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School Counselors and the School Leadership Team

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Abstract

A school leadership team is an opportunity for school counselors to demonstrate their capacity as school leaders and implement their training in using data to identify evidence-based interventions and evaluate the effectiveness of chosen interventions. We share a case study of how we utilized a school leadership team to better meet the needs of students via the development and implementation of the Stress Management and Resiliency Training Lab (SMART Lab) as a K–12 multi-tiered system of support. Use of the evidence-based school counseling model for systematic evaluation revealed that the SMART Lab intervention contributed to improvements in students' behavior, attendance, and grades.

Keywords

evidence-based school counseling model, school counselors, school leadership team, SMART Lab, stress management and resiliency training

Literature on school counseling leadership establishes school counselors as professionals who are capable of generating a significant impact in the educational setting with the specific skills that most school counselors possess (Dollarhide, 2003; Stone & Clark, 2001). Research has demonstrated that using the *ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs* to implement a comprehensive school counseling program supporting students in the academic, college/career, and social/emotional domains has a positive impact for students (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2019; Lapan et al., 2019). Establishing clear goals and defined roles is necessary for school counselors to increase successful outcomes for their students (Grant, 2005).

The use of data is essential for school counselors working to implement effective interventions that result in change (Stone & Dahir, 2006). Counselor educators play a critical role in the training of school counselors and advocating for the most appropriate function of the school counselor role (McMahon et al., 2009). School counselors, counselor educators, and those with common goals in the educational setting can work together on school leadership teams to identify students' needs, implement evidence-based interventions, and evaluate progress toward outcomes that are beneficial to the development and success of students. Researchers have suggested models for integrating evidence-based school counseling into school counselor education programs; these models include (a) offering courses that teach school counselor trainees the data-based decision-making skills for identification, implementation, and evaluation of evidence-based practices; (b) integrating those skills throughout all courses designed to prepare school counselors for the role; and (c) partnering with practitioners to continue professional development for those currently working in schools (Zyromski et al., 2018).

School counselors, counselor educators, and those with common goals in the educational setting can work together on school leadership teams to identify students' needs, implement evidence-based interventions, and evaluate progress toward outcomes that are beneficial to the development and success of students.

The model for evidence-based school counseling practice describes how school counselors collect meaningful data to identify areas that need to be addressed, select evidence-based interventions supported by outcome research, and use data to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions implemented (Dimmitt et al., 2007). In our experience, use of this model can result in improved goal alignment, which supports addressing student needs more effectively. Such alignment also offers

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increased opportunities to advocate for the school counseling program's role in meeting the social/emotional, career, and academic needs of students.

This article shares the experience of school counselors who implemented a school leadership team and used the evidence-based school counseling model as a framework for the data-based decision-making process to positively impact student outcomes. Our aim is to allow other school counselors to apply this information in the development of leadership teams within their school settings. We first present how the evidence-based school counseling model is used in the development of a school leadership team. Second, we provide a case study of our experience as an example of how school counselors used the leadership team and model to better meet the needs of students.

Development of a School Leadership Team

Strong school leadership teams encourage members to anticipate barriers to student success and work together to address these barriers (Young et al., 2013). Simonsen et al. (2019) suggest that a school leadership team is responsible for identifying school needs, providing leadership necessary to address these needs, and supporting the implementation of changes. Through a shared vision, a school leadership team can identify areas for improvement and make informed mutual decisions on the best path to creating positive change within the school environment (Kensler et al., 2012). The team should be responsible for guiding the implementation and monitoring the effectiveness of new programs (Cosner, 2014). Our school leadership team recognized the importance of identifying and implementing evidence-based practices that could address the school's needs. Oakes and colleagues (2014) suggested not only identifying evidence-based practices but also focusing on the long-term viability of desired changes.

Several different types of education professionals may be selected for a school leadership team. In a qualitative, multiple-case study, Kensler et al. (2012) identified the leadership teams of two different schools. The first leadership team comprised the building administrators, a representative from each core content area, a special education teacher, and a writing recovery teacher. The second school's leadership team included a teacher from each core content area, the school counselors, a graduation coach, a special education teacher, a career technology specialist, and the administrators. Zipoli and Merritt (2017) recommended that school leadership teams include administration, specialized support staff such as school counselors, and classroom teachers. However, once membership for a school leadership team is determined, an important component is that the participating education professionals are open to new ideas and ways of thinking that may require flexibility in professional roles (Mellin et al., 2010).

The team at one of the schools identified by Kensler et al. (2012) did not include the school counselors. Although the reason for the absence was not stated, we believe this was an unfortunate oversight. One primary objective of the school counselor is to be a leader in the school (ASCA, 2019). School counselors have been trained to specifically address the social/emotional, behavioral, and cultural needs of a student population and can assist administrators in selecting and implementing evidence-based programs that have the largest impact on students (Nelson & Bustamante, 2009). Moreover, a school leadership team provides school counselors a place to demonstrate their capacity as school leaders and to implement their training in the use of data to evaluate the effectiveness of chosen interventions (Young et al., 2013). Once the makeup of a leadership team has been established, how it is implemented will help determine its effectiveness in creating a lasting impact on a school.

Leadership Team Implementation

Creating a shared, student-focused dialogue can assist school leadership teams in developing a clear purpose and improving student outcomes (Kensler et al., 2012). Establishing meeting norms, having a shared vision and goals, and agreeing on a shared understanding of purpose can all support the implementation of a leadership team and encourage buy-in from participants (Cosner, 2014). Positive support from school staff members can be another important aspect to the implementation of a leadership team (Feuerborn & Tyre, 2016). The decisions made by the school leadership team can have school-wide implications and affect both students and staff members. Therefore, keeping open communication between the school leadership team and other staff members is important as is addressing any concerns from faculty. Through this openness, the school leadership team can create an environment of trust and receptiveness to new ideas and interventions (Feuerborn & Tyre, 2016). Successful implementation of a school leadership team can foster a culture among school staff in which collaboration and the enactment of shared goals become commonplace, leading to more effective change (Kensler et al., 2012).

To achieve successful implementation of the leadership team, we applied the model of evidence-based school counseling practice as the framework that directed the decision-making process. This model outlines three stages that guided the process for the leadership team: (a) identifying needs based on data, (b) addressing those needs with the implementation of interventions that are supported by research showing their effectiveness, and (c) systematically evaluating the interventions implemented (Dimmitt et al., 2007). Implementation of this process can also be integrated into the school counseling program to help the school counselors ensure that they are evolving their approach and developing a comprehensive program of data-driven and evidence-based practices to holistically meet the needs of students (Zyromski & Mariani, 2016).

Using Data to Identify Need

Once the school leadership team is established, members work together to identify student needs in an effort to help all achieve

growth and development (ASCA, 2019; Erford, 2015). School counselors' training prepares them to take a leadership role in using data to identify needs and to impact students' development in the academic, social/emotional, and career domains (ASCA, 2019; Sink, 2009; Young et al., 2013). School counselors have a responsibility not only as leaders but also as advocates. The literature emphasizes that not only is the collection of data critical, so is the way it is used (McMahon et al., 2009). For this reason, counselor education programs can teach school-counselors-in-training how to access and use data to identify underserved student groups within the school system to create potential for systematic change that can ensure more equitable progress for all students (Hines et al., 2017; McMahon et al., 2009; Zyromski et al., 2018).

ASCA (2019) points out that supplemental data are often necessary to provide additional information about the needs that were recognized through the review and evaluation of participation, mindsets and behaviors, and outcome data. Common methods for obtaining this supplemental data include needs assessments, opinion surveys, and climate surveys (ASCA, 2019). School counselors then use all of the data to understand the needs of students within the school system and make informed decisions about who would best be served by which interventions. Through the data evaluation process, the leadership team establishes goals and selects interventions to positively impact outcomes and meet the needs of the students within the school setting (Brown & Trusty, 2005).

Identifying Interventions

The school leadership team has a responsibility to select evidence-based programs and interventions that best meet students' needs in order to develop a school culture that emphasizes the benefits of using evidence-based practices (Kensler et al., 2012). In lieu of quality evidence-based interventions, the school leadership team may search for research-based interventions or create interventions that are research-informed, relevant, and goal-oriented. This section examines the difference between each of these intervention types and the process of selecting interventions.

Evidence-based, research-based, or research-informed. Evidence-based interventions are those that have been studied extensively in a variety of ways by a variety of individuals and have demonstrated efficacy in achieving a desired outcome (Stoiber & Gettinger, 2016). As the school leadership team examines the needs of the students through data, they will identify areas that require extra support or where support does not currently exist (Oakes et al., 2014). For such areas, best practice is for the team to first search for an evidence-based intervention. This will ensure the viability of the intervention while also addressing student need. If no evidence-based intervention exists, research-based interventions may be an option. A research-based intervention is one that has been developed based on available research. Such an intervention may have some support in the literature but is not yet proven to be fully effective in achieving a desired outcome. Finally, if neither an evidence-based nor a research-based intervention can be identified, members of the school leadership team may decide to develop an intervention based on available research. This type of research-informed intervention should be closely monitored to measure its efficacy in achieving a desired outcome.

Sources of evidence-based practices include the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, the Center for School Counseling Outcome Research and Evaluation, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, What Works Clearinghouse, and the National Center for Educational Research.

Ideally, the school leadership team will be able to identify evidence-based interventions for many of the needs identified among the student body. However, due to unique needs of the students or restricted accessibility of certain evidence-based interventions, the school leadership team should make decisions best suited to meet the demands of their school. A wise approach by the leadership team is using their regular meeting structure to determine whether proposed interventions will achieve the desired effect for their students (Oakes et al., 2014).

Multi-tiered, multi-domain systems of support (MTMDSS). When the school leadership team is selecting interventions to meet the needs of their students, a framework to guide the process is helpful. A multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) framework provides direction to a school leadership team when selecting interventions that will address the academic and social/emotional needs of all students (Morningstar et al., 2018). Students' college and career readiness, including both academic and nonacademic skills, can also be embedded within the MTSS framework (Morningstar et al., 2018). Therefore, a MTMDSS (Hatch et al., 2018) can guide a school leadership team in identifying and initiating evidence-based practices that provide academic and behavioral supports for all students, regardless of level of need.

An MTMDSS framework is composed of several principles (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006; Hatch et al, 2018; Morningstar et al., 2018; Stoiber & Gettinger, 2016). Such a framework provides *school-wide supports for all students* in the academic, social/emotional, and college/career readiness domains. The *use of school data* to identify struggling students and determine areas of need through an MTMDSS framework contributes to decisions regarding proposed interventions. An MTMDSS framework allows for *identification of students who may need extra support* in one of the three domains. *Progress monitoring and screening* in all domains is an integral part of MTMDSS. Finally, the MTMDSS framework provides for *the implementation of evidence-based practices* in all three domains to address the needs of all students through increased tiers of support.

The tiered structure of MTMDSS places students at one of three tiers based on their need for intervention. All students are

initially placed in Tier 1 to receive universal supports in each of the three domains. Evidence-based interventions at this level are meant to be administered to every student. When a student does not demonstrate adequate progress, they are advanced to the second tier. Tier 2 interventions are targeted to supplement student development in one of the three domains. The goal of a second-tier intervention is not to replace the core curricula but to provide supplemental learning opportunities in one of the three domains (Stoiber & Gettinger, 2016). When a Tier 2 intervention is ineffective at helping a student demonstrate growth, that student may be provided with a Tier 3 intervention. Tier 3 interventions deliver intensive instruction in one of the three domains for a student who has not benefited from Tier 1 or Tier 2 practices (Hatch et al., 2018; Stoiber & Gettinger, 2016). A school leadership team can expect that 15–20% of the school population will require either Tier 2 or Tier 3 support in at least one domain (Lane et al., 2014).

Evaluating Effectiveness

The process for the school leadership team does not stop after implementing an intervention designed to address an identified need. Using data to evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented interventions is a critical part of the intervention process for the team. It is an opportunity to determine whether the desired outcome has been reached and what, if any, changes in intervention protocol need to be made.

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In the school setting, accessing available resources to meet the needs of students is often necessary. School counselors are trained with skills that prepare them for collaboration that is essential to the function of their responsibilities (Martin, 2015). However, with multiple stakeholders contributing toward a common goal, determining whether student outcomes are the result of the intervention or other factors may be difficult if fidelity is not maintained (Simonsen et al., 2019).

The data-based decision-making process from Simonsen et al. (2019) was designed to support implementation of classroom practices and systems. The first question in this process is, "Are core features of the intervention implemented as intended?" If the answer to this is yes, then the school leadership team proceeds to the second question, "Are all individuals achieving the desired outcomes?" If the answer to this second question is also yes, then the team monitors the intervention consistently to ensure the fidelity and intended outcome.

However, if the answer to the first question is no, indicating that core features of the intervention were not implemented as intended, or if the answer to the second question is no, indicating that not all individuals are achieving the desired outcome, then the school leadership team must ask, "What is the nature of the problem?" Once this question is answered, the school leadership team can go on to the final question, "How will you enhance necessary features of the intervention?" This is an ongoing process that is repeated as often as necessary to ensure that interventions are implemented with fidelity and that outcomes are monitored (Simonsen et al., 2019).

Specific types of data help school counselors, administrators, and other education professionals in the school leadership team hone in on student needs and the impact of interventions. ASCA (2019) has recommended three types of data that school counselors are trained to collect and evaluate. Participation data are a way to communicate who took part in the activities. Targeted populations and the activities involved in the intervention are identified through the data review process. The ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors (ASCA, 2014) are designed to help students gain the skills and perceptions necessary for development and knowledge essential for their educational progress (ASCA, 2019). School counselors can collect mindsets and behavior data using pre- and post-assessments for classroom lessons, small groups, school-wide initiatives, or even individual counseling sessions. The ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors (ASCA, 2014) illustrate student progress and help the school leadership team to further understand the need identified by evaluation of the outcome data. Outcome data refers to achievement, attendance, or behavior data (ASCA, 2019). Upon evaluation, these data can be disaggregated to recognize gaps in progress and identify effectiveness of interventions. With outcome data, a change in what students know or do as a result of the intervention becomes apparent (ASCA, 2019).

The school leadership team can also use immediate, proximal, and distal data to evaluate intervention outcomes (Brown & Trusty, 2005). Immediate outcomes are often collected in the form of a posttest and reflect the learning objectives of the intervention, describing changes in knowledge as a direct result of the intervention (Dimmitt et al., 2007). Proximal data are linked to the outcomes that an intervention is designed to address and the effects as demonstrated by changes in behavior, beliefs, or mindsets that may be measured by observation, self-report, or results (Dimmitt et al., 2007). Distal outcomes are typically linked at a later time and often relate to a distant change that is targeted as a school-related measure such as behavior incidences, academic achievement, or attendance rates (Dimmitt et al., 2007).

Our case study of how the leadership team worked together to identify a need, implement an effective intervention, and systematically evaluate outcomes illustrates how school counselors can implement this approach to maximize their school counseling programs' impact on students. We use the evidence-based school counseling model as a framework for presenting the process throughout the case study.

School Counselors on School Leadership Teams in Practice

A leadership team was established at our school and has become vital to addressing the needs of students. We implemented the evidence-based school counseling model (Dimmitt et al., 2007) as a framework for the leadership team to improve its efforts. We share the case study of this implementation to illustrate how school counselors created a leadership team at their school with professionals who would work together as leaders to create shared goals and align their efforts to benefit students. We then share how we used data to identify the need, so the team would know how to intentionally target efforts to give students equitable access to opportunities for development. Next, we describe how research informed the selection and implementation of interventions to effectively address the identified needs of students. Finally, we present how we systematically evaluated effectiveness, so we could continue to progress in our efforts to improve student outcomes.

School Leadership Team

The school counselors proposed meeting as a school leadership team in an effort to align our goals with those of leaders within the school building to meet the needs of the students. This school leadership team included the administration, including one building principal and two assistant principals, and two school counselors. This junior high school serves more than 800 students in seventh and eighth grades and has more than 50 teachers. Often, other education professionals took part in leadership team meetings based on the needs and focus of the weekly agenda. These professionals included the special education coordinator, the speech and language pathologist, the school psychologist, and members of the teaching faculty. The leadership team defined the roles of the leaders for the purpose of supporting the needs of the building and reflected on the qualities necessary for effective leadership. By establishing and working toward common goals, the team members actively engaged in the process of collaborating to enhance the success of the school and students.

The school leadership team was established to meet with the shared purpose of creating a school environment that would have the greatest impact on student achievement. Kensler et al. (2012) suggested having an established room with the expressed purpose of engaging in the process of shared school leadership and improvement. We furthered this idea by scheduling a weekly time to meet that was protected from distractions, with the exception of crises. We kept our focus on the purpose of meeting by having a running agenda, which had data related to topics that we would discuss weekly to identify both impact of interventions and areas of concern. Data reviewed weekly were associated with outcomes of interventions such as behavior referral incidences, attendance rates, and academic progress. All team members also brought up at meetings areas of concern that might arise through interactions with students and staff. Often, these individual student concerns led the team to further investigate related data to determine whether a systemic need existed that should also be addressed for other students in the building. Finally, we used this time to highlight successes that occurred as a result of chosen interventions and make changes to interventions as needed. This last item helped increase the morale of the group and spark continuous action and improvement.

Using Data to Identify Needs

We used the evidence-based school counseling model as the framework for the school leadership team's decision-making process. The first stage that contributed to our continued development as a school leadership team was the inclusion of data. We accessed and analyzed data to identify needs that were not being addressed effectively, reviewing several types of outcome data including attendance, behavioral, and academic data. The school counseling program also included collection of self-report data as students participated in interventions such as classroom lessons. We often compared the outcome data reviewed during the weekly leadership team meetings to student reports to further understand the needs of students.

Through this systematic data review process, we identified several correlations between behavior, attendance, and academic outcome data and self-report measures completed by students related to social/emotional well-being. For instance, we found that several students who missed a considerable number of school days, according to the attendance report data, were also self-reporting high levels of stress or symptoms of potential anxiety as measured by the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Children (STAIC; Spielberger, 1973). We were also able to recognize students referred to the office for matters related to behavioral discipline who also had higher-than-average self-reported scores, compared to their classmates, on the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) survey (Bethell et al., 2014). Another notable correlation was that students with lower grade point averages (GPAs) had more missing assignments. We collected supplemental data to better understand the needs of these students.

Other supplemental data included student, parent, and teacher needs assessments. When given the opportunity to identify the areas of greatest concern through the needs assessment, all three groups identified the area of "stress." Students also completed a social/emotional learning survey that is implemented district-wide through Panorama. The survey is designed to gather self-report data related to grit, growth mindsets, social awareness, and emotional regulation (West et al., 2017).

Based on this review of data, the school leadership team developed an emotional regulation goal as a building-wide focus. The leadership team recognized emotional regulation as a skill that can be considered a building block to potentially support students who reported symptoms of stress/anxiety, those who have experienced trauma, and those who would

benefit from additional academic support. The goal was articulated as a SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely) goal. The overall SMART goal generated by this junior high school leadership team was "We will increase the percentage of students that believe they are able to regulate their emotions from 42% to 60% based on the Panorama survey data by the end of the next school year." This goal was adopted by district representatives, administration, the school counseling program, teachers, and students and was communicated to parents so that all stakeholders recognized a common focus. With the development of this goal, the leadership team moved on to the next phase of the evidence-based school counseling model: selecting the most appropriate intervention to meet the needs of the students.

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Selecting Evidence-Based Interventions

The school leadership team has the responsibility to select and implement evidence-based practices in all three domains that address the needs of their students. The team began by reviewing the interventions that were already being implemented as Tier 1, 2, and 3 services to build emotional regulation skills. Through this review process, the leadership team recognized an opportunity for additional evidence-based programming directly designed to build emotional regulation skills at each of the tiered levels. The team worked together to access potential resources that were supported by evidence in the related research and then shared the ideas at a leadership team meeting.

The school counselors used the information gathered related to evidence-based, research-based, and research-informed approaches and applied the knowledge to the team's SMART goal. To address this goal, we designed a Stress Management and Resiliency Training Lab (SMART Lab) for students in the K–12 setting to be implemented as a multi-tiered system of support. The SMART Lab concept was being implemented at the Ohio State University (OSU) by Dr. Paul Granello, so the school counselors collaborated with OSU's counselor education department. We applied for a grant offered by our school district to bring the resources to the K–12 setting. The school counseling department began designing, implementing, and collecting data on the SMART Lab so that the research could contribute to the development of the SMART Lab as an evidence-based intervention.

The SMART Lab is a space designated for the practice of emotional regulation strategies through the use of biofeedback software. Designed as a prevention and intervention resource for students and/or teachers who are experiencing dysregulation, the SMART Lab's intent is for students to gain emotional regulation skills and return to class prepared for learning. When students are in the SMART Lab, they learn how their body is physiologically responding to a stressor through the use of HeartMath technology, which provides insight into measurement of the beat-to-beat changes in heart rate, called heart rate variability (HRV; Bothe et al., 2014; Ratanasiripong et al., 2012). Students were introduced to this concept and taught how to monitor their HRV scores and use regulation strategies. Students learned how they can regulate their responses to stressors through numerous strategies such as intentional breathing, mindfulness techniques, exercise using available equipment, talking, writing, or artistic expression. Students then set a goal for using the mindfulness and coping techniques in the classroom setting.

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The intervention is designed as a multi-tiered system of support. At the Tier 1 level, all students participated in classroom lessons targeting emotional regulation skills and had access to the SMART Lab when needed. We put referral processes into place so that students could self-refer to access the SMART Lab as needed, or they could be referred by a teacher or parent. With access to the SMART Lab, students were able to use the lab when opportunities for emotional regulation occurred. For example, some students used the SMART Lab to regulate prior to taking a test, before a mediation, or if they needed to learn emotional regulation strategies so that learning would not be disrupted due to distracting behaviors in the classroom. Also at the Tier 1 level, we provided classroom lessons to all students. During these lessons, students received information and participated in activities designed to help them stay in control when experiencing pressure by peers or otherwise, relax or return to a regulated state when upset or angry, and remain calm when faced with challenges. Students self-reported attainment of these skills through the Panorama survey that was administered as a pre- and postmeasure. The HeartMath program also collects HRV data that allow students to see their physiological response to dysregulation as a measure of progress. All students learned how to use the SMART Lab appropriately during the initial emotional regulation classroom lesson.

At the Tier 2 level, we invited select students with opportunities related to behavior, attendance, or academics to participate in small groups. Students were selected based on self-report and academic data including the STAIC, ACEs

survey, or number of missing assignments that impacted GPA. The leadership team worked together with students, parents, and teachers to determine who would most benefit from this group participation or other school counseling programming or resources. The school counselors piloted Smart Brain Wise Heart, a small group protocol designed to teach students to understand and manage their emotional regulation appropriately. The sessions included the use of the HeartMath software that lets students track progress related to their physiological response.

At the Tier 3 level, school counselors worked with students individually to help them gain emotional regulation skills that would support them as they worked to reach their goals. School counselors utilized True Goals, a research-based school counseling curriculum, to help students set and track goals and to identify positive support systems (Zyromski et al., 2019). Students met individually with school counselors for 9–12 sessions to practice mindfulness and emotional regulation skills in the SMART Lab; they then applied these skills to their personal progress toward goals they identified through the True Goals curriculum. This SMART Lab intervention was put in place as a result of the initiative of the school counselors on the school leadership team and their shared mission to continuously improve their support for student progress.

Evaluating Outcomes

Systematic evaluation of progress and outcomes was a critical process of the school leadership team to determine the degree to which the interventions were effectively meeting the needs of students and make adjustments to interventions when appropriate. Program evaluation took place weekly during team meetings and upon conclusion of the intervention cycle as an opportunity to reflect on overall effectiveness and conclusions. At completion of the intervention, we shared data with stakeholders such as teachers. We compared progress made to the SMART goal previously identified by the school leadership team. This process was repeated for each intervention and for the overall goal.

We included the data evaluation process of the intervention in the regularly scheduled school leadership team meetings. With the use of the running agenda, our common practice was to begin each meeting by reviewing data related to behavior, attendance, and academic progress for students participating in the intervention. We updated links to relevant data prior to meeting so that the team could use its time to evaluate the information and make decisions accordingly. With the team determining areas of focus together, meetings also provided an opportunity to review data from interventions that were implemented to meet the determined goals. Evaluating intervention effectiveness in this way enabled the team to modify the SMART Lab intervention to have the optimal effect for the students.

Participation data revealed that 383 students were referred to the SMART Lab throughout the school year. On average, these students spent 23 min in the space going through the process of identifying and communicating emotions, using the biofeedback software to see their physiological response to dysregulation, practicing a coping strategy, and setting a goal for the classroom setting. These students improved their self-report of regulation an average of 3.5 points on a 10-point scale before returning to class. Overall, 745 students received classroom lessons related to emotional regulation that included accessing the SMART Lab 3 times throughout the school year.

At the Tier 2 level, 78 students participated in SMART Lab small groups. Outcome data for students were collected 1 month prior to intervention and 1 month postintervention. Students who participated in small groups designed to support academic goals revealed a mean GPA improvement of 19%. Students who participated in small groups to target their rates of attendance also improved, with a combined total of 25 fewer days absent for the group. Lastly, students who participated in small groups with an emphasis on improving behaviors had an average of four fewer behavior referral incidences overall.

At the Tier 3 level, 22 individuals created goals for applying emotional regulation strategies to the classroom setting. Students who participated in the SMART Lab at this level improved their HRV scores an average of 7.54, which represents significant progress related to improving their physiological responses to stress. The school leadership team continues to evaluate the SMART Lab intervention as they work toward the building-wide goal of emotional regulation for students.

Implications

Establishing the school leadership team enabled the school counseling program to implement interventions with the shared vision of administration and common goals of teachers and staff in the school building. As a result, students made progress in identified areas such as decreasing behaviors related to discipline referrals, increasing attendance, and improving grades. Targeted students gained positive perceptions of their abilities and adopted mindsets and behaviors that can help them reach their developmental goals.

Data were evaluated as part of a constant cycle established by the school leadership team using the evidence-based school counseling model, which included need identification, intervention selection, and outcome evaluation (Dimmitt et al., 2007). First, the team reviewed data to identify student needs, then the needs were addressed with evidence-based interventions that were implemented with fidelity whenever possible. Finally, the team evaluated the effectiveness of the intervention based on ASCA's (2019) recommended participant data, the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors (ASCA, 2014), and outcome data. This process was repeated systematically during leadership team meetings to help students achieve their goals.

Because the SMART Lab intervention is still in the process of being designed, discussion of limitations is necessary. We intend to establish the intervention as an evidence-based program, but the intervention is still in development with research

collection still in process. Our evaluation process contributes to this progress. The leadership team determined that a 3- to 5-year implementation plan for designing the intervention would be appropriate as the school counselors work to determine the most effective utilization of resources and continue to work toward implementation with fidelity. A future direction for the school counselors is to continue research in this area with appropriate research methods to determine the generalizability of the intervention. The leadership team continues to focus on successful utilization of the team structure using the evidence-based school counseling model as a framework. This process continues to improve as do the interventions implemented to help students achieve their goals.

This article demonstrates that the development and implementation of a school leadership team can be impactful. Using this process, school counselors can lead efforts within their schools to create positive impacts for students. Through the development of shared goals and shared decision-making, use of the evidence-based school counseling model (Dimmitt et al., 2007), and participating in a school leadership team, a school counselor can utilize evidence-based interventions to run a comprehensive school counseling program that more effectively meets the needs of all students.

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