School-Based Family Counseling Evaluation: Warm Feelings, Perilous Paradigms & Empirical Hopes

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Purpose
The purpose of article is to provide an overview of a pilot evaluation of the School-Based Family Counseling model implemented in five schools in urban Los Angeles.

The Article
School-Based Family (SBFC) is not a new idea. School and family counseling professionals have known that working with parents is crucial to helping children succeed and have tried to integrate parents into their work. The authors discussed challenges they first encountered when attempting to implement an evaluation plan that would measure the effectiveness of the SBFC model in addressing barriers to student learning. However, in 2008, the Aspire Charter Public Schools approached the authors with the opportunity to implement SBFC activities and evaluation on their Los Angeles campuses. Through interviews it was found that administrators had many warm feelings about the work that SBFCs have done, particularly in facilitating areas of conflict and concern among students, parents and school staff. Quantitative data was also collected on the prevention components of the SBFC role and also comparison group data on postvention activities.

What this Means for the Field
It is apparent that the SBFC strategies described in this article have had a considerable impact on those who have, at a minimum, experienced a partial implementation of the model. Teachers, administrators, and parents see the benefits and distinctive contributions of SBFC in dealing with challenges of educating children in urban schools. Future research could include gathering systematic empirical evidence of the SBFC role that includes metrics, such as, student attendance, behavior and academic achievement. Additionally, more precise quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the SBFC model may provide evidence of its advantage and effectiveness in addressing obstacles to student learning.

Citation

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