Title:
Promoting educators’ social-emotional competence, stress management, and wellbeing through a school-based contemplative intervention: An evaluation of efficacy, implementation process, and mechanisms

Dissertation Committee:
Mark Greenberg  
Edna Petenson Bennett Endowed Chair in Prevention Research  
Professor of Human Development and Psychology  
Dissertation Adviser  
Chair of Committee

Celene Domitrovich  
Research Assistant Professor of Health and Human Development  
Adjunct Faculty, Department of Human Development and Family Studies

Scott Gest  
Professor of Human Development and Family Studies

Karen Bierman  
Distinguished Professor of Psychology

DATE: June 10, 2014  
TIME: 10am – 12pm  
LOCATION: 311 BBH Bldg.

Areas of Specialization: Individual Development and Intervention

Abstract

U.S. educators face increasing levels of stress and burnout that can impede their effective classroom practice and contribute to declines in wellbeing. To support educators in managing these stresses and providing healthy classroom climates facilitative of students’ academic and social-emotional development, attention must be given to educators’ own social-emotional functioning and wellbeing. The CALM study of Educator Health and Wellbeing sought to address these problems through the development and evaluation of an intervention to support educators’ emotional functioning, stress-management, and wellbeing in a sample of 64 educators in two middle schools.

Study 1 employed a wait-list control design and evaluated the feasibility and efficacy of CALM, a brief daily work-place contemplative intervention designed specifically for educators. Posttest (5 months past pre-test) comparisons provided evidence for CALM’s efficacy to: support some aspects of educators’ emotional functioning; promote efficacy for classroom management; reduce time urgency, one aspect of burnout, and reports of
physical symptoms; and improve physiological indicators of blood pressure and cortisol functioning.

Study 2 was an implementation process evaluation exploring three dimensions of participant responsiveness (attendance, practice, and perceptions) within the intervention group. Analyses explored relationships between dimensions of responsiveness, baseline characteristics, and outcomes. Responsiveness was related to professional characteristics, such as efficacy and years in education, but not strongly linked with other baseline characteristics. Practice and attendance each explained differential improvements in intervention outcomes.

Study 3 employed mediation analyses to test a set of hypothesized mechanisms of change in the CALM logic model. Intervention-related posttest improvements in emotional functioning (mindfulness, positive affect and distress tolerance) mediated indirect impacts on teaching efficacy at follow-up the following school year (12 months past pre-test).

These studies add to a small but growing body of knowledge on intervention strategies to support educators’ social-emotional functioning and wellbeing. Results suggest that strategies like CALM are promising to support schools in promoting educators’ effective emotional and stress management, sustaining classroom performance, and supporting their health and wellbeing. The results have potential for strengthening professional development in the education field and they contribute to the prevention science literature on work-place strategies for promoting wellbeing.