Proposal for the March 2016 Graduate Student Symposium

Defining Effective Supports for Students with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders:

The Wraparound Approach in the Context of a Community School

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Context of the Study

In the province of Manitoba the utilization of the wraparound approach for children and youth with emotional and behavioural disorders [EBD] has been encouraged across human service providers through the implementation of the “Wraparound Protocol for Children and Youth with Severe to Profound Emotional and Behavioural Disorders” (Healthy Child Manitoba, 2013). The wraparound approach is a process for planning, individualizing and integrating supports across multiple service providers for children and youth with EBD and their families.

The province of Manitoba also recently amended The Public Schools Act to include The Community Schools Act which recognizes the community school philosophy and the community school model and outlines the role that community schools may play in the integration of support for children, youth, families, and communities in low socio-economic neighbourhoods (Government of Manitoba, 2012). Community schools are defined as the “hub” in their respective communities, “….where a variety of coordinated services are available and where those in charge are working together to assure the optimal development for all children in the community” (Zigler, Finn-Stevenson, & Stern, 1997; p. 406).

Research Questions

I conducted a qualitative, multi-case study of three designated community schools in the province of Manitoba to obtain the perspectives of parents, teachers, principals, community school connectors and partnering service providers about the characteristics of community schools that support collaboration and the integration of support for children and youth with EBD and their families. I also explored the practices in community school that reflected the guiding principles of the wraparound approach that have been found to be effective in improving outcomes for students with EBD and their families.
Significance of the Study

There is a considerable amount of research that supports the integration of services for children and youth with emotional and behavioural disorders. There also is research that supports the notion that community schools may provide the most effective host environment for the integration of support for children and youth whose needs span an array of service providers. However, there is limited Canadian research about the integration of support through the wraparound approach for children and youth with EBD in the context of a community school.

Findings

In this study the analyzed participant perspectives and the literature in the field were synthesized and three primary characteristics of community schools were identified as being foundational to collaboration and they included: (1) the structure of the community school, (2) the climate of the community school, and (3) the resources that were available to the community school. A continuum of collaboration developed by Howarth and Morrison (2007) was also used to analyze the degree of collaboration that was occurring at the team, organization and system level. It was concluded that the optimal level of collaboration described as integration was occurring at the team level within the community schools that were studied, but that the collaborative practices at the organization level and system level were not yet integrated and therefore were impeding the provision of support. It was further concluded that the guiding principles of the wraparound approach were evident in all of the community schools that were studied. These findings indicate that many of the essential elements that support the implementation of the wraparound approach as outlined in the “Wraparound Protocol for Children and Youth with Severe Emotional and Behavioural Disorders,” (Healthy Child Manitoba, 2013) were evident within the community schools that were studied and therefore community schools may serve as effective host environments for the utilization of the wraparound approach.
Implications

On a practical level, this study may inform the application of the *Wraparound Protocol for Children and Youth with Severe to Profound Emotional and Behavioural Disorders* (Healthy Child Manitoba, 2013) by identifying the organizational structures and elements of a community school that support wraparound planning for children and youth with severe to profound emotional and behavioural disorders. Identifying exemplary practices in community schools that reflect the wraparound approach also may assist stakeholders in more effectively supporting children and youth with EBD and their families and thus lead to improvements in life outcomes for this population.

Presentation Format

Traditional format - powerpoint