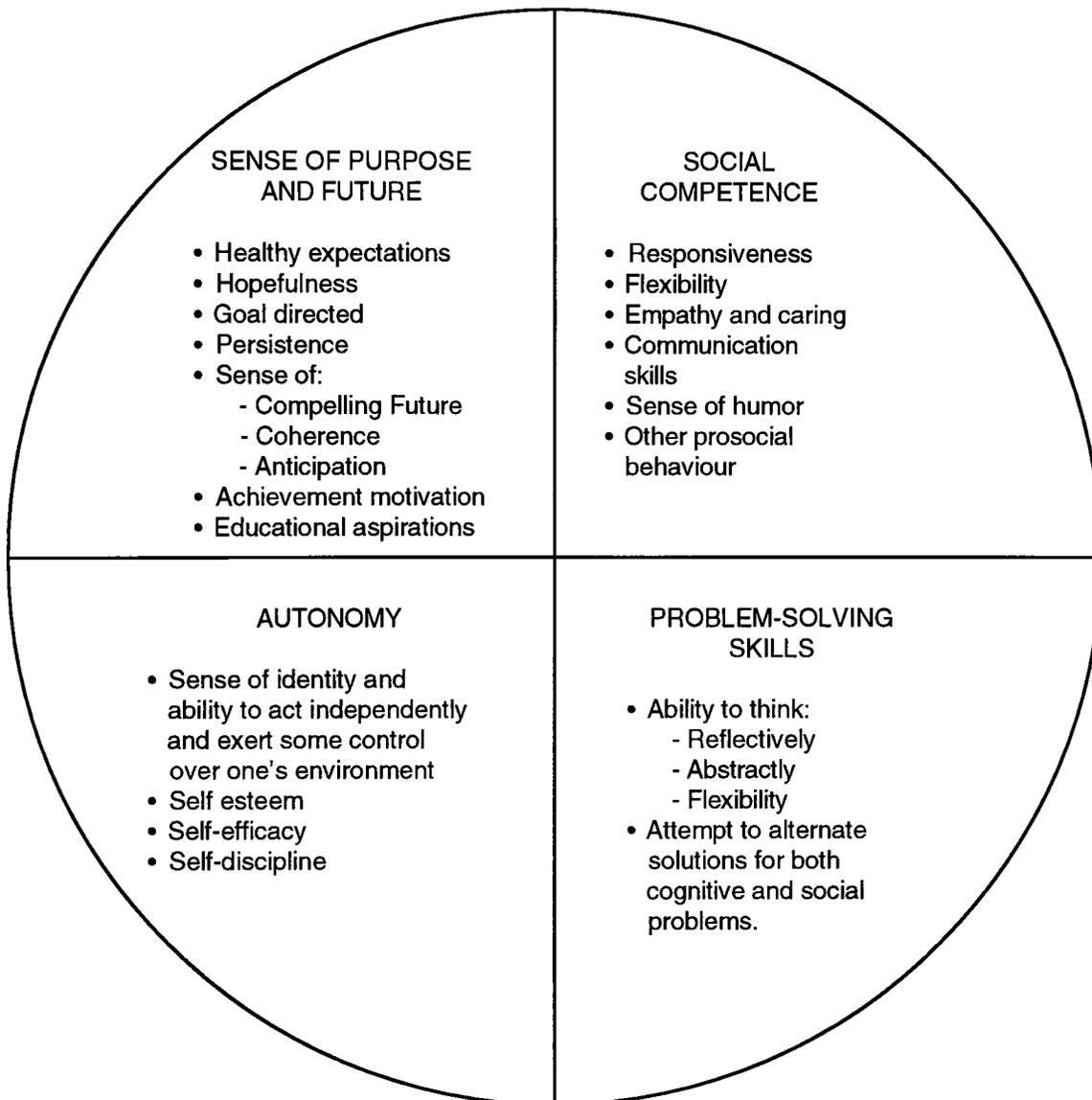
Rather than a focus on “pathology” and labels, resiliency focuses on human development, challenges and “opportunity”. Resiliency traits in people could be

equated with mental health in an individual.

(Kocay, Debbie, AADAC Youth Services, Alberta.)

Historically, much attention has been focused on children that we consider, “at risk”, especially children who face poverty, neglect, abuse, physical handicaps, war or the mental illnesses, alcoholism or criminality of their parents. However, researchers have found that while these children do develop more problems than their peers who did not live with these circumstances, a high number of them become healthy, competent adults. A study conducted over a period of 38 years, by researcher Emmy Werner, of the children of Kauai found that one third of the children having four or more risk factors during their childhood were doing fine by adolescence. By age 32, two-thirds of the children who did develop problems during adolescence were leading successful adult lives (Werner and Smith,1992).

Profile of the Resilient Child



Benard, 1991

Figure 1 - Profile of the Resilient Child

The Kauai Study:

When discussing resiliency the main study referred to is the Kauai study conducted by Emmy Werner, Ruth Smith and colleagues from the University of California at Berkeley. This was a 30 year longitudinal study of 698 infants born in 1955 on the Hawaiian island of Kauai. The researchers were assessing the long-term consequences of prenatal and perinatal stress and were documenting the effects of adverse conditions on the children's physical, cognitive and psychosocial development (Werner et al., 1989). They were particularly interested in discovering the factors that helped certain children among a high-risk group of 201 to become resilient and to go on to develop healthy personalities, stable careers, and rewarding, fulfilling interpersonal relationships.

Two thirds of the 201 children demonstrated extensive learning and behavioural problems. These youngsters were particularly vulnerable, having encountered at least four developmental problems, such as parental alcoholism or mental illness, limited parental formal education, and problematic child-rearing behaviour and abuse. About one-third of this high risk population became competent, well-functioning young adults, and their development was the focus of the study. Why did these youngsters develop into well-balanced, well-integrated young adults, while their peers and siblings failed to thrive? (Burger, J, Dowling College, 1997) Childhood temperament

seems to be intertwined with the development of resiliency traits. Some of the children seemed naturally easy-going and even tempered which would inevitably make them easy to be with. These qualities elicit positive responses from others thus helping them to develop positive interpersonal relationships with others.

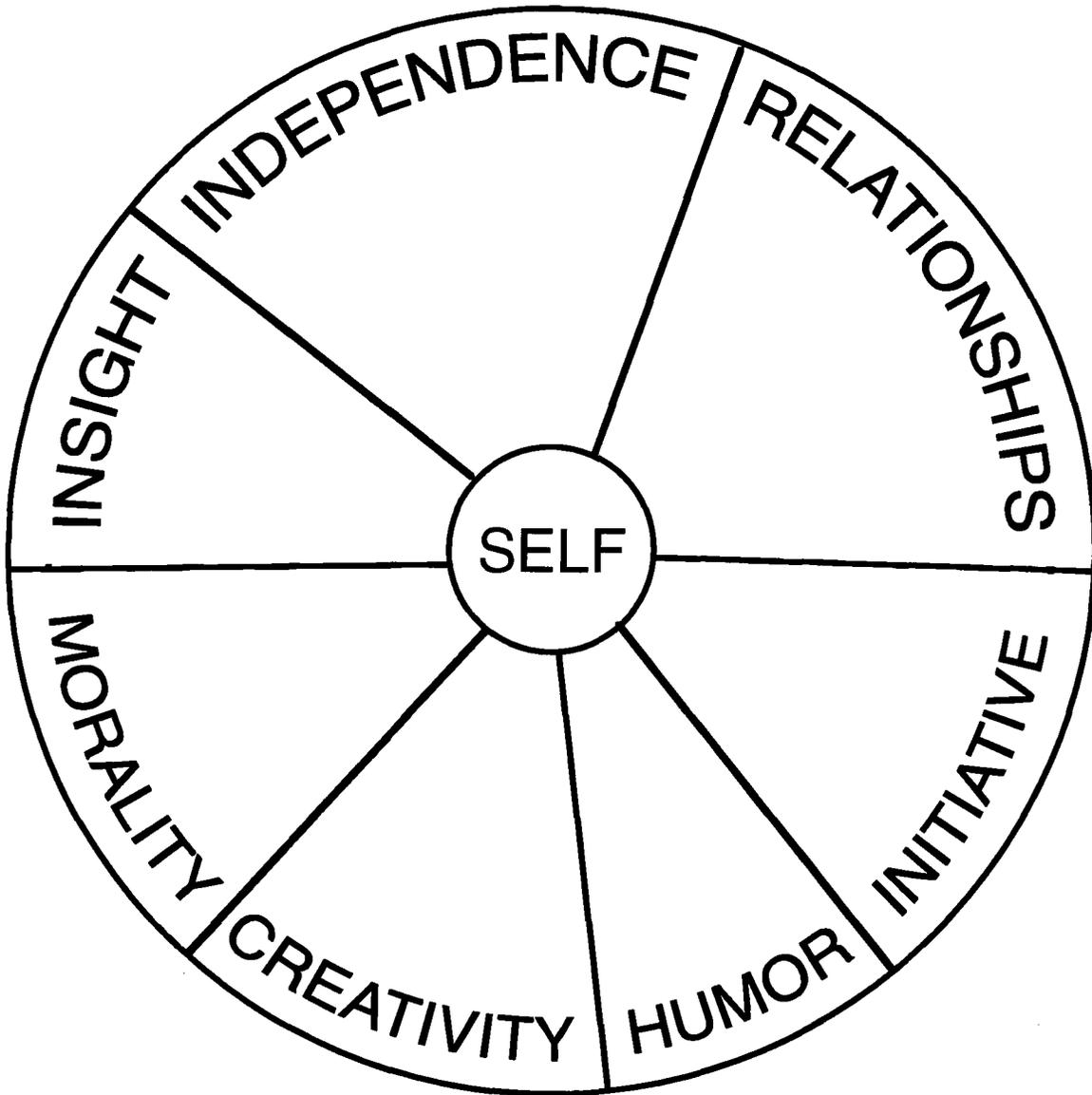
In school these children were described as being alert, responsive and willing to ask for assistance when needed. They could focus and concentrate on what was being taught and therefore were able to learn academic task such as reading. They could also make decisions and problem solve with interactions with both adults and their peers.

Other environmental factors that seem to have been influential in the resilient children's lives include: a) living with families who had four or fewer children and in which the resilient children's siblings were at least two years younger or older; b) being nurtured by substitute parents within the family when biological parents were unavailable; c) developing a sense of autonomy and responsibility by girls whose mothers were either employed or often caring for other children; d) being firstborn sons who shared in family responsibilities; e) living with clearly defined household rules and standards, chores, and routines; f) having hobbies and at least one close friend with whom to share both good and bad feelings; g) school was a valued experience and teachers were significant to the child.

Further, among the most frequently encountered positive role model in the lives of the children of Kauai, outside of the family circle, was a favorite teacher. For the resilient youngster a special teacher was not just an instructor for academic skills, but also a confidante and positive model for personal identification (Werner 1990). Further documenting the power of a caring teacher is Sarah Moskowitz's 30 to 40 year follow-up study of childhood survivors of the Nazi Holocaust. Following World War II, children from concentration camps and orphanages were sent to a therapeutic nursery school in England. All 24 of the resilient survivors "considered one woman to be among the most potent influences in their lives-the nursery school teacher who provided warmth and caring, and taught them to behave compassionately," (Moskovitz 1973).

It is felt that the combination of these factors and the even tempered nature of the child enabled the child to develop a strong sense of self despite adversity. However, it also strongly reinforces the importance of a significant adult in the life of a child can help to foster personal growth and resiliency. It also brings into question the fact that if we could teach other children how to develop some of these qualities then they too might become more resilient when faced with adverse circumstances (Burger, J, Dowling College, 1997).

The Resiliency Mandala



Steven & Sybil Wolin

Figure 2 - The Resiliency Mandala

THE RESILIENCIES

Brief Definitions

INSIGHT: The habit of asking tough questions which pierce the denial and confusion in troubled families.

INDEPENDENCE: Emotional and physical distancing from a troubled family, which keeps survivors out of harm's way.

RELATIONSHIPS: Fulfilling ties to others that provide the stability, nurturing and love that troubled families do not give.

INITIATIVE: A push for mastery that combats the feeling of helplessness troubled families produce in their offspring.

CREATIVITY: Representing one's inner pain and hurtful experiences in art forms; "building a new world on the ruins of the old."

HUMOR: The ability to minimize pain and troubles by laughing at oneself.

MORALITY: An informed conscience which imbues the survivor surrounded by “badness” with a sense of his or her own “goodness.”

Wolin & Wolin

Project Resilience 1997

Using a survey directed towards understanding resiliency I chose to interview twenty adults who are considered to be and consider themselves resilient adults. All twenty respondents experienced some type of dysfunction in their childhoods ranging from severe alcoholism in the family, mental illness, divorce, verbal, physical and sexual abuse as well as foster care. The survey included the following people:

Survey Demographics

Twenty adults between the ages of 19 and 47 (twelve females and eight males.)

Positions held in the family include:

Youngest - seven

Middle - Five

Oldest - Eight

There were many common traits found while analyzing these surveys. Many of the respondents have some or all of the traits identified as one of the seven resiliency traits. Seventeen of the twenty identified their mother or a sibling as their primary care giver, (all twelve of the middle and youngest identified their siblings as care givers). Second to this was grandparents. Further, each person identified one or more non-related adults as having a significant influence in their lives. Eighteen of the twenty respondents identified particular teachers from primary, junior high and high school as adults that influenced their lives. Seven of the respondents identified that a teacher had significantly influenced them.

The importance of temperament as a child has been highlighted by the experts in the field. It was interesting to note that of the twenty respondents several did not have any recollection of how they were viewed by their parents as a child. They assumed from this that they were probably easygoing children. Three of the respondents were told how easy they were to deal with as children. Whereas, one of the respondents recalls being sick all the time. However, this was a youngest child and he was mainly taken care of by his older siblings.

Traits of independence was significant in this particular group. Several of the respondents have physically distanced themselves from their parents. However, many remain close with their siblings. Most of these adults feel that they have

satisfactory relationships with their parents now that they do not have to deal with them on a daily basis. They also feel that they have, 'let go,' of the past and gone forward and stated that although old memories haunt them they try to put them in perspective and try not to dwell on the negative.

All were goal oriented people who were easily able to discuss short and long term goals that they had for themselves both personally and professionally. There is a strong sense of mastery in these respondents lives. Eleven of the twenty hold one or more University degrees, seven have technical courses and two had not completed high school but have successful businesses. The majority work in the helping professions of Education, Social Work, Nursing, Law Enforcement and Counselling. The business owners both run retail businesses.

All respondents displayed a serious and humorous side to them. Humor and the ability to laugh at themselves was seen as a stress reliever. Many also commented that they use coping skills learned in formal education and training seminars to reduce stress. Physical activity was also a high priority for many and seen as a stress reducer. Respondents said they liked themselves and considered themselves to be happy people that others liked to be around. Interestingly two of the respondents said that they did not always like their behaviors or actions but that they were able to differentiate between liking themselves and disliking their actions. Many said that they

did not start to like themselves until they were young adults. These types of insights were evident in several ways throughout the survey questions.

All twenty of the respondents came from varying degrees of dysfunction. Some had strong support from extended family members, some from siblings and almost all from a teacher somewhere in their lives. All felt that at one time they were on the wrong path in life but through their own resiliency, determination and in many cases support from adults in their lives helped them to get back on track and turn their lives around.

These respondents displayed traits of resiliency. Their lives were not without pain, strife and difficulty but none of them display the problems of their parents today. These people have shown creativity, insight, independence of self and are healthy, progressive individuals capable of having good interpersonal relationships.

Domains of Resilience

Three interrelated domains influence the presence of resilience, namely, the child, the family, and the larger social environment.

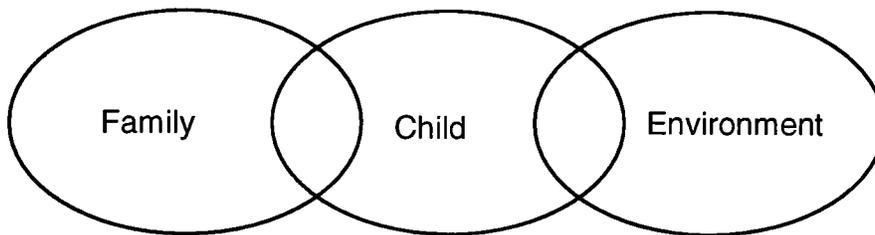


Figure 3 - Domains of Resilience

Child:

Temperament seems to be a key resource for resilient children. Children reported to have a happy temperament as an infant elicit more positive responses from care givers; in addition, they appear to have higher intelligence, more advanced problem solving skills, cognitive-integrative abilities, social skills and coping strategies. Further, resilient children appeared to maintain a high level of self esteem, a realistic sense of personal control, and a feeling of hope. Werner stated that , the central component in the lives of resilient individuals that contributed to their effective coping in adulthood appeared to be a feeling of confidence that odds can be surmounted (Werner 1993).

Family Climate:

Not unexpectedly, resilient children are more likely to come from home environments characterized by warmth, affection, emotional support and clear-cut and reasonable structure and limits (Werner 1993). However, it is a reality that not all children are fortunate enough to live in such an environment. Many homes are characterized by family discord, hostility, and a lack of warmth and understanding and are less likely to produce resilient children. However, the presence of other family members can provide a more suitable and positive climate.

Social Environment:

Grandparents, other extended family members, friends, community groups and agencies can provide support that is absent in the home (Werner 1993). Similarly, questionnaire results indicate that many resilient adults identified a parent, teacher or other significant adult in their life who believed in them and that was helpful to them as they were growing up. "Schools have been highlighted as institutions that can offer children experiences that enhance their self-esteem and competence, thereby reinforcing resilience" (Brooks 1991).

It is obvious that many factors residing within the child, in the family, and in the larger social environment interact in an ongoing and dynamic way to determine whether early vulnerabilities give way to a life of productivity, success and happiness

- a life truly characterized as resilient - or whether these vulnerabilities intensify, resulting in a life punctured with disappointment, despair and ongoing failure. As these factors are articulated more precisely, increasingly effective programs can be developed and implemented for harnessing the unique strengths of individual children (Brooks 1994).

Protective Factors

The characteristics of family, school and community environments can elicit and foster the natural resiliency in children. These are identified as “protective factors,” which is a term that refers to the characteristics of environments that appear to alter or even reverse potential negative outcomes and enable individuals to transform adversity and develop resilience despite risk, comprise three broad categories.

The first protective factor is caring relationships which convey compassion, understanding, respect and interest are grounded in listening and establish safety and basic trust. The presence of at least one caring person in a child’s life and who cares for them unconditionally provides support for healthy development and learning. Werner and Smith’s study over forty years showed that, among the most frequently encountered positive role model outside the family was a favorite teacher.

The second category is positive and high expectations. High expectation messages communicate not only firm guidance, structure and challenge but, and most importantly, convey a belief in the youth's innate resilience and look for strengths and assets as opposed to problems and deficits. Research shows that schools that establish high expectations for all youth, and give them the support necessary to achieve them, have high rates of academic success. Through relationships that convey high expectations, students learn to believe in themselves and in their futures, developing the critical resilience traits of self-esteem, self-efficacy, autonomy and optimism (Benard 1991).

Thirdly, are opportunities for meaningful participation and contribution include having opportunities for valued responsibilities, for making decisions, for giving voice and being heard, and for contributing one's talents to the community. Participation, like caring and respect, is a fundamental human need (Benard 1991).

Along with other educational research, research on resilience gives educators a blueprint for creating schools where all students can thrive academically and socially. Research suggests that when schools are places where the basic human needs for support, respect, and belonging are met, motivation for learning is fostered. When a school redefines its culture by building a vision and commitment on the part of the whole school community that is based on the above three critical factors of resilience,

it has the power to serve as a “protective factor” for all students and a beacon of light for youth from troubled homes and impoverished communities (Benard 1991).

The Internal Protective Factors

These are individual characteristics that facilitate resiliency:

1. Gives of self in service to others and/or cause.
2. Uses life skills, including good decision making, assertiveness, impulse control, and problem solving.
3. Sociability/ability to be a friend/ability to form positive relationships.
4. Sense of humor.
5. Internal locus of control.
6. Perceptiveness.
7. Autonomy/Independence.
8. Positive view of personal future.
9. Flexibility.
10. Capacity for and connection to learning.
11. Self-motivation.
12. Is “good at something”/personal competence.
13. Feelings of self-worth and self-confidence.
14. Personal faith in something greater;spirituality.

The External Protective Factors

These are characteristics of families, schools, communities, and peer groups that foster resiliency:

1. Promotes close bonds.
2. Values and encourages education.
3. Uses high warmth/low criticism style of interaction.
4. Sets and enforces clear boundaries (rules,norms, and laws).
5. Encourages supportive relationships with many caring others.
6. Promotes sharing of responsibilities, service to others, "required helpfulness".
7. Provides access to resources for basic needs of housing, employment, health care, and recreation.
8. Expresses high, realistic expectations for success.
9. Encourages goal setting and mastery.
10. Encourages pro-social development of values (like altruism), and life skills (like cooperation).
11. Provides leadership, decision making, and other opportunities for meaningful participation.
12. Appreciates the unique talents of each individual.

(Adapted from Resiliency in Schools: Making it Happen for Students and Educators, by Nan Henderson and Mike M. Milstein, Corwin Press, 1996)

Personal Testimonial

Similarly, the testimonial of an adult resilient child supports many of these factors. The following is the culmination of an interview with Karen, an adult who experienced an adverse environment while growing up and considers herself to be a resilient person:

I was told that I was even tempered, funny and humorous as a child. I was often very independent and could entertain myself for hours. I was very undemanding of adult time and seemed quite self-sufficient from a very young age. I was also very fortunate that I did not have any significant health problems, learning problems, and generally seemed quite happy and well adjusted. People took to me and I reveled in any attention that I received, especially positive attention.

However, home was often frightening and beyond my control. My father was an alcoholic and it seemed that him and my mother were always fighting. On top of this my mom would go into depressions for days on end. At this time I was left to care for my siblings. When my dad would come home late and drunk I learned to see it coming. The later it got the more agitated my mom got. I learned to see these signals of distress by the time I was nine years old and would accommodate accordingly. I would make supper, do dishes, entertain my siblings and get them out of the way when

dad finally arrived. We often made ourselves scarce in our room playing games or reading stories.

This lasted until I was about 15 years old and then my mother took us and left my dad. Although at the time it seemed like a good idea this created a whole set of new problems for mom. Dad never paid his child support, he'd often call or come over after a night (or day) of drinking. Mom took two jobs and I was left to do everything. Eventually, I got a part-time job too and my siblings kind of took care of themselves.

With the turmoil and uncertainty at home school became my sanctuary. Most of the teachers were consistent, fair and seemed caring. If you did your work and listened well no one yelled at you. In fact very few teachers yelled and often when they did it was aimed at someone who deserved it! Although I don't think it really helped all that much. Nevertheless, I liked the stability of the daily routine. I was a good student and worked hard and was rewarded by the teachers for this. They said I had a strong work ethic. School was a positive sane place and I embraced it. I started to take extra work home to do so I could feel the security of school at home.

In my high school years one teacher took a real interest in me and constantly challenged and encouraged me. He was the phys-ed teacher and he helped me to excel in sports. I was very athletic and did well in almost any sport I tried. I started

exercising and getting fit. I developed a passion for this and still am active today. I didn't realize it at the time but being active was probably a great stress reliever for me. I also loved being an important part of a team. I was particularly good at basketball and loved the sense of belonging I felt while participating in this.

When I finished high school I was feeling very together at school. However, home was not very good. Mom was going through difficult times, finances were strapped and my younger brother and sister were getting into trouble in school and in the community.

I graduated from school and left home to go to College. I was glad to be getting out of the house but was feeling guilty about the troubles of my mom and siblings. I went off to College but there weren't any roses. It was a big place, I didn't know anyone and didn't have anyone to connect with.

I was so overwhelmed that I became immobilized and didn't even try out for the basketball team because I was sure that I wouldn't be good enough. My grades weren't good and I started sleeping in and missing classes. Overall it was a dismal failure and I felt like a failure too. I was sure that I wasn't as smart as the others there, that I wasn't worthy and shouldn't be there. In my blackest moments I tried to remember discussions I had had with teachers who had believed in me. I would try to focus on that. Instead of being picked up by this I was feeling very bad thinking about

how I had let them down. So, feeling down and lonely I went home for the weekend for a visit. The situation at home was reaching a crisis point - everyone was in chaos! I set about trying to fix everyone and it was during this time that I realized this would be me if I didn't get my act together soon.

I went back to College renewed and determined. I had found some type of inner strength that was going to help me face my fears and succeed. I truly believed that things could only get better and focused on this. I graduated with my degree four and a half years later.

Today, I consider myself to be a fairly healthy individual. I had a difficult childhood and I got through it and am quite a happy person today. Some of my old fears and insecurities come back to haunt me from time to time but I just try to remember that when the chips were down in College I didn't give up, I rose above and did my best and survived. In fact many of the experiences I had although negative have helped to develop me into the strong and resourceful person that I am today!

There are many many other stories like Karen's out there. Karen displays specific traits of resilience. Below is an analysis of the seven resiliency traits identified within Karen's story.

Insight:

The mental habit of asking searching questions and giving honest answers. Karen displays this trait several times but one way is by alerting herself to warning signs of problems ahead and accommodating to fit the situation for herself and her siblings.

Independence:

The emotional and physical distance from a troubled family. This was shown by her leaving a possible volatile situation, taking her siblings and going to her room. Possibly joining athletic teams and working enabled her to distance herself when older.

Initiative:

A push for mastery. Karen began bringing extra school work home and excelling at athletics.

Creativity:

Representing personal pain in the form of art. Karen said she kept a daily journal at school of all the good things that happened at school. She never mentioned home in this journal because the teacher would read it and respond in it. However, she did feel that the teachers knew home wasn't very good because of their address, the fact that her mom never went to an interview (ever) and the trouble of her younger brother who was in the same school as her.

Humor:

Her ability to laugh and have friends in her sports activities.

Relationships:

To develop positive relationships with peers and teachers. This was shown through her remembering positive discussions with her teachers when times were difficult.

Morality:

An informed conscience. Helping and taking responsibility for her siblings in periods of stress.

Karen displays the traits of a resilient person. Where did she learn this? It seems that there is a combination of nature vs nurture. It is probable that Karen had a strong inner sense of resiliency and strong environmental factors that helped to develop and expand on these traits. There are many “Karen’s” out there and more succeed than that don’t. Children, like Karen, go through difficult times in their life and often have serious and overwhelming problems. Many, like Karen credit a teacher or other significant adult in their life with making a difference.

Although teachers could not change or fix Karen’s environment , it is obvious that they recognized and emphasized the positives they saw within her person. They

enabled her to develop as best that they could help her to by providing challenging opportunities in a caring and safe environment.

“Armed with an understanding of the resiliencies, educators can play the same crucial part in students lives.

The following are some actions that educators can take:

- provide students with many opportunities for success to instill in them a sense of competence.
- give kids work that is meaningful, that requires them to stretch their minds, but that is not within the range of their abilities.
- bring humor into the classroom.
- allow time for play and creative activities.
- teach and reinforce social skills.
- acknowledge the strengths that children have and the heroic battle against hardship that many are waging.
- understand and communicate to these kids that they can prevail.

(Wolin and Wolin 1996)

Educators, as well as other professionals, tend to focus on the direct problems that the child is having and while this is necessary to understand in order to help the child deal with life's stressors it should not be our main focus. "We must move beyond a focus on the "risk factors" in order to create the conditions that will facilitate children's healthy development" (Benard 1991). It is imperative that we, as educators do not assume that a child's current level of functioning signals his future.

Further, it is obvious that school's play a key role in developing resiliency in kids. Firstly, it is the child's second home and often a refuge for kids dealing with adversity. Secondly, teachers interact with the kids daily and may be the only adult in the child's life who the child might have the opportunity to have positive interactions with. Thirdly, schools are often a community focal point and know the needs of the community and have the power to significantly influence lives.

Building resiliency in students need not take substantial time from teachers' other instructional pursuits. A lot of the techniques are likely already a part of many teachers' repertoires. But more important, feelings of competency, belonging, usefulness, potency, and optimism result from authentic experiences. Deep down we all know that assemblies, classroom posters and happy face stickers cannot change a student's attitude toward school or life outside of school. On the other hand, infusing the classroom and the curriculum with resiliency building experiences can have a profound impact on our students' self images. When taking this perspective we begin to see that resiliency building and teaching can be one and the same (Sagor, Richard 1996). Along with other educational research, research on resilience gives educators a blueprint for creating schools where all students can thrive.

What the Schools can do:

Key experiences provided by schools help kids to succeed:

- a) Provide them with authentic evidence of academic success (competence)
- b) Show them that they are valued members of a community (belonging)
- c) Reinforce feelings that they have made a real contribution to their community (usefulness) and
- d) Make them feel empowered (potency).

Resiliency research indicates that we are all born with innate resiliency. Given the opportunity and a supportive environment we can reinforce, establish and learn traits of resilience. We are all born with the capacity to develop the seven traits of resiliency found in resilient survivors. Resiliency is our inborn capacity for self-righting and for transformation and change” (Werner and Smith).

The fact that it is believed resiliency is innate has strong implications for educators. “It provides a powerful rationale for moving our narrow focus in the social and behavioural sciences from a risk, deficit and pathology focus to an examination of the strengths youths, their families, their schools and their communities have brought to bear in providing healing and health.

The examination of these strengths and the shift in thought helps to give educators a clear sense of direction. The development of resiliency is quite simply the process of healthy human development. Therefore research has shown that fostering resilience is a process and not a program. Every school can build this process into their daily program by having an emphasis on having an interactive program that promotes and believes in the potential of the child and provides opportunities for responsibility and work. “ Resiliency research thus promises to move the prevention, education and youth development fields beyond their focus on program and what we do to an emphasis on process and how we do what we do (Benard 1996).

A sense of belonging and a sense of connectedness in relationships is crucial to building resilience. Social bonding, with a parent, friend, or sibling is crucial to providing meaning, caring and commitment in someone’s life. We need to transform society to meet the needs of all people within our families, schools and communities.

The following profile, by Bonnie Benard, of a resilient child and the elements necessary to learn the strategies and skills conducive to growth and resiliency.

PROFILE OF THE RESILIENT CHILD

Social Competence

responsiveness	prosocial skills
flexibility	adaptable
empathy and caring	tends to develop positive relationships with others
communication skills	positive disposition
sense of humor	likable personality

Problem Solving

ability to think abstractly	active
planning skills	ability to produce change
reflective	includes ability to solve cognitive and social problems

Autonomy

a strong sense of independence	a realization that they are not the cause of the adversity
a sense of power	a sense of one's own identity
self-efficacy	ability to exert some control over one's environment
positive self-esteem	ability to distinguish self and own experience from family's

Sense of Purpose and Future

goal direction	achievement motivation
sense of anticipation	aspirations
persistence	success orientation
healthy expectations	hopefulness
sense of purpose	sense of coherence

Bonnie Benard 1991

Table 1 - Profile of the Resilient Child

With the current research in the area, survey results and personal testimonials we determined to identify elements in the school that could help to foster resiliency in the schools. After surveying staff we determined that much of this is being done already by teachers but felt that an increased awareness and specific goal to improve in this area would enhance activities to promote resiliency. The following school philosophy began as a pro-active response to an attempt to eliminate undesired behaviours in our students.

What we found as we began to see more positive results in students was that our overall student population began to be more positive. There were fewer altercations on the playground, less incidence of swearing and difficulties with other students and teachers. As opportunities for student involvement increased students began to feel empowered as they were able to be part of the decision-making process in the school.

Using an action research model we are constantly revisiting our programs and modifying them to meet the changing needs of our students. To address the area of resiliency we came up with a plan.

Action Research Plan

1.) Brainstorm for ideas - Ask Questions?

- a) What do we want to do?
- b) Who needs to be involved? Staff, community, other agencies?
- c) Time frame of programs?
- d) Research in this area?

2.) Purposeful Action

- a) Study other organizations that have done research and implemented programs in this area.
- b) Survey staff and students to determine support of programs.
- c) Collate the feedback and determine responses.

3.) Analyze, Organize and Evaluate

- a) Determine specific programs to implement.
- b) List of community agencies to involve.
- c) Determine dates, times and evaluative procedures.

- d) Method of delivery.
- e) Division of responsibilities for specialized areas.
- f) Are there any cost associated with program?

4.) Reflections:

- a) Are we being realistic?
- b) Are programs suitable?

5.) Documentation:

- a) Document improvements in target kids.
- b) Community/Police feedback on less student problems outside of school.
- c) Track counselling referrals.
- d) Student/Parent feedback.

6.) Reflect and Collaborate:

- a) Publication of student citizenship awards.
- b) Publication of student of the week awards.

- c) Student Luncheons.
- d) Student assembly recognition.

7.) Reflections on Improvements:

- a) Possible improvements for future action.
- b) Sharing and collaborating with feeder schools.

The following brainstorm activity is one that can be generated by teachers to determine what is seen as some of the difficulties students are having and plan accordingly. These strategic intervention programs are outlined in more detail. The desired outcomes complement the particular resiliency traits that will be developed through this process.

Building Resiliency Brainstorming Activity

<u>Current Condition</u>	<u>Strategic Interventions</u>	<u>Desired Outcome</u>
Low Student Morale	Leadership Group Peer Support Team Intramurals	Builds Competency & Sense of Belonging
Internal Lack of Control	Conflict Management Team Student Led Conferences	Empowerment
Feeling Unneeded or Unwanted	Mentoring Project Service Learning	Connectedness Belonging
Alienation	Small group work Divorce group Mediation training	Empowerment Belonging Problem Solving
Low Academic Self- Esteem	Mastery Learning Cooperative Learning	Competency

While evaluating the various school programs that we offered at our school I looked carefully to see what we were doing to facilitate the process of developing resiliency in our students. I was pleased to see that we were on the right track as a staff. The previous year we had identified social skills and behaviour of students as areas of

need. We were seeing an increase in the number of students experiencing difficulties outside of school and felt that their negative school behaviours were an expression of their difficulty and lack of coping skills. In response to this we developed a six tiered program to help students develop and improve in these areas. Many of these programs and the philosophy of the school directly relates to and promotes resiliency as a process. Our entire school team is committed to this goal and that is where the real power of the process lay. When we all buy into it as a need then we are consistent and committed in our implementation of programs. School expectations for both academics and behaviours are high and students know what is expected of them. They also know that they will receive assistance in meeting these expectations. The following programs are designed to facilitate the process of fostering resiliency in children.

Our academic program was very strong in the school with class sizes averaging 27. Academic expectations are very high and assistance available to any student who requires of requests assistance.

Researcher Rhona Weinstein identifies the following ways through which we can communicate positive high expectations to students:

Teacher Behaviour and Attitudes

Teachers who convey the message that, “this work is important; I know you can do it; I won’t give up on you!” and who play to the strengths of each child exert a powerful motivating influence, especially on students who receive the opposite message from their families and communities.

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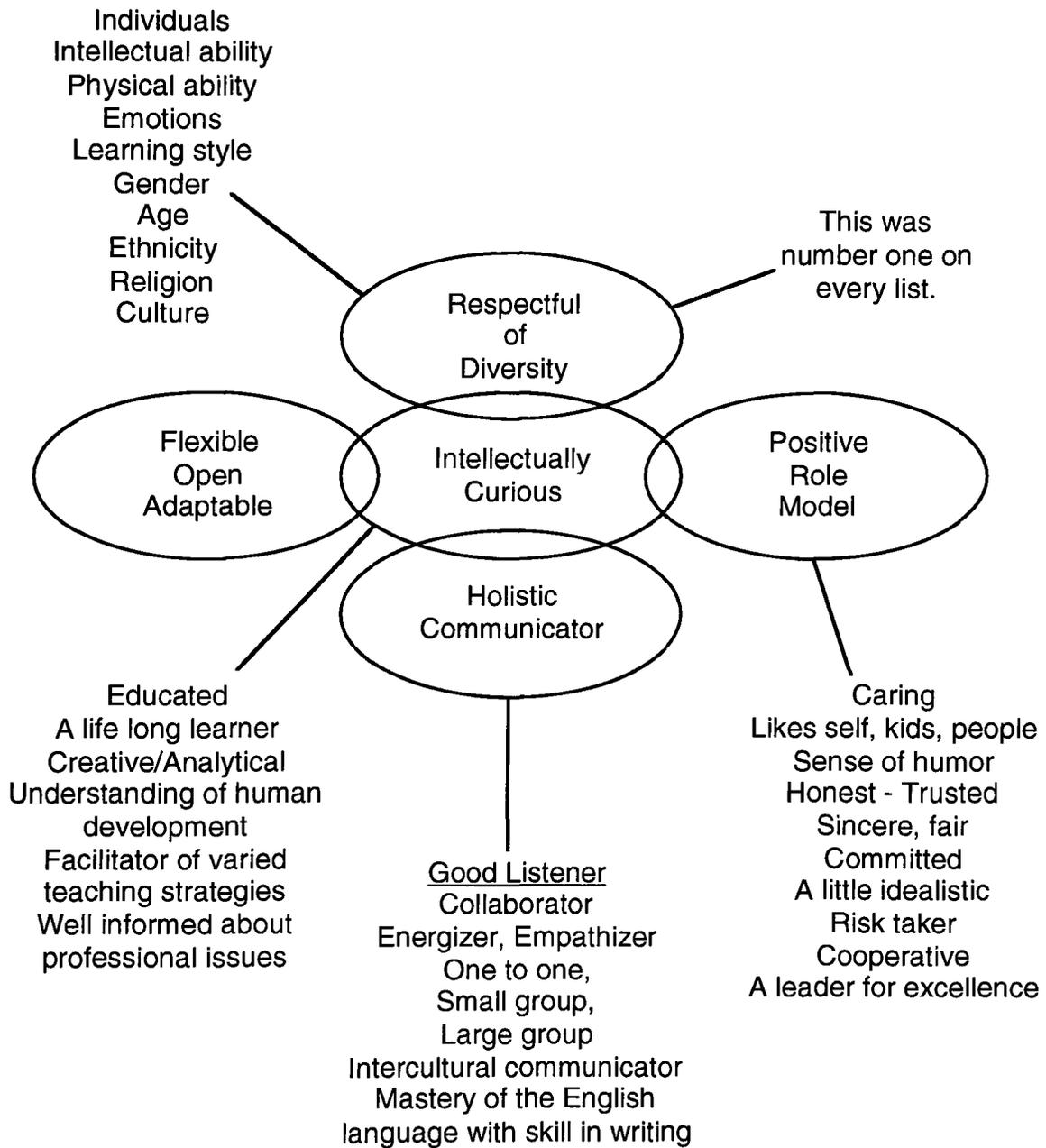
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Attributes That Predict Success As A Teacher

An Educators Point Of View



TRFT, 1992

Figure 4 - Attributes that Predict Success as a Teacher

Curriculum

A rich and varied curriculum provides opportunities for students to be successful not just in academics but also in the arts, in sports, in community services, in work apprenticeship, and in helping peers. In doing so, it communicates the message that the unique strengths of each individual are valued.

Evaluation

Schools that encourage young people do not rely on standardized tests that assess only one or two types of intelligences. Instead they use multiple approaches, especially authentic assessments, that promote self-reflection and validate the different types of intelligences, strengths and learning styles children possess.

Motivation and Responsibility for Learning

Schools that are especially successful in promoting resiliency build on students' intrinsic motivation and interests through a varied and rich curriculum that encourages cooperation instead of competition. Active student participation and decision making in both the curriculum and evaluation foster students' responsibility and ownership for learning.

Grouping

How we group children in schools powerfully communicates expectations. Research points to the consistent positive academic and social outcomes of heterogeneous, cooperative learning groups for all students, especially for low achievers. Numerous studies show that 50 to 80 percent of students with multiple risks in their lives do succeed, especially if they experience a caring school environment that conveys high expectations (Weinstein 1991).

The academic program at Lacombe Upper Elementary subscribes to this philosophy for their school. Thus we offer class sizes that average 27, a full learning assistance program available to ALL students in the school and a special education room for mentally challenged students with a strong inclusion component built in. To further complement and enhance this strong academic program we have developed the following pro-active program to promote growth and resiliency within our school population.

SOCIAL SKILLS PROGRAM TO DEVELOP RESILIENCY IN CHILDREN

Lacombe Upper Elementary School

In September of 1996 and again in September of 1997, the Lacombe Upper Elementary School Staff, continues to make a commitment to develop a curriculum for teaching pro-social skills and therefore foster resiliency to the school population as a whole. This was a result of teachers seeing an increase in behavioural problems in some of our students. The teachers then determined that we needed a pro-active preventative program as well as the teaching of skills necessary for successful social interactions. We then identified a school objective to develop a pro-social skills curriculum and began the process of researching programs and designing a school-wide pro-social skills program that would best suit our student body. This is consistent with our school mission.

Our school Mission Statement states that:

“Lacombe Upper Elementary School is committed to working together to provide a quality education in a caring environment.”

We furthered this mission statement with a school motto for student behaviour, which is **C.A.R.E.** This stands for:

C - Cooperation (working together)

A - Achievement (doing our personal best)

R - Respect (taking care of ourselves, others and our world)

E - Encouragement (We can do it!)

School Demographics:

The Lacombe Upper Elementary School is composed of grades five and six English and grades three, four, five and six French Immersion programs. There are 385 children enrolled, twenty teachers and seven support staff. During discussions on difficulties encountered in our school, we determined a six step pro-social skills curriculum for our school.

Pro-Social Skills Program Outline

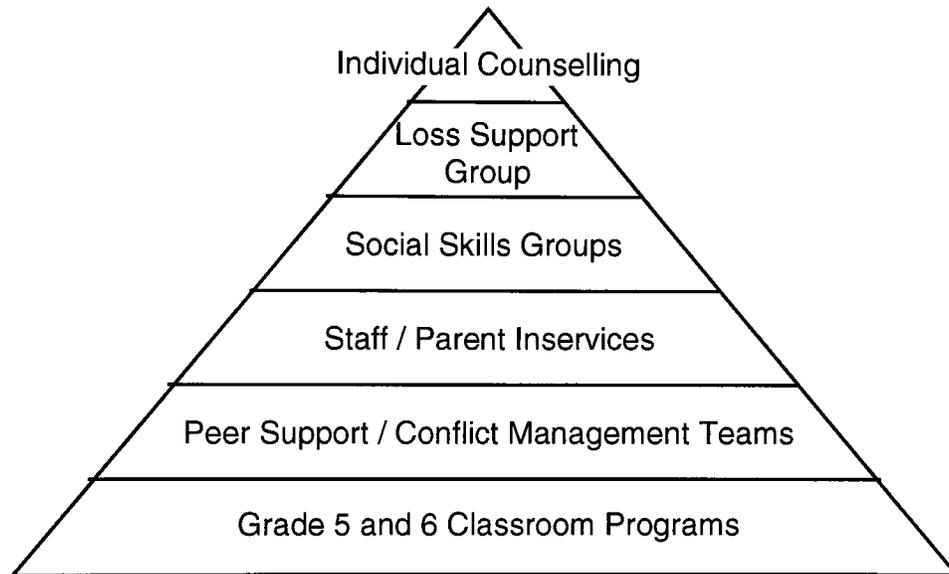


Figure 5 - Pro-Social Skills Outline

Six consistent themes have emerged from the research showing how schools, families and communities can provide both environmental protective factors and the conditions that foster individual factors (Hawkins and Catalano 1990; Benard 1991). Lacombe Upper elementary school addresses these six themes at each of the six levels.

1) Increase Bonding

This involves strengthening connections between the individual and any pro-social person or activity.

One way to increase bonding is to make family involvement a priority by actively recruiting parents, giving them meaningful roles in the school and calling them periodically with good news about their children. Further, in school and after school activities, such as art, music, drama, sports or any other type of club provides positive connections.

The Lacombe Upper Elementary school meets these needs throughout the six level pyramid as well as through informal procedures such as, principles positive phone calls, student of the week program, citizenship luncheons and after school programs.

2) Set clear and consistent Boundaries

This means to be consistent in implementing school policies that clarify behaviour expectations. Students at Lacombe Upper Elementary are involved in establishing their own set of classroom guidelines and are expected to follow them. School wide policies are reviewed often and clearly communicated to all people involved with the school, staff, students and parents, so that expectations are clear. This is

communicated with a kind, supportive and caring attitude rather than a punitive attitude.

3) Teach Life Skills

This aspect includes ideas such as cooperation, conflict resolution, resistance and assertiveness skills, communication skills, problem solving, decision making and healthy stress management. These skills are best achieved through implementation of cooperative learning groups in the classroom and through the Lion's Quest program for all students. Students who have difficulty in these areas are able to get additional assistance through the Level four and five small groups that are designed to focus primarily on these areas.

4) Provide Caring and Support

This is a crucial element to promote resiliency. A trusting relationship with a single adult is necessary for growth and resiliency. Behaviours that express caring and support include noticing all students, knowing their names, drawing out kids who may not readily participate in events. The staff at Lacombe Upper Elementary begin each school year by going into each classroom for ten minutes per day and introducing themselves to the kids on a personal level. Daily, teacher supervisors greet students at

the doors when they enter the school and teachers greet students at their classroom doors before they come into class. This starts the day off on a happy, positive note and allows staff and students to interact on a more personal level.

5) Set and Communicate High Expectations

It is important that expectations be both high and realistic to be effective motivators. Classrooms that embody high expectations are characterized by higher order, meaningful and participatory curriculums; flexible, heterogeneous groupings, varied evaluation systems and a variety of participatory activities.

Teaching strategies communicate high expectations, are cooperative and actively involve students in the learning process. At Lacombe Upper Elementary these expectations are a daily occurrence in all classrooms but are often further exemplified by the many community service projects that students work on throughout the year.

6) Provide Opportunities for Meaningful Participation

This strategy involves giving students a lot of responsibility within their school. At Lacombe Upper Elementary this is shown daily in the classroom programs by the cooperative 'jobs' the students have in order to help keep their classroom active and

efficient. At a school-wide level this is demonstrated through Peer Support, Conflict Management team, Leadership team, Chess Club, Drama Club and after school Sports Clubs.

The staff at Lacombe Upper Elementary School addresses these six resiliency strategies daily through their classrooms and through their focus on pro-social issues. In the past year there has been an increase in test scores, a decrease in delinquency and fighting and students seem to be participating more in after school programs which shows an increased attachment to the school.

These practices are used by all teachers to promote social and academic competence, thus fostering personal growth and resiliency.

Level 1

The Classroom

The grade five and six classroom programs utilize the Lion's Quest - Skills For Growing program in grade five and the Lion's Quest - Skills for Adolescence program in grade six. The staff of our school made a commitment for every grade five and six teacher would have the opportunity to complete the three day training workshop necessary to deliver the Lion's Quest program. Partial funding for this training was provided by the local Lacombe Lion's club.

History of Lion's Quest Program

The Lion's Club of Canada wanted to become involved in a program to assist youths with changes in today's world. This was in response to family changes and an acknowledgement of the new pressures and challenges that today's youth are facing. In 1984, the Lion's group joined up with the Quest organization to write a program to provide young people with educational programs and skills they would need to be successful in life.

Fifty seven educators, researchers, psychologists and curriculum developers were involved in writing the skills for adolescence program and the Skills for Growing programs soon after that. The Lion's Quest organization is continuously upgrading and developing new materials to meet the changing needs and demands youths are facing today.

Lion's Quest Program Goals

- 1) To involve parents, school staff, and the community in supporting the healthy development and success of all children.
- 2) To provide opportunities for children to practice good citizenship through cooperative group work and service to others.
- 3) To promote a healthy, drug free approach to life.

- 4) To celebrate diversity and encourage respect for others.
- 5) To provide support for teachers, parents, administrators, and others involved in the program through effective materials, comprehensive training and follow-up services.

(Lion's Quest Implementation page 3)

Rationale and Philosophy - Lion's Quest Program

The Quest program was developed in response to changes in the structure of the traditional family. Some changes in family that the Quest program recognizes are the increase in single parent families, increase of extended and blended families, and both parents working outside the home. They feel that all of these changes may have an impact on children's values system and moral development. "With families spending less time together and relatives often living far away, the traditional support networks for children are less likely to be in place" (Quest Rationale page 3). The Quest program incorporates a clear set of values based on basic principles and beliefs that are necessary for the health and well-being of society as a whole.

Some resulting factors of this may be that many children are looking primarily to their peers rather than to their parents for guidance. This, combined with the influence of the mass media via television have the potential for children to be " at much higher

risk of becoming alienated and developing behaviour problems” (Quest Rationale page 4).

“The Quest program uses a conceptual model that integrates theoretical approaches and research from several related disciplines and major studies. This program responds to the needs of youth and families by focusing on two main objectives:

- 1) Helping young people develop positive social behaviour, such as self- discipline, responsibility, good judgment, and the ability to get along with others.
- 2) Helping young people develop positive commitments to their families, schools, peers, and communities, including a commitment to lead healthy, drug - free lives.” (Quest Rationale page 5)

“The program focuses on developing external and internal conditions for the child that will enable them to grow and develop positive social behaviours thus fostering resiliency. External conditions refer to the environmental factors in the child’s world, primarily the home, school, and community. Internal conditions refer to the whole child, what the child already knows and also the child’s self confidence, perception of self, motivation and feelings of self worth. Specific skill instruction focuses on developing of the self within the child. These skills are introduced using activities that are age appropriate.

Conceptual Model for Positive Youth Development

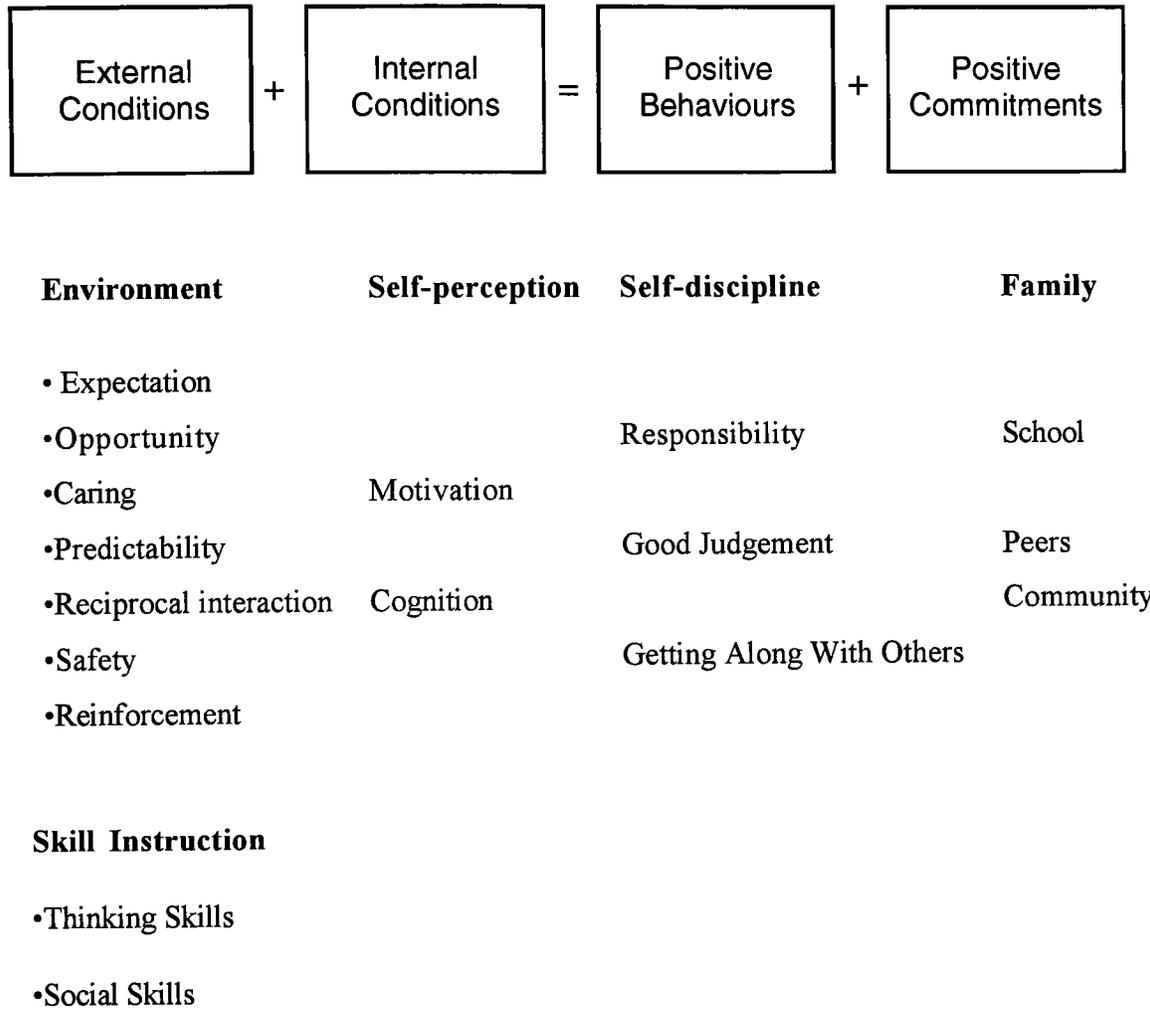


Figure 6 - Conceptual Model for Positive Youth Development

Information

“The Lion’s Quest program draws on a clearly defined approach to how children learn and how schools and classrooms can best promote every child’s success. All of the lessons and components in the program reflect this basic philosophy.” (Quest rationale page 8)

Lion's Quest Grade Five Classroom Program

All grade five teachers would be trained in the Lions Quest - Skills for Growing grades Kindergarten - five Health program. This would be the primary program used for the grade five students. This program fosters citizenship skills in the following areas: responsibility, good judgment, self-discipline, and getting along with others. These are traits that are consistent with the development of resiliency.

There are five units in the grade five program and the units are consistent at each grade level, from kindergarten to grade five with age appropriate activities to develop and foster the program goals at each level. The five units are:

Unit One - Building a School Community

Unit Two - Growing as A Group

Unit Three - Making Positive decisions & Service Learning Project

Unit Four - Growing Up Drug Free

Unit Five - Celebrating You and Me.

The curriculum for this program is set up for two thirty -five minute periods per week. The lessons and activities are contingent and build off of one another. The service learning projects from unit three are designed to include community based activities where students can practice skills learned in a realistic and meaningful way.

There is also student -family activity booklets to complement each unit. These activities are designed for the family to do together.

Parent meetings are also an integral part of the program. There are three 90 minute meetings to help integrate the skills learned by the students and to inform families about the program. The overall objective of this program is to successfully integrate the school, community and families to work together in helping their children to grow.

Peacemaker's Creative Conflict Solving Program

The complementary program that our school delivers in grade five and in conjunction with the Lion's Quest program is the Creative Conflict Solving for Kids Peacemaker's program. This program designed by the Peace Education Foundation consists of twenty different lessons and activities to promote peaceful conflict resolution skills. This program is taught for one forty minute period per week in the grade five classroom.

Lion's Quest Grade Six - Skills For Adolescence Program

All grade six teachers would be trained in the Lion's Quest Skills for Adolescence, grades six - eight program. This program fosters skills in, responsibility, decision making, communication, building self-confidence and goal setting.

Rationale and Philosophy

During adolescence young people experience many physical and emotional changes. While experiencing body changes they are trying to cope with changes in the world around them. The pressures of a rapidly changing society are taking their toll on schools, families and other institutions that formerly helped ensure healthy growth and development of young people.

There are eight units that are predominant to the Skills for Adolescence Program. These units are consistent for grades six, seven and eight with age - appropriate activities to develop and foster the specific program goals. The eight units are:

Unit One: Entering the Teen Years

Unit Two: Building Self-Esteem and Communication Skills/Service Delivery

Unit Three: Managing Emotions in Positive Ways

Unit Four: Improving Peer Relationships

Unit Five: Strengthening Family Relationships

Unit Six: Living Healthy and Drug Free

Unit Seven: Setting Goals For Healthy Living

Unit Eight: Summing Up

Delivery

The Curriculum for this program allows for the course to be taught as a nine week, twelve week or one semester program. It accommodates school systems structures.

It may be taught in isolation or integrated into a theme with core courses, such as Language Learning.

Parent Involvement

Students host three - four ninety minute parent meetings per year. These are done in dramatic play format where students can demonstrate to parents the skills they have been learning.

Working Towards Peace Program

This is a Lion's Quest Program Unit to accompany the Skills For Adolescence Program. Working For Peace for grades six - eight. There are twenty sessions designed to assist students in recognizing and managing conflict appropriately.

Senior/Student Mentoring Program

There is a recurring theme in resilient children - they model themselves after resilient mentors. "If youth today cannot bring resilience to the relationships they form naturally, we must bring it to them through mentoring experiences we make available to them, so that they can become resilient enough to form relationships in the future

without our help” (Flaxman, Erwin 1992). The following mentor program was coordinated by two teachers as an attempt to foster connections within the community for students. It has been a pilot project with one classroom for one year and is now expanding to cover more classes.

Senior/Student Mentoring

The Lacombe Upper Elementary school developed a pilot project to try to have more community involvement in their school. Two teachers delivered a writing program with a grade five class, which focused on Canada’s past, present and future through the eyes of the students and senior citizens from the community. Seniors from the community came into the school once a week for one hour for ten weeks to work on a writing project with the students. Some of the adult mentors were related to the students with whom they worked, however, most were not related. Groups of two to three students worked with one adult mentor.

The project was called, ‘Canada - Past, Present and Future.’ The majority of the writing was done by the students with the adults providing information, brainstorming for ideas and reading and listening to student work. The objectives of this program were to have the students learn about Canada, improve writing skills by more individualized assistance, bridge the gap between the different generations and

develop friendships. Upon completion, group members bound and published their own book of writings.

In my work as a Learning Assistance Centre Teacher I work with students who have Learning Disabilities and Behavioural Disorders. I am often astonished at the number of students who are increasingly acting out negative behaviours in school and who have severe learning problems. The number of these students has almost doubled in the ten years that I have been teaching. I am finding that an increasing number of students do not seem 'available' for learning, as they are usually preoccupied with other issues in their lives and, often, it was from problems at home. This concerned me and I wondered what we, as educators, could do to assist these students and try to help them learn the very necessary skills of reading and writing as well as social and problem solving skills that are all necessary to cope in our world.

When questioning some of the students that I worked with, I became aware that, for various reasons, they were not getting encouragement or assistance from home. They implied that they did not feel connected with anyone and were often feeling isolated and alone. In trying to help them I asked them to identify significant people in their lives that they felt really cared about and appreciated them. The students often identified a grandparent as being a primary source of support, even though several of their grandparents lived quite a distance away. Students said that they felt accepted by them, no matter their faults. I found this very interesting and decided to pursue

this as a community service project in our school.

My partner was a grade five teacher who I had team taught with on several other projects. We collaborated on ideas using an action research plan to guide us, and we decided to invite only seniors, as we wanted to stress differences in lifestyles from the past to the present. The project focus could be “Canada - past, present and future.” Participating seniors were asked to come into the school for one hour per week for ten weeks. This assignment would best fulfill our curriculum objectives as outlined by Alberta Education as well as allow us to fulfill our goal of enrichment through community service.

The project was consistent with Alberta Education Objectives. Using curriculum goals as outlined by Alberta education we were successful in creating an interdisciplinary project covering areas of the Language Arts, Social Studies and Health curriculums.

Research Based Conclusions

In this era of challenge due to many external variables schools are feeling tremendous pressure from the public to be accountable. Teachers are expected to assume several roles: nurse, social worker, counsellor, lunch supervisor, and instructor to name a few. It is becoming increasingly difficult to teach as we are being forced to deal with a

plethora of issues outside the direct realm of the 'three R's.' This mentoring program is but one response to these many new challenges that we face as educators.

Parents want schools that set high academic standards and they want to be sure that their children are learning basic values like honesty, self-reliance and respect for others. I feel that all of these ideas are important but how can one teacher and a couple of volunteer parents achieve this and still meet the other challenges of the 90's? By involving others in the school community, such as the seniors, teachers can try to begin to achieve some of these goals as well as building a true community partnership. Communities need to pull together to strengthen education because they know it's the key to helping our young people succeed and to making communities strong, safe, and prosperous. Getting together with various people in the community is true teamwork and cooperation.

By working together, we can achieve our goals more effectively than any of us could ever do alone. What matters is that your principal, teachers, families, and community are forming partnerships to improve learning. Through teamwork, we can mobilize our ingenuity, skills, and deep concern for our children's and our community's future.

Level 2

Peer Support , Leadership and Conflict Management Teams

Rationale:

The peer support team consists of two students chosen from each classroom in the school. The peer support students are generally students that show initiative, are solid average students, show caring and acceptance of others and wish to be part of the team.

Program Goals:

- 1) To create a school climate that encourages the development of responsible independence and a positive identity.
- 2) To create opportunities for students to learn how to actively and intentionally use their experiences to gain new levels of confidence and competence.
- 3) To encourage opportunities for early intervention to deal with adolescent difficulties.
- 4) To involve students in identifying and meeting student perceived needs.

(AADAC Red Deer, Alberta.)

Criteria:

The students are chosen in many different ways depending on the teacher's preference.

- 1) Students are selected through a democratic process by their peers and their teachers. Voting is done within the classroom.
- 2) Teacher selection of students.
- 3) Students fill out an application form and are screened from their application. The chosen students will then participate in an interview for the job.

Expectations:

Students meet with the peer support teacher team after being selected. A general meeting to get acquainted with one another and go over the goals of the peer support team is held.

Program Objectives:

- 1) To create a school climate that encourages the development of responsible independence and a positive identity.
- 2) To create opportunities for students to learn how to actively and intentionally use their experiences to gain new levels of confidence and competence.
- 3) To encourage opportunities for early intervention to deal with adolescent

difficulties.

- 4) To involve students in identifying and meeting student perceived needs.

(AADAC Manual page.10)

Activities:

The peer support team is trained by the school support staff to work in the front office during noon hours. Students do general clerical duties such as: answering phones, photocopying, and making announcements all year round.

Leadership Team

The leadership team is comprised of students who are involved in designing special school spirit days, refereeing intramurals and hosting sports events. The students decide events, coordinate and run them for the rest of the students in the school.

How to get on the Team

This team is for grade six students. Students are required to fill out an application and be interviewed by the physical education team teachers to determine suitability and placement. No student is ever turned away, jobs are found for each student that wants to be on the team. This is one of the most popular programs.

Program Goals:

- 1) To be part of a school team.
- 2) To develop responsibility.
- 3) To organize and have input into special events for the school.

Activities:

- 1) To coordinate intramural sports program with staff.
- 2) To referee intramural games.
- 3) To organize and run school spirit days.
- 4) To promote school spirit for all students.

Conflict Management Team

The peer support students are trained in mediation skills to assist students involved in minor conflicts at school. Each Peer Support team member goes through a five hour program to assist them in skill development. Training is delivered by two peer support team teachers and previously trained student peer support team members.

How to See the Team:

When two students have a conflict, such as name calling or other less serious conflicts, they then write out their conflict on a conflict sheet that is in a binder located at the office.

Expectations:

Students work in teams of two and assist other students with minor conflicts . They follow a set criteria for conflict resolution. The central objective for this program is for students to learn and practice the basic skills of conflict resolution. As well, this process empowers students to have input into making their school a better place.

Program Objectives:

- 1) Understand and know how to use active listening skills.
- 2) Recognize how non-verbal communication can affect conflict resolution.
- 3) Brainstorm for solutions to interpersonal conflicts.
- 4) Understand the importance of compromise in resolving conflict.
- 5) Modeling resolution skills for peers.

Activities:

- 1) Five hour Conflict Management training program including video segments on mediation.
- 2) Two 40 minute periods of practice in solving mock conflicts with one another.
- 3) Making a videotape of the procedures for utilising the conflict management team.
- 4) Each member shows the video to their classroom and is responsible for answering student questions about program.
- 5) Work schedule determined on a rotational basis.
- 6) Show the individual classrooms videotape on mediation.

Level 3***Staff/Parent /Community Involvement*****Rationale:**

Following the lead of the Lion's Quest program objectives our school has developed a collaborative program with staff, students, parents and the community as a whole. We have many programs and activities organized by the school to promote the objective of service learning. These include:

- 1) **School Councils** - The school councils act as an advisory resource group to the school.

2) Panda Press Monthly Newsletter - This is an information newsletter for families on upcoming activities in the school, new programs, student recognition programs and student work.

3) Lion's Quest Meetings - Student /parent monthly meeting, built along the particular theme that students are working on at the time.

The program is parent run and it gives families a chance for involvement in our school. As well, families can purchase the certificates at the school at any time so that it promotes parents coming into the school. This raises awareness of our school, parent involvement and community partnerships.

4) School Resource Centre - The school counselling office provides information for parents and respond to requests for workshops when necessary. Personal Development programs are offered through the school in the areas of: behaviour management, study skills, Attention Deficit Disorder, video series, divorce, separation, bereavement and motivation.

5) Family/School Liaison Worker - The family /school liaison counsellor works ten hours per week with families in need of assistance. This includes:

A) Encouraging cooperation and communication between families, schools, and

community agencies.

- B) Helping families access community resources.
- C) Providing short term counselling and support.

6) Interagency Coordination -

Currently the Office of the Commissioner for Children's Services is seeking to improve services for children systemically. It's mandate is the fundamental redesign and implementation of the entire system of services for children. Their goal is to coordinate all of the agencies that deal with children's issues. this includes: health, education, social services and justice. The premise is that by coordinating these agencies they will be able to improve services for all children. Two staff and parents from our school will represent our school at the regional public consultation meetings.

Level 4

Social Skills Groups

Rationale:

The fourth component of the program are the social skills groups. Students having personal difficulties that are impacting on their school performance and socialization with other children are targeted for this program. These are small groups of six to ten

students. In our school we have three groups - two groups of males and one group of females. We split the students into male/female groups at this level due to the occasional sensitive nature of the group concerns.

Criteria:

Students are selected on the basis of their poor social skills, their lack of belonging and/or poor academic performance. Students are usually referred by teachers or parents. Parents are required to provide consent in order for their child to participate.

Social Groups are held two forty minute periods per week. Students will miss regular class time and arrangements are made with the classroom teacher for student work that is missed.

Objectives:

- 1) Developing self-esteem
- 2) Making friends
- 3) Anger Management/Conflict Resolution Skills
- 4) Coping Strategies
- 5) Empowerment
- 6) Standing up to Bullies
- 7) Family group - Divorce, Separation and Loss

Level 5

Loss Support Group

Rationale:

This program was implemented as a result of increasing numbers of students in our school having difficulty adjusting to their parents separation and/or divorce. Some of the indicators observed in students by their teachers, parents and counsellors were: anti-social behaviour, anxiety, depression, peer conflict, academic difficulties and social withdrawal. After staff discussion and research on this growing problem we determined that we needed to address this issue. The school can be a major socializing institution for the child and play a vital role in offsetting some of the negative impacts of the family disruption. When teachers are informed about divorce/separation they can be more emotionally supportive to the child.

Criteria:

Students can become participants in the group through a variety of ways. They may be referred by their teacher, parent or by self-referral. Participation in the program is optional. Parental permission is mandatory.

Objectives:

- 1) To give students the opportunity to meet with others who share similar

experiences.

- 2) To give students a safe environment for sharing of their experiences.
- 3) To provide opportunities for self-awareness, sharing with others, problem-solving and improve communication skills with families.
- 4) To provide support in a warm, nurturing environment.

Level 6

Individual Counselling

Rationale:

Individual Counselling and guidance is available to any student or family in our school that requests it. The Counselling Program utilizes the cognitive principles of Reality Therapy and the Adlerian approach.

The program philosophy reflects the belief that humans are capable of controlling their behaviour and that we are responsible for the behaviours we choose. These behaviours can either be life-enhancing or life-limiting.

The Counselling program has the following priorities:

- A) Promote the use of conflict resolution strategies by students and staff.
- B) Foster a positive school climate where students experience success and have positive self-esteem.

C) Provide additional support for students/parents through individual and group counselling as well as through the Family School Liaison Program.

D) To build strong ties with community agencies and utilize the resources available.

(Lacombe Upper Elementary Manual p. 17)

Program Evaluation:

The Lacombe Upper Elementary School is in its second year of this pro-active approach to help students learn skills necessary to their success. Within our six programs we have seen much success with students at all levels. The school has developed a positive, happy climate where students feel comfortable, connected and that they belong. Due to increased demand we hope to be able to continue offering these services and possibly increasing our time for the social skills and loss support groups.

Many children are at risk for developing cognitive, educational, behavioural, social, and emotional problems. we recognized this and have seen an increase in children who appear to be having difficulty coping. thus, the design and implementation of these types of processes to promote growth and resiliency in children. We hope that through our school-wide initiative that we can help children to develop the necessary skills for children to overcome adversity. We are hoping to be able to change the descriptor of children “at risk” to “resilient.”

School-wide classroom pro-active programs can make a real difference in the lives of children. Instead of throwing up our hands and saying, "I can't help this child no one can until their home life improves!" We can replace that with, "I can provide a safe, caring, and supportive environment for this child for seven hours per day!" As teachers we all can help them through a repertoire of instructional approaches that promote insight, independence, initiative, relationships, creativity, humor, and morality in the classroom everyday.

In answering the question of, "why some children in high risk circumstances develop resilience and bounce back from adversity while others fail to thrive," it appears that both internal and external factors are necessary. There is a definite link to organicity, such as temperament, health factors and adaptability. External protective factors such as support systems of people in the child's life assist in helping to develop resiliency. Research indicates that the resiliences can be taught to children to help them to cope more effectively in their world. Therefore, educators can play a key role in fostering the growth and development of resiliency in children. The Lacombe Upper Elementary School-wide program attempts to address this area. Thus, we **CAN** teach, promote and help children develop traits of **RESILIENCY** to enable all children to have happy, healthy and successful lives!

Resource Information & Addresses

Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC) - Peer Support Program
Main Floor, Provincial building
4920-51 Street
Red Deer, Alberta T4N 6K8
Tel: (403) - 340-5274

Creative Conflict Solving For Kids & Mediation For Kids
Grace Contrino Abrams Peace Education Foundation Inc.
P.O. Box 191153,
Miami Beach, Florida
33119

FOCUS Counselling and Consulting - Social Emotional Skills Development Program
P.O. Box 7123
Riverview, New Brunswick, Canada
E1B 4T8

Helping Children with Family Change
Bereavement Society of Alberta
506 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 2W9
Tel: (403) 426 - 0434

Lion's - Quest Canada
P.O. Box 429, 154 Main Street.
Mt. Forest, Ontario
N0G 2L0
1-800-265-2680

Skills For Living - Group Counselling Activities for Elementary Students
Skill Steaming the Elementary School Child -A Guide
Research Press
2612 North Mattis Avenue
Champaign, Illinois
61821

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Resiliency Questionnaire

1. What is your position in the family? Oldest? Youngest? Middle? Oldest girl?
Oldest boy?

2. Do you have any memories or recollections about what your mother or father said about you as a baby? or anyone else?

3. Did anyone ever tell you about how well you ate and slept as a baby?

4. Do members of your family and friends usually seem happy to see you and to spend time with you?

5. Do you feel like you are a helpful person to others? Does anyone in your family expect you to be helpful?

6. Do you consider yourself a happy and hopeful (optimistic) person even when life becomes difficult?

7. Tell me about some times when you overcame problems or stresses in your life. How do you feel about them now?

8. Do you think of yourself as awake and alert most of the time? Do others see you that way?

9. Do you like to try new life experiences? Please give an example.

10. Tell me about some plans and goals you have for yourself over the next year. Three years. Five years.

11. When you are in a stressful, pressure-filled situation, do you feel confident that you'll work it out or do you feel depressed and hopeless?

12. What was the age of your mother when you were born? Your father?

13. How many children are in your family? How many years are there between children in your family?

14. What do you remember, if anything, about how you were cared for when you were little by mom and others?

15. When you were growing up, were there rules and expectations in your home? What were some?

16. Did any of your brothers or sisters help raise you? What do you remember about

this?

17. When you felt upset or in trouble, to whom in your family did you turn for help?
Whom outside your family?

18. From whom did you learn about the values and beliefs of your family?

19. Do you feel it is your responsibility to help others? Help your community?

20. Do you feel that you understand yourself?

21. Do you like yourself? Today? Yesterday? Last year?

22. What skills do you rely on to cope when you are under stress?

23. Tell me about a time when you were helpful to others.

24. Do you see yourself as a confident person? Even when stressed?

25. What are your feelings about this interview with me?

Thank you!