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# Building Resilience in an At-Risk Youth Population

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# Building Resilience in an At-Risk Youth Population

## **Description**

Miller Education Center (MEC) is an alternative school located in the Hillsboro School district that serves approximately 100 middle and high school students. Students that attend MEC face a myriad of issues that pose as a challenge to meeting standard performance in a traditional school setting. While teachers or counselors at the students' home schools make the referrals for students to attend MEC, all students are still required to apply and interview with the principal to be able to enroll.

A needs assessment of MEC services was completed in February 2014. Completion of the needs assessment revealed that MEC high school students currently have an advising period scheduled into their curriculum. However, advising periods are typically unstructured and are used as advising staff see fit. MEC high school students who were enrolled in advising were surveyed to understand how they perceived advising sessions. Overall, students were interested in seeing greater incorporation of group games, college preparation, and relationship building skills in advising sessions. MEC students were less interested using advising time for reading (silent and aloud) and personality testing.

After analyzing student survey results and discussing the advisory program with the principal at MEC, it was determined that the high school students could benefit from implementing a resiliency-based curriculum in the current advising program. A more structured approach to advising sessions had the potential to meet the interests of students but also to foster greater resiliency and coping strategies for the high school student population as a whole.

## **Disciplines**

Occupational Therapy

## **Rights**

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## **Building Resilience in an At-Risk Youth Population**

Chantelle Bernier, Gracie Mukai, Jaclyn Sinauskas, & Diona Wikum

### **Community Partnership with Miller Education Center**

Miller Education Center (MEC) is an alternative school located in the Hillsboro School district that serves approximately 100 middle and high school students. Students that attend MEC face a myriad of issues that pose as a challenge to meeting standard performance in a traditional school setting. While teachers or counselors at the students' home schools make the referrals for students to attend MEC, all students are still required to apply and interview with the principal to be able to enroll.

MEC is a unique institution in that they provide alternative paths to education that separates themselves from other traditional learning environments. Their mission is to provide individually tailored educational opportunities to students in order to promote greater self-esteem and sense of personal responsibility. MEC's small class sizes of approximately 10-17 students allow teachers to have personal interaction with each student and provide greater support.

Many of MEC's students fall into the category of an "at-risk" youth population. This places the student population at greater risk for both mental health issues and chronic illness, in addition to chronic poverty and underemployment (Felitti, Anda, Nordenberg, Williamson, Spitz, Edwards, Koss, & Marks, 1998; Morris, 2000). At-risk youth also have a higher likelihood of engaging in risky behaviors such as alcohol and substance abuse, criminal activity, and unprotected sex (Morris, 2000).

### **Needs Assessment**

A needs assessment of MEC services was completed in February 2014. Completion of the needs assessment revealed that MEC high school students currently have an advising period scheduled into their curriculum. However, advising periods are typically unstructured and are used as advising staff see fit. MEC high school students who were enrolled in advising were surveyed to understand how they perceived advising sessions. Overall, students were interested in seeing greater incorporation of group games, college preparation, and relationship building skills in advising sessions. MEC students were less interested using advising time for reading (silent and aloud) and personality testing.

After analyzing student survey results and discussing the advisory program with the principal at MEC, it was determined that the high school students could benefit from implementing a resiliency-based curriculum in the current advising program. A more structured approach to advising sessions had the potential to meet the interests of students but also to foster greater resiliency and coping strategies for the high school student population as a whole.

### **Development of a Resiliency-Based Model and Advising Curriculum**

The basis for designing the resiliency-based advising program first started with the development of a visual model for determining how external and internal factors affect the individual to attain healthy development and lower resiliency risk. Ginsberg's (2011)

7 C's of resiliency were used as the core internal characteristics to build upon to nurture an individual's resiliency. Seven modules were produced with the intentional selection of activities based on the 7 C's of resilience. Occupational therapy students were mindful of choosing activities that would encapsulate all of the 7 C's as well as to give students opportunities to practice different skills rather than being taught about resilience as an abstract concept.

While developing the materials, occupational therapy students were mindful of clients' needs, the clients being both the advising staff and MEC students. For every module, a group protocol complete with facilitator's notes was created with the idea that advising staff would need to spend very little planning time to implement the group. Occupational therapy students were also cognizant of the high school students' responses to the needs assessment survey. The interests of the students were integrated into the curriculum to include practical, yet enjoyable activities to engage in with their classmates and potentially with their respective families.

### **Feedback from MEC Staff Presentation of Program**

During the spring semester, occupational therapy students delivered a training session to MEC staff to introduce the resiliency-based advising curriculum as well as the importance of fostering resiliency within MEC's student population. The manual was presented to the staff not as a mandatory curriculum but a tool to supplement MEC staff's current efforts. Part of the training presentation included an activity to identify MEC high school students that might not have a strong connection to a staff member. A sample of a group protocol was also distributed to staff members to familiarize them with the format of the modules.

Feedback from MEC staff included:

- Concern with time to implement program – Currently sessions are only 20 minutes in length twice a week. However, MEC principal is interested in combining the two sessions into one 40-minute session that would take place once a week.
- Explicitly fostering a resiliency culture within the school, not just using advising sessions to focus on resiliency building activities.
- Positive feedback toward student relationship activity - Staff was able to identify the quality of the existing relationships with students and distinguish those students who could benefit from a more intentional interaction approach from staff members

Overall, the presentation generated a productive discussion about MEC student needs and how staff can be more supportive in building resiliency and a creating a safe and compassionate environment for students.

### **Final Product for Miller Education Center**

The final product presented to MEC consisted of a manual containing the resiliency-based curriculum, protocol to train future staff in use of resiliency modules and required materials, and resiliency literature resources (needs assessment and student literature

reviews). MEC staff will also be given an electronic copy of the manual that will be made available to all staff on the school's server.

### **Future Directions**

Based on the response from MEC staff, it is apparent that greater efforts can be made to develop methods for building resiliency in this population. It is the hope that future successors of the project will build upon the resiliency-based advising curriculum with the potential to pilot the program at MEC. If the curriculum were to be piloted, this would serve to strengthen the community partnership between Pacific University and MEC and measure the efficacy of the curriculum. This would also give future occupational therapy students the opportunity to further refine the program and add more elements of resiliency building to MEC's school environment.

### **References**

- Felitti, V. J., Anda, R. F., Nordenberg, D., Williamson, D. F., Spitz, A. M., Edwards, V., Koss, M. P., & Marks, J. S. (1998). Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults: The adverse childhood experiences (ACE) study. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 14, 245-258.
- Ginsburg, K. R. (2011). *Building resilience in children and teens: Giving kids roots and wings*. Elk Grove, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics.
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# Resiliency-Based Advising Program Curriculum Manual



Created in partnership with Miller Education Center

Pacific University  
School of Occupational Therapy  
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Diona Wikum

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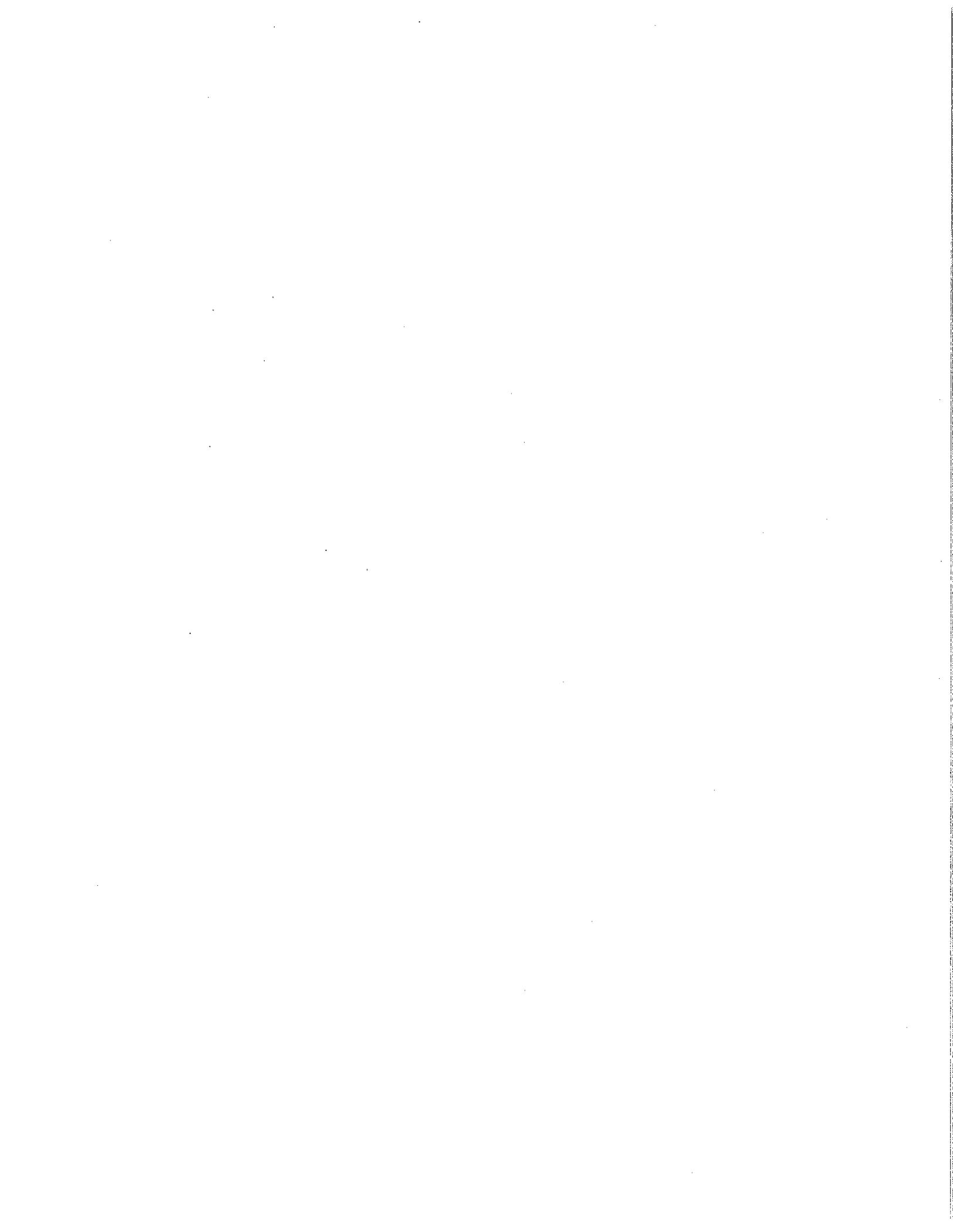
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## I. Introduction

### **What is resiliency?**

Resiliency is commonly identified as the ability to be able to bounce back from setbacks (Ginsburg, 2011). While all children have the ability to develop resiliency, incidences of trauma and stress can inhibit the development of resiliency (Goldman, 2005). Despite the trauma and stress experienced, parents, educators, and health professionals have the capability to cultivate resilience by creating positive environments and relationships (Goldman, 2005). The goal is that when faced with a difficult situation, the adolescent will be able to seek out effective solutions rather than feel victimized or avoidant (Ginsburg, 2011).

### **Why focus on fostering resiliency in an at-risk youth population?**

Resiliency made its debut in research approximately 50 years ago. As research surrounding at-risk youth populations has received more attention so has the concept of resiliency (Goldstein & Brooks, 2005). Identifying risk factors and the how youth can cope with adversity has become a main concern with the growth of at-risk populations. Resilience is only one concept that reduces vulnerability in the at-risk youth population, however, the research suggests that the buffering effects of resilience has a great impact on the child's ability to navigate adverse experiences (Goldstein & Brooks, 2005). The literature surrounding the development of resilience is complex in nature because of the different factors involved and the variation in how the outcomes manifest (Goldstein & Brooks, 2005).

The school system is a setting that allows great potential when addressing resilience in youth. Literature concerning the use of advisory programs as avenues for building resiliency has shown promise as an effective method for at-risk youth (Aspy, Vesely, Oman, Tolma, Rodine, Marshall, & Fluhr, 2011; Benson & Poliner 2013; Henderson, 2013; Perkins, 2006; Theron, 2012; Zimmerman, 2013). In addition to building resilience, advisory programs have also demonstrated higher student achievement, higher student and teacher morale, reduced student drop out rates, decreased student violence, and better community relations (Perkins, 2006).

### **7 C's of Resilience (Ginsburg, 2011)**

Ginsburg (2011) categorizes the characteristics of resilience into seven components: competence, confidence, character, contribution, coping, connection, and control. Each of these components are described by Ginsburg (2011, p. 24) as "ingredients" of resilience that can be strengthened during any stage of life. The first competence is the knowledge to handle situations effectively. The second ingredient, confidence, is the belief in one's abilities, which is directly connected to competence. Students with character have a strong sense of self-worth and are able to recognize right and wrong. Children who understand contribution see themselves as agents of change. The fifth 'C' is

coping, which examines the child's ability to deal with stress effectively. Those with connection looks at the individual's ties with family, friends, school, and community. Strong connections with these external factors suggest that the child is less likely to engage in risky behaviors. The last ingredient is control. Children that are able to recognize when they have control in a situation have a greater likelihood of being able to problem solve effectively. The 7 C's of resilience are highly interrelated. When an educator works to improve one of these building blocks, there is good probability that the student will increase skill in another area.

### **What does a resilient youth look like?**

- The ability to bounce back
- The capacity to have courage
- The motivation to move forward
- The power to stay centered
- The awareness of knowing themselves
- The gift of laughter
- The potential of showing promise
- The capacity to ask for help
- The tenacity to accomplish goals
- The willingness to share feelings
- The capability to connect with others
- The inspiration to give back

(Goldman, 2005, p. 269)

With the existing advisory program, Miller Education Center has the ability to employ the Resiliency Program based on Ginsburg's (2011) 7 C's of resilience to foster resiliency in the student population.

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- Aspy, C.B., Vesely, S.K., Oman, R.F., Tolma, E., Rodine, S., Marshall, L. & Fluhr, J. (2012). School-related assets and youth risk behaviors: alcohol consumption and sexual activity. *Journal of School Health*, 82(1), 3-10.
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# Advising Staff Training

## II. Resiliency Staff Training:

### 1. Start with asking staff about what their perspective is of what resiliency is?

- Interactive activity:
  - What is resiliency activity: Have the teachers use post-it notes to categorize what resiliency is relating to the specific setting including:
    - school, family, community, social, etc. which will be the headings.
    - Under the headings, will be the sticky notes.
    - As a group discuss how resiliency relates to the MEC student population.
    - Provide stats:
      - In 2012, 12.6% of all students in the Hillsboro School district dropped out of high school. (Hillsboro High School 2012 Graduation Rates)
      - Hillsboro School District current strategic goals: decrease dropout rates by 50%.

### 2. Provide the definition of resilience:

#### What is resiliency?

Resiliency is the ability to continue in spite of hardships, distress or suffering. You are not necessarily born resilient; you develop it as you grow within supportive environments and relationships that are positive. Resilience in an individual becomes a characteristic that is promoted through both internal and external supports. Relationship to kids @ MEC,

#### TRAINING ACTIVITY

Determining the students who are “slipping through the cracks”

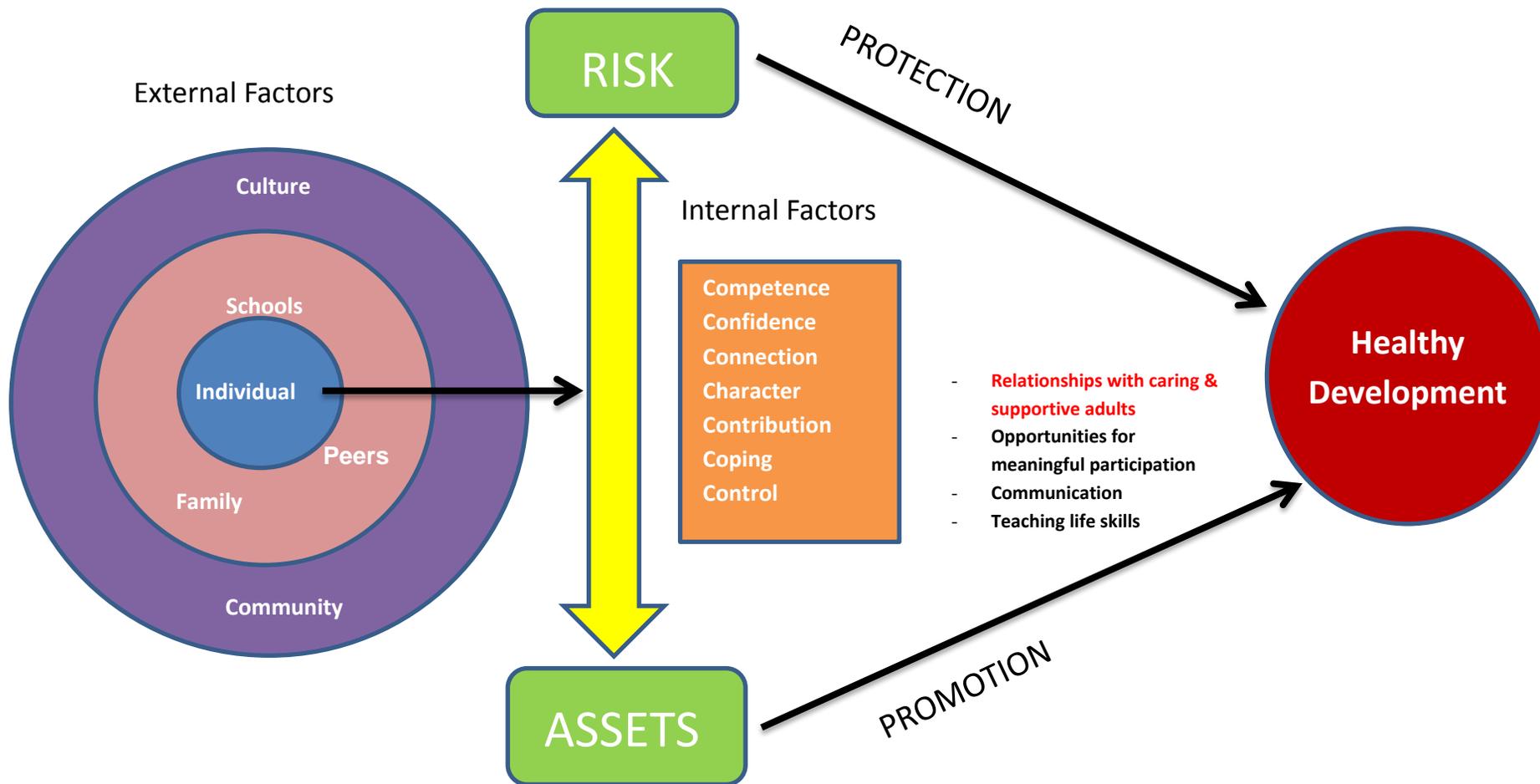
**Preparatory Work:** Write down every student’s name on a 3x5 card. This can be done before the meeting or could be incorporated into the meeting by having each advisor write down their students name on the card.

**Goal:** This activity is to help identify and connect students with adults working onsite. This activity will help see the students who are benefiting from multiple relationships with staff members as well as identify the students who may be slipping through the cracks.

#### ACTIVITY:

1. After each student’s name is written on a 3x5 card ask the staff member’s to identify the student’s that they have a relationship/connection with. A student that they have taken the time to invest their time with.
2. After the staff is finished go back through the cards and pick out the students who have NO staff written on their card. Once identified, ask a staff member to write their name on their card and “adopt” that student.
3. After adopting a student it should be the staff’s goal to connect with that student during each week. It could be as simple as “how are you doing today?” in the hallway or acknowledging something they are doing well that week.

# Pathways of Resilience Model



## **FOLLOW UP**

1. After each student has at least one staff member assigned to personally invest some time in them these cards should be brought to future meetings as a reminder to the staff of the relationships they should be fostering with their students.
2. Also at future meetings it would be a good idea to address "how things are going"? "Is the staff succeeding at this task?" "What are some examples of how staff members are connecting with students? Relationships are a crucial element of resiliency and should not be overlooked.
3. This activity should be done at least once a year. Staff will be dedicated to their student for one year. Next year the activity will be done again and names may switch cards, and new students may be added.

The official home of

# The Resilience Scale™

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## How Resilient Are You?

Complete the Resilience Scale and find out. (or Take the RS-25)

\*The highest level of education I have attained:

\*My age:

\*My gender:  Female  Male

## The 14-Item Resilience Scale™ (RS-14™)

14 April 2014

Please read the following statements. To the right of each you will find seven numbers, ranging from "1" (Strongly Disagree) on the left to "7" (Strongly Agree) on the right. Click the circle below the number which best indicates your feelings about that statement. For example, if you strongly disagree with a statement, click the circle below "1". If you are neutral, click "4", and if you strongly agree, click "7", etc. You must answer every question to submit the test for scoring.

	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. I usually manage one way or another.	<input type="radio"/>						
2. I feel proud that I have accomplished things in life.	<input type="radio"/>						
3. I usually take things in stride.	<input type="radio"/>						
4. I am friends with myself.	<input type="radio"/>						
5. I feel that I can handle many things at a time.	<input type="radio"/>						
6. I am determined.	<input type="radio"/>						
7. I can get through difficult times because I've experienced difficulty before.	<input type="radio"/>						
8. I have self-discipline.	<input type="radio"/>						
9. I keep interested in things.	<input type="radio"/>						
10. I can usually find something to laugh about.	<input type="radio"/>						
11. My belief in myself gets me through hard times.	<input type="radio"/>						
12. In an emergency, I'm someone people can generally rely on.	<input type="radio"/>						
13. My life has meaning.	<input type="radio"/>						
14. When I'm in a difficult situation, I can usually find my way out of it.	<input type="radio"/>						

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\*I have felt depressed in the past 2 weeks:  Never  Sometimes  Frequently  All the time

\*I rate my health as generally:  Excellent  Very Good  Good  Fair  Poor

\*I am at my ideal body weight:  Yes  No  
(±5 pounds)

\*I exercise 30 minutes or more most days:  Yes  No

\*I eat a healthy diet most days:  Yes  No  
(with 5 fruits/vegetables)

\*I DO NOT use tobacco products:  Yes  No  
(smoke, chew, or dip)

\*I have FEW\* or NO alcoholic drinks:  Yes  No  
(\*female: 1/day, male: 1 or 2/day)

NOTE: By clicking the Submit button below, you agree to allow us to use your ANSWERS in future published studies on Resilience, which we hope you will find useful and beneficial. We will keep your responses in a large database and will only report aggregate data; we do not keep data to identify you.

studies on resilience, which we hope you will find useful and beneficial. We will keep your responses in a large database and will only report aggregate data; we do not keep data to identify you.

[Redacted]

**Scoring:**

Low	Mod. Low	Mod. High	High	Very High
57 - 64	65 - 73	74 - 81	82 - 90	91 - 98

# Module Protocols

## Resiliency-Based Curriculum for Advisory Program

	<b>Name of Module</b>	<b>7 C's</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	Stress Management	Coping, Character, Confidence, Competence, Control	Identifying, managing and relieving stress.
2	One Rung at a Time	Confidence, Control	Goal setting.
3	Resiliency Characteristics	Confidence	Identifying strengths
4	Assertive Characteristics	Control, Confidence, Coping, Connection	Learning to foster healthy relationships.
5	Community Membership	Connection, Character, Contribution	Understanding how youth fit into the community web.
6	Lifeline	Confidence, Connection	Fun, hands on activity using team building and problem solving.
7	Boundin': Responding to Life's Challenges	Character, Control, Confidence	Facilitates group discussion for coping and control.

MEC Group Protocol Template  
[Name of the Group]

**Session Purpose:**

**Session Goals:**

**Group Leader Role:** (Here is where information about what the leader/advisor role is in this group.) Ex: The leadership style the advisor should use is facilitative. The students will be provided with all necessary directions, supplies and answer any questions. The advisor will be participating in the activity while facilitating the process.... etc...

**Procedures:**

**Introduction (Time):** (Explanation of what the topic is)

**Warm-up (Time):** (If applicable, facilitator can start out with a warm-up activity)

**Activity (Time):** (List instructions for facilitating module activity)

**Sharing (Time):** (Youth share about the goal they came up with, the stress reducing strategy they liked best, if they made something they can share what they made. The sharing is for them to just share a fact about the group)

**Processing (Time):** (This is where the youth talks about their feelings about the group, did they enjoy it? Not enjoy it? and why?)

**Generalizing (Time):** (questions) (This is how you try and get them to use the information they learned from group and apply it in a real-life scenario)

**Application (Time):** (Students apply this strategy or skill into other real-life scenarios)

**Summary (Time):** ( Ex: The advisor will summarize the general positive response to the activity (if any) and then thank all individuals for their participation)

**Supplies and Costs:**

**References:**

**Appendix:** (May include handout(s))

## One Rung at a Time

**Session Purpose:** This activity is focused on **confidence** and **control** from the 7 C's. This activity proposes a new way to break down a goal into smaller more manageable chunks helping the students feel in control over their decisions and giving them confidence when they accomplish their goal.

**Session Goals:** The goal of each student participating is to create one goal that can be broken down into smaller steps and then to work toward accomplishing their goal by first tackling the smaller pieces of their goals. Each student will receive the ladder handout: one ladder will represent all of the habits/behaviors that the student currently engages in (on each rung of the ladder). The other ladder lists things that you can do "steps" towards reaching your goal. Begin working at the bottom of the ladder one rung at a time.

**Group Leader Role:** The leader role is facilitator and encourager. The leader is responsible for explaining the activity, and walking the students through the procedures. It is NOT the leader's role to come up with the goals for the students but rather encourage the students that they have the ability to accomplish this task.

### **Procedures:**

#### **Introduction (5 minutes):**

During the introduction it should be explained to the students what the activity is, what the purpose of the activity is and how long you will be giving the students to come up with a goal. Also, you should include that after they have written down a goal; the group will talk about them.

#### **Activity (10 minutes):**

Follow each step:

1. Each student will receive the ladder handout.
2. Students will label the ladders "steps to accomplishing my goal" and "Behaviors that keep me the same".
3. They then will come up with one "long term goal" that they would like to try and work on over the semester.
4. Then they can start filling out the ladder with the behaviors that will keep them the same.
5. On the other ladder they will come up with one or two rungs on their "steps" ladder that they could accomplish in the next week that would take them one step closer to their overall goal.

#### **Sharing (5 minutes):**

During this time you can ask students who are comfortable with sharing their goals to share their goal with the group. Also make sure this is optional, some students goals may be personal.

**Processing (5 minutes):**

Ask the students how they felt about this activity.

- Do they think that this activity helped them break down their goals into more manageable sizes?
- Would they use this strategy in the future when trying to accomplish a goal?

**Generalizing (5 minutes):**

This section can help students take the concept of this idea and apply it to their life.

- Can you see how this activity could be helpful when trying to accomplish a task that seems too hard or too big to accomplish?

**Application (5 minutes):**

See if the students can come up with any other areas of their life that they could apply this strategy. If they can't come up with one, the leader can provide an example.

**Summary (5 minutes):**

During the summary the leader will take some of the points made during the processing, generalizing, and application discussions and sum it up for the students as a "take home message" and to remind them why they did the task to begin with. The most important part of the summary is to make sure you use some of the student's words because they may have taken something different away from the group than what was initially intended.

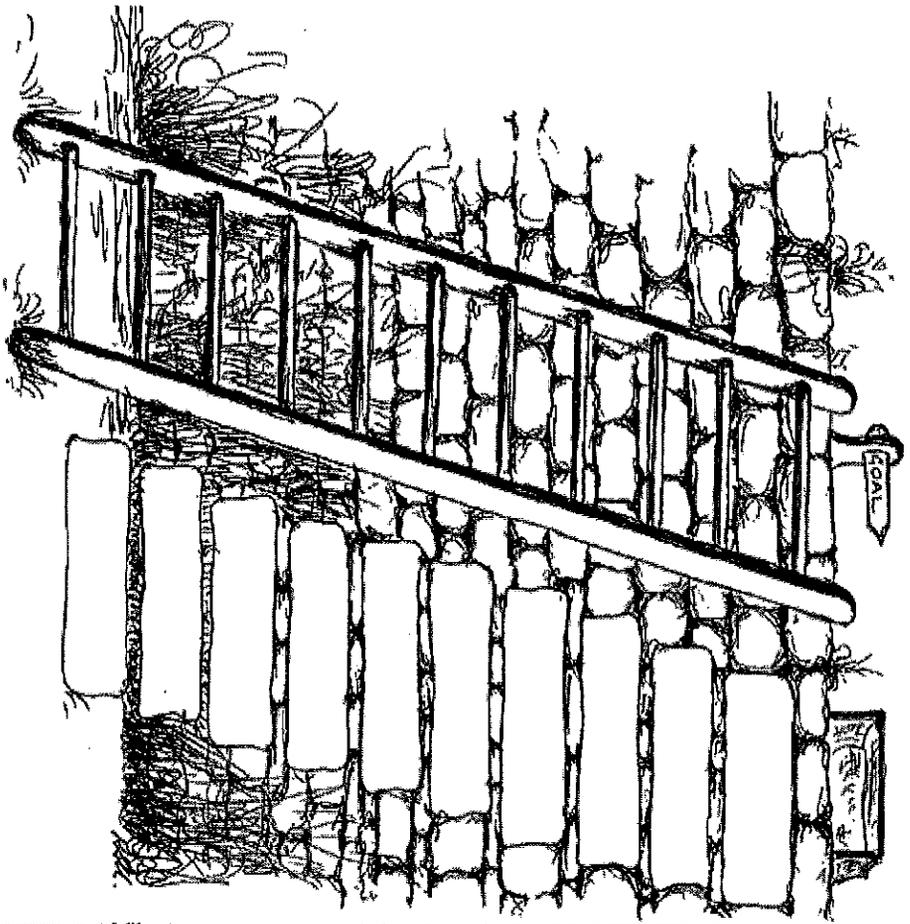
**Supplies and Costs:**

1. Copies of the ladder appendix (one for each student in the class)
2. Pen or pencil for each student

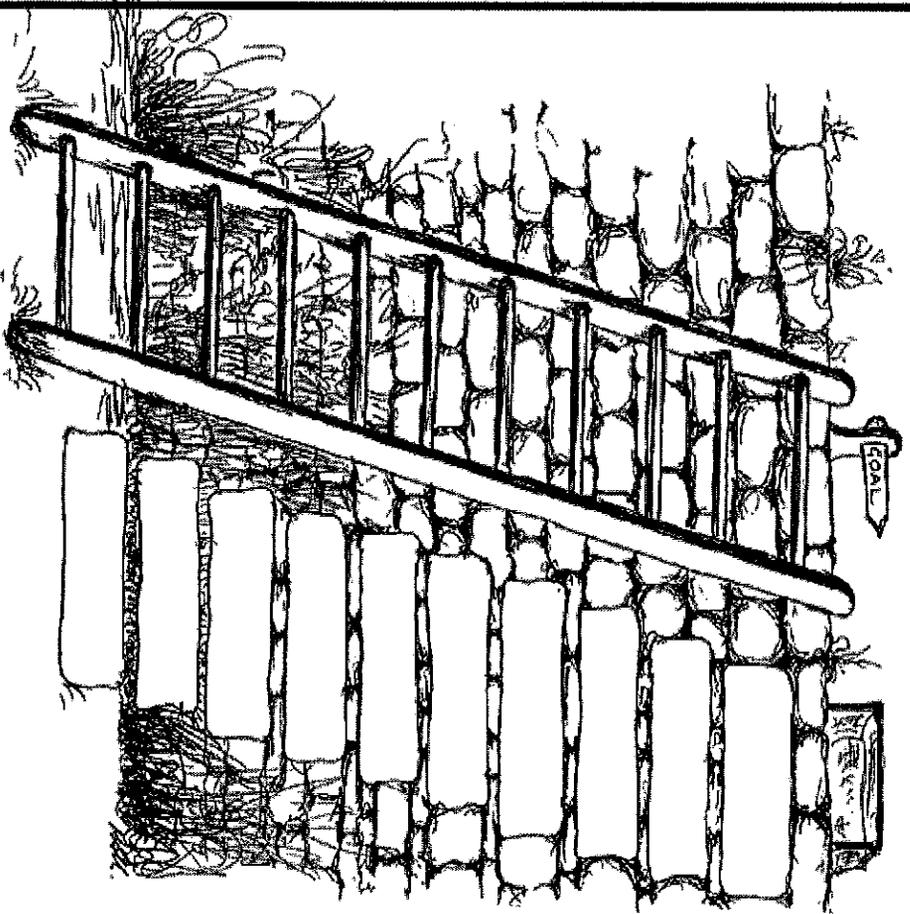
**References:**

Ginsburg, K.R. (2011). *Building Resilience in Children and Teens: Giving Kids Roots and Wings* (pp.303-6). Elk Grove, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics.

New goal



Steps that keep you the same



## Resiliency Characteristics

**Session Purpose:** This activity works on **confidence** from the 7 C's. This activity is designed to help students identify their strengths out of a list of characteristics that have been found to contribute to resiliency. Once they have identified what they are good at, it will help the advising process build on their strengths and encourage those internal protective factors.

**Session Goals:** The goal of each student participating is to identify their strengths (internal characteristics they naturally possess) from a list of characteristics that have been linked to resiliency. Students will be able to refer back to this list throughout the advising year and continue to work on and strengthen these characteristics. The goal is to help the students see that they may already possess characteristics for overcoming trials and “strengths” that can help them cope with their life circumstances.

**Group Leader Role:** The leader role is facilitator. The leader is responsible for explaining the activity and then walking the students through the procedures.

### **Procedures:**

#### **Introduction (5 minutes):**

Briefly explain what these characteristics are. Read the list to them and explain that they should circle the characteristics that they believe they are good at.

#### **Activity (10 minutes):**

A list of the characteristics will be handed to each student. Each student will read the characteristics and their definition and pick the ones they feel they are good at.

#### **Sharing (5 minutes):**

Ask the students if they would like to share what characteristics they circled.

#### **Processing (5 minutes):**

Ask the students how they felt about this activity.

- Was it helpful to see that they already possess some characteristics to encourage coping?

#### **Generalizing (5 minutes):**

Ask the students to share a scenario that they can use this skill to overcome a challenge.

- How do they use these characteristics on a daily basis?

#### **Application (5 minutes):**

Explain that these characteristics will be referred back to throughout the year. The advisory program is going to work on enhancing the characteristics that each student possesses while helping to build on others they feel need improvement. Ask the students if they have an example of how they use a characteristic in everyday life.

**Summary (5 minutes):**

Leader can re-explain what resiliency is and why it is an important characteristic. Reiterate some of the ways the students mentioned being able to use these characteristics in real-life scenarios and encourage them to think about how they can improve on them and build other ones.

**Supplies and Costs:**

1. A printed out copy of the list of characteristics and their definitions
2. A pen/pencil

**References:**

Henderson, N. (2013). Havens of resilience. *Educational Leadership*, 69, 50-55.

## Resiliency Characteristics

Directions: Circle the characteristics that you believe you have and give an example of how you use it in your everyday life:

**Relationships:** Is sociable; able to be a friend; able to form positive relationships

Example of this in your life:

**Service/Helpfulness:** Gives of self in service to others or a cause

Example of this in your life:

**Life Skills:** Uses life skills, including good decision making, assertiveness, and impulse control

Example of this in your life:

**Humor:** Has a good sense of humor, can laugh at difficult situations.

Example of this in your life:

**Inner Direction:** (Internal locus of Control). Bases choices and decisions on internal evaluation.

Example of this in your life:

**Perceptiveness :**Has insightful understanding of people and situations.

Example of this in your life:

**Independence:** Can distance himself or herself from unhealthy people and situations. Has autonomy and is able to go his or her own way.

Example of this in your life:

**Positive View of Person Future:** Is optimistic; expects a positive future.

Example of this in your life:

**Flexibility:** Can adjust to change; can bend as necessary to positively cope with situations.

Example of this in your life:

**Love of Learning:** Shows capacity for and connection to learn

**Self-Motivation** Has internal initiative and positive motivation from within.

Example of this in your life:

**Competence:** Is good at something; has person competence

Example of this in your life:

**Self-Worth:** Has feelings of self-worth and self-confidence.

Example of this in your life:

**Spirituality:** Has personal faith in something greater than yourself.

Example of this in your life:

**Perseverance:** Keeps on despite difficulty; doesn't give up

Example of this in your life:

**Creativity:** Demonstrates expressiveness through artistic endeavor and/or by using imagination and creative thinking or other processes.

Example of this in your life:

## **Stress Management**

**Session Purpose:** The overall purpose of this activity is for students to explore ways to reduce stress, set personal goals and handle school pressures. Students will develop coping skills; identify various academic stressors as well as ways in which to reduce stress, ultimately becoming more resilient. The stress management group focuses on **coping, character, confidence, competence, and control** of the 7 Cs of fostering resilience.

**Session Goals:** Students will gain necessary coping skills to deal with stress or academic pressures. They will develop these skills by exploring ways to reduce stress, make their own decisions, set specific goals and take the necessary steps to achieve these goals.

**Group Leader Role:** The leadership style the advisor should use is a facilitative style. The students will be provided with all necessary directions, supplies and answer any questions that the students may have before starting the activity. The advisor will be participating in the activity while facilitating the process of learning about managing stress. They will be available for support and guidance if any student needs it. The supplies for this activity include three handouts, a writing utensil and any materials needed to practice the techniques. The hope is that the members successfully learn coping strategies that will help them combat every day stresses of life both in and outside the school environment.

### **Procedures**

#### **Introduction (5 minutes):**

Start with introducing stress to the students:

What is STRESS?

Everyone experiences stress. It is the body's way of rising to a challenge and preparing to meet a tough situation with focus, strength, stamina and heightened alertness. Although just enough stress can be a good thing, stress overload is a different story. Too much stress isn't good for anyone. Prolonged stress can lead to serious health problems. In order to stay healthy, it is important to understand and manage your stress before it causes you harm.

#### **Warm-up (optional):**

Facilitating advisors will introduce themselves first following the participants. Then they will each individually state one technique they use to relieve stress.

#### **Activity (35 minutes):**

(For best results, this activity is best split into two sessions. Times estimates are based on two-40 minute sessions).

The activity will start following introductions.

Go over handout 1: (Identifying Stressors) Students will recognize the various signs of stress that they have experienced before. Then students will be asked to share about these signs they recognize within themselves in either a group setting, in partners or one on one with their advisor.

Go over handout 2: (How to Manage Stress) Students will develop long-term strategies to reduce stress and then share their strategies in either a group setting, in partners or one on one with their advisor.

Go over Handout 3: (Ways to Relieve Stress) Students will go over short-term techniques that will relieve stress, complete question on handout about how they relieve stresses, and then practice short term techniques with other students in a group, in partners or one on one with their advisor.

### **Sharing (10 minutes):**

The sharing part of the activity will occur during and after completion of each handout. The students will be asked if they would like to share signs of stress that they have experienced in their past as well as ways in which they overcame stressful situations. After reviewing the third handout, and practicing ways to relieve stress such as deep breathing, students will be asked to share their favorite technique they learned today. The advisor will encourage sharing through social interactions and model this behavior with their own as well.

### **Processing (10 minutes):**

Processing will take place at the end of the activities as they share what they learned with the rest of the group where a casual conversation with the participants will be facilitated about the experience and whether they enjoyed the activity. More directive questions can be used to obtain relevant opinions/ideas about the overall experience.

### **Generalizing (10 minutes):**

If appropriate, generalizing will take place after processing with the group at the end of the stress management session, in which questions will be directly asked such as:

- Do you have anything in common with other group members?
- What is something surprising you learned about others?
- What did you learn about yourself from being a part of this activity?
- What are some of the signs of stress you recognized in yourself?
- Why is it important to set some long-term goals for reducing stress?
- How can short-term strategies help you to be successful in school and graduate?

### **Application (5 minutes):**

At the end of the session, students will be asked when and how they will utilize the stress management techniques. A discussion will follow as to the ways in which this activity could be done outside of Miller Education Center such as in their home environment, applying the principles learned here to be able to cope during difficult times in their lives in order to be more resilient.

**Summary (5 minutes):**

The advisor will summarize the general positive response to the activity (if any) and then thank all individuals for their participation.

**Supplies and Costs:** Total estimated cost: \$1.00

- Handouts
- Stress relieving techniques materials

**References:**

Cole, M. (2012). *Group dynamics in occupational therapy: The theoretical basis and practice application of group intervention*. Thorofare, NJ: Slack.

*Lesson/handouts adapted and modified from-*

[http://kidshealth.org/teen/your\\_mind/emotions/stress.html#](http://kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/emotions/stress.html#)

<http://www.webmd.com/balance/guide/blissing-out-10-relaxation-techniques-reduce-stress-spot>

<https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/stress-signs.aspx>

<http://www.stress.org/stress-effects/>

<http://www.webmd.boots.com/stress-management/physical-stress-symptoms>

<http://stress.about.com/od/meditation/ht/meditation.htm>

<http://zenfullydelicious.com/5-stress-relieving-stretches/>

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/06/10-yoga-poses-for-stress- n\\_3000801.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/06/10-yoga-poses-for-stress- n_3000801.html)

<http://www.bodimojo.com/health-topics/yoga-teens-eagle-pose.htm>

<http://healthcenter.ncsu.edu/counseling-center/resources/mental-health-and-wellness-topics/stress/>

Chicago Public Schools (9-12) Advisor/Advisee Lessons

The Advisory Guide in the Partners in Learning Series Activity

<http://sdmylife.com>

## **Appendix A**

### **Identifying Stressors**

Before you can manage stress, you will need to recognize the signs that you are experiencing stress in your life. If you are aware of these signs, you can take steps to reduce the impact that stress may have on your life in and outside of school. Circle any signs of stress that you have experienced in your life in the past or present.

### **Recognize the Signs of Stress**

- anger
- anxiety
- changes in eating
- difficulty sleeping
- feeling powerless
- feeling uptight
- forgetfulness
- headaches
- hopelessness
- irritability
- lack of energy
- new or increased use of tobacco, alcohol or other drugs
- poor concentration
- sadness
- upset stomach
- worrying too much

### **How do I know if I'm stressed out?**

- I hurt others with my words or actions.
- I reach out to things that seem to make the pain go away but in the end I'm left with the pain and the problem.
- I just can't stop crying; everything hurts my feelings.
- I don't know why I'm tired all the time.
- I'm a perfectionist, nothing is good enough; it's got to be perfect!

**Tell yourself: When I am aware of my actions, I can take control of myself before things get out of hand.**

## Appendix B

### How to Manage Stress

Long-term ways to manage stress requires you to develop strategies that reduce the negative impact of stress. The key to stress management is organization. Some of the things that work are very simple changes in your habits. Circle the ways to manage stress that are part of your daily routine.

#### Ways to Manage Stress

- Think positively and surround yourself with others who do so.
- Don't demand too much of yourself. Ask for help.
- Accept that you can't control everything and be flexible.
- Make a list of things to do each day and set reasonable priorities. (Get Organized)
- Divide big tasks into smaller ones.
- Eat healthily and avoid sugar.
- Get plenty of sleep each night.
- Exercise some each day to boost energy and improve your mood. Don't sit too long. Use stairs instead of elevators.
- Make time to relax. Listen to music, meditate, read or do something you like.
- Avoid alcohol, tobacco and drugs which act as a pacifier to stress & aggravates stress.
- Use mistakes to learn.
- If possible, say "no" to tasks that you know will be stressful for you.
- Talk about things with a friend so that frustrations don't build up.
- Appreciate nature.
- Laugh and have fun.
- Let yourself cry.

What are three strategies that you feel you need to improve on?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## Appendix C

### Ways to Relieve Stress

There are many short-term techniques that relieve stress when faced with difficult situations. While it is important to develop long-term strategies to reach your goals, here are some simple activities you can do to relieve stress.

\*Try them with a partner, with your advisor or in a group

#### Stress Relieving Activities:

##### I. Deep Breathing

While in a comfortable position, take a long deep breath to the count of 5. As you exhale to the count of 5, imagine breathing out tension and breathing in relaxation. With each breath, think "relax."

##### II. Meditation (5-30 minutes)

Meditation builds on deep breathing, and takes it a step further. When you meditate, your brain enters an area of functioning that's similar to sleep, but carries some added benefits you can't achieve as well in any other state, including the release of certain hormones that promote health. Also, the mental focus on nothingness keeps your mind from working overtime and increasing your stress level.

Here's How:

- A. Get into a comfortable position. Many people like to sit in a comfortable chair, or cross-legged on the ground. You want to be able to completely relax while still staying awake.
- B. Close your eyes.
- C. Clear your head. (This is the part that takes practice.) The idea is to stay unattached to thoughts of any kind. That means that, if that inner narrative voice in your mind speaks up, gently "shush" it and opt for internal silence.
- D. That's it. Keep letting go of any thoughts that may pop into your mind, and the quiet spaces between thoughts will become longer and more frequent. You're on the road of meditation!

##### III. Stretches

These techniques can be done either standing or sitting.

- A. Breathe
  - Focusing on your breath is relaxing and restorative. Take a minute or two, close your eyes and focus on your breath. Inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth. Repeat 10 times, for a set. Do three sets. It's almost like taking a nap!
- B. Shoulder and Neck Stretch
  - Sit up straight in your chair with both feet on the floor about shoulder-width apart. Place both hands behind your head at the base of your neck and interlock your fingers. Tilt your head toward the floor and press your shoulder blades together. Hold for 10 seconds, release and repeat 3 times.

#### C. Arm Stretches

- Sit up straight in your chair with both feet on the floor about shoulder-width apart. Interlock your fingers and stretch your arms straight out in front of you. Rotate your wrists so your palms face away from your body. Hold this stretch for 10 seconds, then raise your arms over your head, hold for 10 seconds. Repeat three times.

#### D. Leg Stretches

- Sit up straight in your chair with your feet flat on the floor. Raise one leg and straighten it in front of you. Hold for 10 seconds and rotate your ankle to the left and then to the right. Repeat with the other leg. Do 5 repetitions with each leg.

#### E. Lower Back Stretches

- Sit up straight in your chair with your feet flat on the floor. Lean forward and try to grab your ankles with both hands. Feel the stretch in your lower back! Hold for 10 seconds and repeat three times.

### **IV. Guided imagery**

Because of the way the mind and body are connected, guided imagery can make you feel like you are experiencing something just by imagining it.

- You can do guided imagery with audio recordings, an instructor, or a script (a set of written instructions) to lead you through the process.
- You use all of your senses in guided imagery. For example, if you want a tropical setting, you can imagine the warm breeze on your skin, the bright blue of the water, the sound of the surf, the sweet scent of tropical flowers, and the taste of coconut so that you actually feel like you are there.
- Imagining yourself in a calm, peaceful setting can help you relax and relieve stress.

### **V. Music Therapy**

This technique has shown to have many health benefits for people with mild stress to severe stress. When dealing with stress, the right music can actually lower your blood pressure, relax your body and calm your mind. Try listening to some of your favorite tunes and pay close attention as to how your body responds.

### **VI. Bubble Technique**

Close your eyes and sit quietly, then imagine yourself floating underwater with air to breathe and no tension. Picture your thoughts inside of air bubbles and watch as they float away.

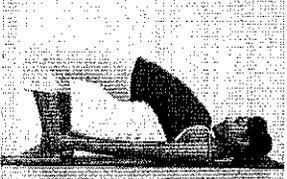
## VII. Yoga

Yoga is a great way to reduce stress and calm the mind. It helps you slow down for a moment and tune into the breath. Try these poses and see if they are helpful at releasing tension.

- A. Childs Pose: The calming child's pose is a resting posture that can help quiet the mind, ease stress and anxiety while gently stretching the back.



- B. Bridge pose: stress/tension.



- C. Standing forward Bend: relieves stress, and fatigue.



- D. Corpse Pose: This pose puts the body completely at ease and relaxation, reducing stress.



**Describe something that you do to relieve the stresses you face inside of or outside of school?**

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## Assertive Communication

**Session Purpose:** Part of fostering resilience is encouraging students to engage in non-violent, assertive communication to be able to communicate their needs. In the past, students may not have been able to engage in assertive communication effectively. They might respond aggressively or passively to negative situations and are unable to experience improvement or success in their school performance. The assertive communication module is designed to encourage students to recognize their own style of communication and how they might be able to experience desired outcomes by using assertive communication. This activity focuses on fostering **control, confidence, coping, and connection** from the 7 Cs of resiliency.

**Group Leader Role:** The advising teacher should assume a facilitative role. The students will be provided with all necessary directions, supplies, and answer any questions. The advisor will introduce different styles of communication and then read scenarios. The facilitator will then use follow-up questions to encourage thought about why students might respond a certain way.

### Procedures:

#### Introduction (5 minutes):

Facilitator will explain what the different communication styles are:

What are the different styles of communication?

- **Passive communication** is “a style in which individuals have developed a pattern of avoiding expressing their opinions or feelings, protecting their rights, and identifying and meeting their needs”
- **Aggressive communication** consists of expressing feelings and advocating their needs in a way that violates others.
- **Assertive communicators** are able to clearly state their feelings and opinions and advocate for themselves while still showing respect for others’ rights and feelings.

Not only is it what you say but how you say it. Tone can put a different meaning on the same phrase. (Ex. “I’m so happy for you” can mean different things if you say it excitedly or sarcastically.)

#### Activity (10 minutes):

The advisor will post the three signs up on the wall ranging from passive to assertive to aggressive. Instruct students to listen to a scenario and to stand next to the sign indicating how they would respond to the situation once the situation has been read. Facilitator can explain that this activity is designed to help students identify or better understand their communication styles as well as their classmates’ communication styles. After each student has situated his or herself next to a sign, ask the student how they would respond. If students are divided into separate groups, it is helpful to ask for responses from each style of communication to show the variety of how a person could respond to the same scenario.

**Sharing (5 minutes):**

This portion will take place as part of the activity after each scenario is read. Some of the questions that the advisor can ask students at the end of the activity are:

- Did you recognize a pattern in your own responses? Or...
- Your class as a whole?
- How did it feel to hear some of the responses of your classmates?
- What were some of your initial reactions?

**Processing (5 minutes):**

- How did some of you feel when you heard the responses to the situations from your classmates?
- Did any of you think about how you might feel on the receiving end of your own responses?
- Do you currently feel that you get your needs met with your communication style?

**Generalizing (5 minutes):**

- What were some of the areas of disagreement/similarities between classmates?
- Sensitive subject areas – awareness of your “hot buttons,” prepare responses to these areas, be prepared with stress management strategies (i.e., taking a break/walk)

**Application (5 minutes):**

Advisor can ask students questions such as:

- How can this be applied to your everyday life?
- How often are you faced with situations like the ones that you were presented with today?
- Variety of ways to get your needs met but which method of communication do you feel is most likely to get you what you need?

**Summary (5 minutes):**

The advisor will summarize the points made in response to the activity and highlight the main points. Some points that may come up are:

- Communication styles can vary widely and can also consist of a combination of styles
- Communication styles can be dependent on the situation - Sometimes an aggressive style of communication is needed in emergency situations or when decisions need to be made quickly. Passiveness can be an ideal style of communication when the issue is minor or if emotions are running high or if your power is much lower than the other person's (i.e., manager of your workplace) (Sherman, 1999)
- Be aware of your “hot buttons” – certain scenarios do not affect you, others might “set you off”
- Think about the reaction you might get in response to your communication style
- Thank all students for their participation in the activity

**Supplies and Costs:** Total estimated cost ~\$5.00

Three sheets of paper with a style of communication on each paper

Scotch/Masking Tape

**References:**

Serenity Online Therapy. (2013). Assertiveness and four styles of communication.

Retrieved from <http://serenityonlinetherapy.com/assertiveness.htm>

Sherman, R. (1999). Understanding your communication style. Retrieved from

[http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/sba/comm\\_style.htm](http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/sba/comm_style.htm)

## **Appendix A**

### **Reaction Scenarios**

You are waiting in line at the grocery store and someone cuts in line at the person in front of you. What do you do?

You are buying some snacks from the convenience store and you realize as you are walking out the door that you were short changed. How would you handle the situation?

You hear from a friend that one of your other friends has been spreading an embarrassing rumor about you? What is your reaction to the situation?

Your teacher has pulled you on the side during class to talk about your performance in class. There's been a lot going on in your life, but your teacher is not aware of the other stresses you have. How do you react?

Your employer notices a mistake that occurred and you know that it was a co-worker who made the mistake. Your boss is angry and puts the blame on you alone. How do you respond?

## Community Membership

**Session Purpose:** The purpose of this activity is to show students different areas that they can be involved in their community. Being involved in their community and acting as agents of change can be empowering for youth. This activity focuses specifically on **connection, character, and contribution** of the 7 Cs of resilience.

**Session Goals:** For those students that may not have very many connections, this activity will be able to give them ideas for where they might seek connection, develop positive relationships, and give back to their community.

**Group Leader Role:** The group leader's role is a facilitator. Group leader should facilitate discussion in small groups and help students articulate the benefits and advantages of being involved in their community.

### Procedures:

#### Introduction (5 minutes):

Ask students what community is to them and having a sense of belonging in them. Write their answers on a whiteboard to show the variation. If applicable, facilitator might want to share an example of what community they are a member of and what is the role they play.

#### Activity (10 minutes):

Ask students to get into groups of three to four people. Within their groups, ask the students to discuss their involvement in communities and what their roles are? Have one person in the group list the communities that the people in their group are involved in.

#### Sharing (5 minutes):

- What were some of the communities that you came up and what is/was your role in the community?

#### Processing (10 minutes):

- How many groups had over 10 communities they were active in? 5? 3? 1?
- For those who have many connections to the community, how did you get involved in so many communities?
- How did it make you feel talking about your role in the community?
- What are some of the benefits of involvement? Are there any disadvantages?

#### Generalizing (5 minutes):

- Where can you look to get involved?
- Can you identify things that might make it difficult to get involved?

**Application (5 minutes):**

Students apply this strategy or skill into other real-life scenarios)

- What are the opportunities that can come out of getting involved in your community?
  - Feeling good about a contribution
  - Investing in improving your community
  - Sense of belonging
  - Skill building
  - Networking

**Summary: (5 minutes)**

Review the points that students shared with class

Some of the points that might come up during this activity:

- Where can students become involved and make contributions to their community
- What can be gained through volunteering/community membership
- At this point, the advising facilitator can also share community connections or projects that students can become involved in if applicable

**Supplies and Costs:**

- Whiteboard and dry erase pens

## Lifeline

### **Session Purpose:**

To encourage a group of students to work together to problem-solve and to be resourceful when given a challenging task. This activity focuses on **confidence** and **connection** as they relate to the 7 C's, they are learning to rely on the support of their peers/community to find solutions to a problem and this support is helping them to develop belief in their skills that make a task/goal seem more achievable.

**Session Goals:** For a group of people to work together to problem-solve and to be resourceful when given a challenging task. Some students may not understand that working with others can help to solve a problem so the goal of this activity is to show them how support from others and resourcefulness can help them to achieve their goals.

**Group Leader Role:** The advisor should play a very informal role for this group. They need to facilitate as they provide the task and inform the students of the objective, but encourage the students to find ways of working together without having to engage unless there is a question about the rules. Facilitation of the group will resume during group discussion following the activity.

### **Procedures:**

#### **Introduction (5 minutes):**

Take five minutes to introduce this activity by talking to the group about what resources are.

- Is a person a resource?
- Is information a resource?
- How can creativity influence resourcefulness?

Next, encourage the group to talk about what resources they have around them (before telling them what the activity is) and brainstorm together to understand the concept of resourcefulness.

#### **Activity (10 minutes):**

1. Create an area that is to be a "fast-moving river" by marking off an area on the ground at least 20 feet across (wider for more group members).
2. Ask for one or two volunteers from the group to go to the other side of the river.
3. Tell other team members that their friends have become stranded on the far side of the river after their boat tipped over, and the group must create a lifeline so that they can pull them to safety.
4. The group must make a chain of items that are tied together out of anything they can find (clothes, Frisbee, shoelaces, branches, etc).
5. Once the group makes a chain, they must be able to hold onto one end and throw the other end to their stranded teammates.
  - a. The lifeline must make it all the way to the other side when thrown. If it goes into the river it must be reeled in and thrown again.

6. Once the lifeline reaches the other side, the teammates may be pulled to safety one at a time.

**Sharing (5 minutes):**

- Did everyone contribute to the lifeline? Why or why not?
- Could one person have made the lifeline? Why or why not?

**Processing (5 minutes):**

- How do you feel about the role you played?
- Do you wish there were more or less people on your team to help if your objective was to accomplish the goal faster?

**Generalizing (5 minutes):**

- Would you want to be across a real river and be depending on this group to throw you a lifeline? Why or why not?
- Readdress how they identified resources around them before learning about the activity. What do you view as a resource now? Changes?

**Application (5 minutes):**

- If this was a real river, how would trust be a factor?
- What are some problems you encounter in everyday life that can be solved using the support of community members/peers or other resources?

**Summary (5 minutes):**

Summarize what resources were identified by the students and what resources seemed to provide them with the most support for accomplishing their goal. Emphasize how they worked together (communication) as a team and how it made this activity successful or stressful.

Talk about some challenges that the students face and how others have similar problems. Would it be beneficial to work together on these problems or share resources?

**Supplies and Costs:**

Masking tape (or other alternative "markers" for activity)

**References:**

Jones, A. (1999). *Team-building activities for every group*. Richland, WA: Rec Room Publishing.

**Name of group:** Boundin' - Responding to Life's Challenges

**Session Purpose:** This activity is focused on character and coping from the 7 C's of resilience. The activity is an approach to help students distinguish between healthy and unhealthy alternatives to social and mental health issues. It's objective is to positively influence student health practices and behaviors by integrating personalized strategies for decision making that engage students based on their interest and motivation.

**Session Goals:**

The goal of the session is to watch a short film and discuss the problem that was encountered and how the lamb in the film copes with his problem and eventually overcomes. This activity was originally designed for middle school students but was found to also be effective with high school students and the cartoon provides a certain level of silliness for the students to enjoy.

- Objective #1: To identify resilient and non-resilient decisions and alternatives to meeting life's challenges.
- Objective #2: Help students set a personal goal to increase resiliency.
  - This part is OPTIONAL w/ Appendix D.

**Group Leader Role:**

The advisor will facilitate a whole-group discussion that relates to the film and choose different questions for the group to address. If desired, the advisor can list both resilient and non-resilient alternatives to meeting life's challenges that students suggest on the board during class discussion.

Following the discussion, the teacher should emphasize that challenges are a regular part of life. When challenges and adversity are presented, individuals must decide between healthy and unhealthy choices. Attempts to cope using unhealthy choices may lead to additional difficulty. By contrast, building resilience can help individuals to cope with difficulty in healthful ways. Resilient individuals still experience difficulty, yet they are able to manage their challenges through positive thoughts, behaviors, and actions.

**PROCEDURES**

**Introduction:**

The introduction includes a quick talk about how we all face challenges in life and there is no set way for overcoming those challenges so we all define our own strategies. Then the video "Boundin'" is played for the students, it is a short, 4-minute film that can be found at the beginning of the movie "The Incredibles".

**Activity:**

1. Watch a clip or listen to a story of how a fictional character encounters a difficult situation.
  - a. In this short film, the situation is a lamb who has all his beautiful wool sheared off and is then loses his feeling of worth.
2. Discuss strategies for the lamb to overcome the difficulty they faced.

3. This should then lead to a discussion of what is an obstacle or difficulty that each person in the group has faced and what was their strategy to overcome this problem.
4. Allow the group to share other ideas for problem solving or coping.

Questions for discussion may include:

- a. What difficulty or challenge did the lamb encounter?
- b. What are some of the difficulties or challenges that students face?
- c. How did the lamb initially respond to this challenge?
- d. What are some nonresilient (unhealthy) choices the lamb could have made?
- e. What are some nonresilient (unhealthy) choices individuals sometimes make in responding to challenges?
- f. What resilient (healthy) choices did the lamb make?
- g. What are some resilient (healthy) choices individuals make in responding to challenges?
- h. How did the jackalope help the lamb?
- i. Did the lamb's challenge go away?
- j. How did the lamb respond to this challenge thereafter?
- k. What differences can choosing to respond to challenges with resilience make in life?

**Sharing:** What are some personal challenges you have encountered/faced and how did you respond to this challenge?

**Processing:** How did you feel about the choices you made and what are some other approaches you could have taken?

**Generalizing:** Ask the rest of the group to provide ideas and suggestions for other ways to manage how they encounter the situation. What are other approaches?

**Application:** Do they see a best way for dealing with a problem they have encountered?

**Summary:** Advisor will summarize healthy and negative ways that the students have dealt with stressful situations and reinforce how the support of peers and suggestions they provided might be ways to approach future situations.

**Supplies and Costs:**

TV/DVD or computer monitor  
DVD – Boundin' – A 4-minute Pixar film

**References:**

Cougar Hall, P., & West, J. H. (2012). Boundin': Responding to Life Challenges With Resilience. *Journal of School Health, 82*(4), 196-200.

Appendix D: Resilience-Building Worksheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

- 1) Think about a specific goal that you can set to build personal resilience this week.

**MY GOAL IS:**

- 2) Be sure the goal is achievable and measureable

**I will measure my goal by:**

- 3) Assess your current behavior related to resiliency. Where are you now? Where do you want to be by the end of the week?

**Currently I am:**

- 4) Make a plan. What steps do you need to take to reach your goal? How can your family, friends, or classmates help you in reaching this goal?

**Steps needed to reach this goal include:**

**My friends, family, or classmates can help me by:**

- 5) Evaluate your progress. Briefly note how you did each day in building resilience?

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

## Strategies for Building Resilience

### 1. Work on relationships with family.

Good relationships with family members are important. While you are becoming more independent, it is important to remain close with family who can provide strength and encouragement during difficulty.

### 2. Develop a relationship with a mentor.

A mentor is a responsible person who can offer guidance and support when needed. Extended relatives, teachers, coaches, and clergy are each examples of possible mentors. These individuals can help during difficulty by offering advice, providing perspective, and helping you access needed resources.

### 3. Choose responsible and supportive friends.

Responsible friends will likely encourage you to respond to life challenges with dignity and respect. Supportive friends will take the time to listen and provide thoughtful advice. Choose your friends wisely.

### 4. Confront feelings.

Dealing with feelings and emotions during difficult times is challenging, yet important. Avoid denying thoughts, feelings, and emotions. Rather, find helpful ways for expressing yourself during a challenge. Talking to others and writing in a journal can be helpful in working through difficult feelings.

### 5. Choose healthful coping strategies.

Harmful reactions to life challenges only make matters worse. Resist any inclination to cope with challenges through substance abuse, violence, unlawfulness, or other unhealthful behavior. Healthful strategies may include exercise, deep breathing, and doing something you enjoy.

### 6. Ask for support during times of need.

Resilient people learn to rely on those around them in accessing help. Asking for help is a sign of humility and resourcefulness, not weakness. Do not expect others to know what you need without your asking.

### 7. Identify a support group.

Support groups are made up of others who are experiencing, or have experienced, similar challenges. Support groups provide an opportunity for sharing thoughts and feelings in a safe place. Many find it helpful to learn how others have responded to similar challenges.

### 8. Participate in school and extracurricular activities.

A sense of belonging can be important during times of difficulty. Actively participating in school activities can help young people feel connected to others and increase resilience.

### 9. Engage in healthful behaviors.

Coping well with adversity requires a proactive approach. Getting plenty of sleep, exercising regularly, and eating healthful foods are very important during challenging times.

### 10. Serving others.

Serving others helps to put one's own challenges in perspective. Acts of service also release chemicals in the brain helping individuals feel relaxed, happy, and energized.

# Resiliency Resources

# Miller Education Center Advisory Program

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## Needs Assessment

**Chantelle Bernier, Jackie Sinauskas, Diona Wikum**

Pacific University

Miller Education Center (MEC) is an alternative high-school within the Hillsboro School District. It provides a safe educational environment for middle school and high school students who are not succeeding in a traditional middle school or high school. Most students are referred to MEC by a teacher or counselor from school, then must apply and interview with the principal in order to attend. The student population at MEC is considered “at-risk” because of a variety of characteristics that make them less likely to succeed academically; many come from challenging situations at home that influence their ability to focus in school. Other students work part-time in order to support their families and therefore find the traditional school setting too demanding and schedule to be very overwhelming.

MEC asked for assistance creating and organizing a new advisory program, due to concerns that their current advisory program lacks structure, organization and integration with their curriculum. Advising is a very important program for at-risk youth and holds a lot of potential to promote health and wellness. Benson & Poliner (2013) provide the following definition of advisory programs:

*In an advisory program, students meet regularly with a small group of peers and an advisor over multiple years; such programs give every student a mentor. Advisory groups can include activities or discussions, but they aren't academic classes. Advisor-advisee interactions are low-pressure and supportive. Advisories build community; they promote academic success, social-emotional learning, and postsecondary planning; and they can support the community when tragedies occur. (p. 51)*

MEC would like a revised and enriched advisory program and they would like it to be based upon the concept of resiliency. This needs assessment analyzes the data collected through the lens of these models: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological theory of development and the Person-Environment-Occupation model. The remainder of this paper will discuss the team's research findings, and recommendations for a new advisory program at MEC.

### **Population:**

MEC exists to serve at-risk youth by providing access to education necessary to achieve a GED or high school diploma. The goal is reached through reducing the barriers that exist which inhibit performance in the school environment as well as by providing modified classes that match their abilities. Along with this, MEC strives to provide a “just right challenge” while increasing support for its students for the purpose of gaining the necessary skills to be successful outside of the school environment. The goal is that these skills will help them independently succeed in employment or higher education.

The population at MEC is 60% female and 40% male between the ages of 12-18 which is consistent with the average ages in middle and high school. Currently, there are around 84 high school students at MEC with more juniors and seniors than freshman and sophomores. The middle school program consists of 12-14 year olds and many of them are here due to major behavioral and emotional issues. These individuals are all considered to be at-risk and come from a wide range of backgrounds, lifestyles, cultures and ethnicities. The population at MEC consists of 55% white, 4% African American, 2% Asian and 6% American Indian. They come to MEC with a breadth of life experiences and personal histories which have impacted them greatly making it necessary to access

the services of MEC to gain the support needed in order to be successful. Although MEC has many smaller programs, we have conducted a needs assessment focusing specifically on the high school population per stakeholder's request.

The high school population at MEC exhibits a wide range of at-risk characteristics and is estimated to engage in a variety of at-risk behaviors including: abusing alcohol and other substances, failing in school, committing crimes, and engaging in unprotected sex. Morris (2000) describes risk factors associated with these behaviors that jeopardize the healthy social, emotional and behavioral development of young children. These include: low self-esteem, teen parenthood, inadequate opportunities for success in school, lack of motivation, insecure attachment, parents with depression and other mental health issues, parents with drugs and alcohol addictions, poverty, social isolation, gang affiliations, physical disabilities and other physiological problems, development and language delays, exposure to domestic violence or other traumas, physical and emotional abuse and neglect. All of these risk factors dramatically increase the chance that these populations will have difficulty in school or will develop behavioral issues. Students that exhibit these risk factors are unlikely to graduate from high school and have a higher dropout rate (Henderson, 2013).

### **Partnering Community Organization**

Miller Education Center has a mission of teaching students in the way they learn best and provide them with alternative paths to education. Their mission is supported by providing inventive and individualized educational opportunities in order to develop self-esteem, and increased responsibility. MEC supports Hillsboro School District strategic goals which are to decrease the dropout rates by 50%. In 2012, 12.6% of all students in the Hillsboro School district dropped out of high school ("Hillsboro High School 2012 Graduation Rates," 2013)

The staff at MEC consists of two teachers per each grade, principal, guidance counselor, and the secretary/receptionist. The class sizes average between 10-17 students and because of the low student to teacher ratio, it allows for small group instruction. This is an important support for the students at MEC.

MEC offers a variety of programs to meet the needs of the students. The high school provides an onsite day care for teen parents. They also offer both parenting classes and early childhood education to enhance performance in their roles as parents. MEC provides access to afterschool programs which provide a safe environment for these youth to engage in activities that are both meaningful and productive.

### **Environmental Contexts and Stakeholders:**

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model was the beginning of risk and resilience framework, designed by an ecological theorist to show that child and adolescent development is greatly affected by interactions "between the biological, psychological, and social characteristics of a child and conditions in her or his family, peer group, school, and community" (Anthony, Alter & Jenson, 2009). In this model, the systems include the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. (See Appendix A)

Within the microsystem the child and adult relationships are formed. These one-on-one relationships and interactions occur in environments such as homes and schools. The main part of the microsystem that we are focusing on is the high school that these youth attend, MEC, which

includes the teachers and counselors. Many of the students at MEC have families that have decreased capacity to provide adequate guidance into adulthood for reasons such as addiction, family conflict, mental health issues and homelessness. Overall, family systems tend to be of lower socioeconomic status, and are less educated. Many of these students are also parents which decreases their capacity to fully engage in a role as a student. Hanging out with friends has been identified by students at MEC as important. It would appear that the peers and social interactions of the students have a major impact in their development. The areas contained within a community are the neighborhoods in Hillsboro where the students live, connection to students at Pacific University, and gangs and job opportunities.

The mesosystem is how the different microsystem components interact. The mesosystem includes the interrelations that take place between two or more environments such as home and school, or home and community. These are environments where youth spend much of their time. At MEC, the youth spend five hours a day in school which becomes an opportunity to foster healthy relationships through the advisory program with faculty and staff members. A goal of the new advisory program is to help promote development of these healthy relationships. This would include strategies for teachers to interact with counselors about how to best advocate for students. Keeping communication between staff open plays a major role in making sure issues are quickly addressed. This might also include how the staff at MEC keep parents informed about the relationship that the school has with other community partners such as Pacific University.

Within two Bronfenbrenner's systems lies the microsystem and exosystem. Research shows that both play crucial roles affecting how at-risk youth learn to cope and become resourceful individuals in spite of negative circumstances and adversity. These systems also influence each other in that they impact the degree of success at-risk youth experience in developing protective factors and resilience-based traits. The system that influence at risk youth indirectly is the exosystem. These include welfare agencies, public health departments at not only the local level, but also the state and federal levels. The Hillsboro school district is in charge of determining requirements for the students to graduate and sets the budget which determines the funding of programs at MEC. These all are responsible for distributing resources and deciding what practices in schools take place as well as school policies which all affect development of youth indirectly.

Our culture, the macrosystem, decides the specific rules, values and norms that define the importance of youth resilience development. However, this same culture may stereotype at risk youth, become hostile and unsympathetic towards them, throughout their lives; negatively impacting development into adulthood. Another system, found at the macrosystem level is our political system. This system is very influential in that it delegates money towards programming based on resiliency. Therefore at risk youth rely on this system to help break down the barriers that exist and provide the necessary resources needed to acquire the protective factors in their lives in order to cope, thrive and ultimately function in everyday life.

These systems put pressure on youth as they develop. Within the Ecological model, these systems influence one another and have an effect on whether or not at risk youth acquire the abilities to survive when negative circumstances are encountered. If disruptions occur during any of these interactions within the systems, it creates risk which creates a need for protective factors to negate them. According to Brendtro (2006), the most powerful interventions with children and youth are those that seek to build a supportive ecology around a child. That is why the development of a new advisory program based on resilience would be an influential protective intervention.

## Conclusions

After collecting data using various approaches (see Appendices B & C), we have concluded that the priorities for MEC is to create a successful advisory program that helps build resiliency within the youth. According to Zimmerman (2013) “resiliency theory provides a conceptual framework for considering a strengths-based approach to understanding child and adolescent development and informing intervention design.” The goal of this program is to approach advisory from a strength based model by promoting internal and environmental protective factors, as demonstrated by the person, environment and occupation interactions for each student (see Appendix D). By promoting these protective factors, we help mitigate risk factors increasing academic and life success (Henderson 2013). The first set of protective factors that need to be addressed relate directly to the person. These are considered internal protective factors. Henderson (2013) provides a list of protective factors that foster resiliency. This list includes: relationships; service/helpfulness; life skills; humor; inner direction; perceptiveness; independence; positive view of personal future; flexibility; love of learning; self-motivation; competence; self-worth; spirituality; perseverance and creativity.

The environmental protective factors will help create a safe context for these characteristics to be built. According to Council of Urban Boards of Education (CUBE) and the National School Boards Association (NSBA), six environmental factors are considered to be most important for building resiliency in a school climate. They include: (1) feelings of safety amongst staff and students (2) supportive relationships within the school (3) engagement and empowerment of students as valued members and resources within the school community, (4) clear rules and boundaries that are understood by all students and staff, (5) high expectations for academic achievement, and appropriate behavior and (6) trust, respect and an ethos of caring. Imbedded within this advisory program, will be specific training for the staff at MEC to help strengthen external factors. Our goal is to strengthen internal and external factors, to enhance their roles as student and as members of their community through activities that promote and enhance skills that promote resiliency.

## Recommendations & Action Plan

(see Appendix E for detailed Action Plan)

We have four recommendations for MEC:

1. Add elements of resiliency to your current advisory program
2. Incorporate staff training on resiliency based approaches before implementation of new advisory program.
3. Lengthen the schedule for the current advisory period to allow for longer advising sessions. *Benson and Poliner (2013), suggests that when redesigning an advisory program based on resilience, it is important to consider scheduling of advisory periods. It is more beneficial to have one longer advisory period per week than shorter ones multiple times a week to allow for students to fully engage the topics being discussed.*
4. Utilize the OTD students in OTD 625 to implement resiliency based approaches and strategies to further support the staff in this new advisory program.

## Goals

**Outcome:** Help MEC students gain skills in order to successfully graduate high school and pursue secondary education or a job.

**Goal 1:** MEC students will experience an increase in self-efficacy within their role as a student and a community member.

**Objective 1:** After completion of 2 sessions of the advisory program based on resiliency, 50% of MEC students will make positive self-statements when asked to state their positive qualities.

**Objective 2:** After completion of 2 sessions of the advisory program based on resiliency, 50% of MEC students will demonstrate skills that support engagement in volunteer or paid work, or job shadowing (i.e., completed resume, completed application etc.)

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**Goal 2:** MEC students will identify appropriate goals for themselves to be successful in their role as a student and in the community.

**Objective 1:** After completion of the 'coping management skills session' in advisory, 50% MEC students will identify 2 barriers to accomplishing their goals.

**Objective 2:** After completion of the 'coping management skills' session, 50% MEC students will develop 3 strategies that address the barriers identified by the student in order to successfully participate in school.

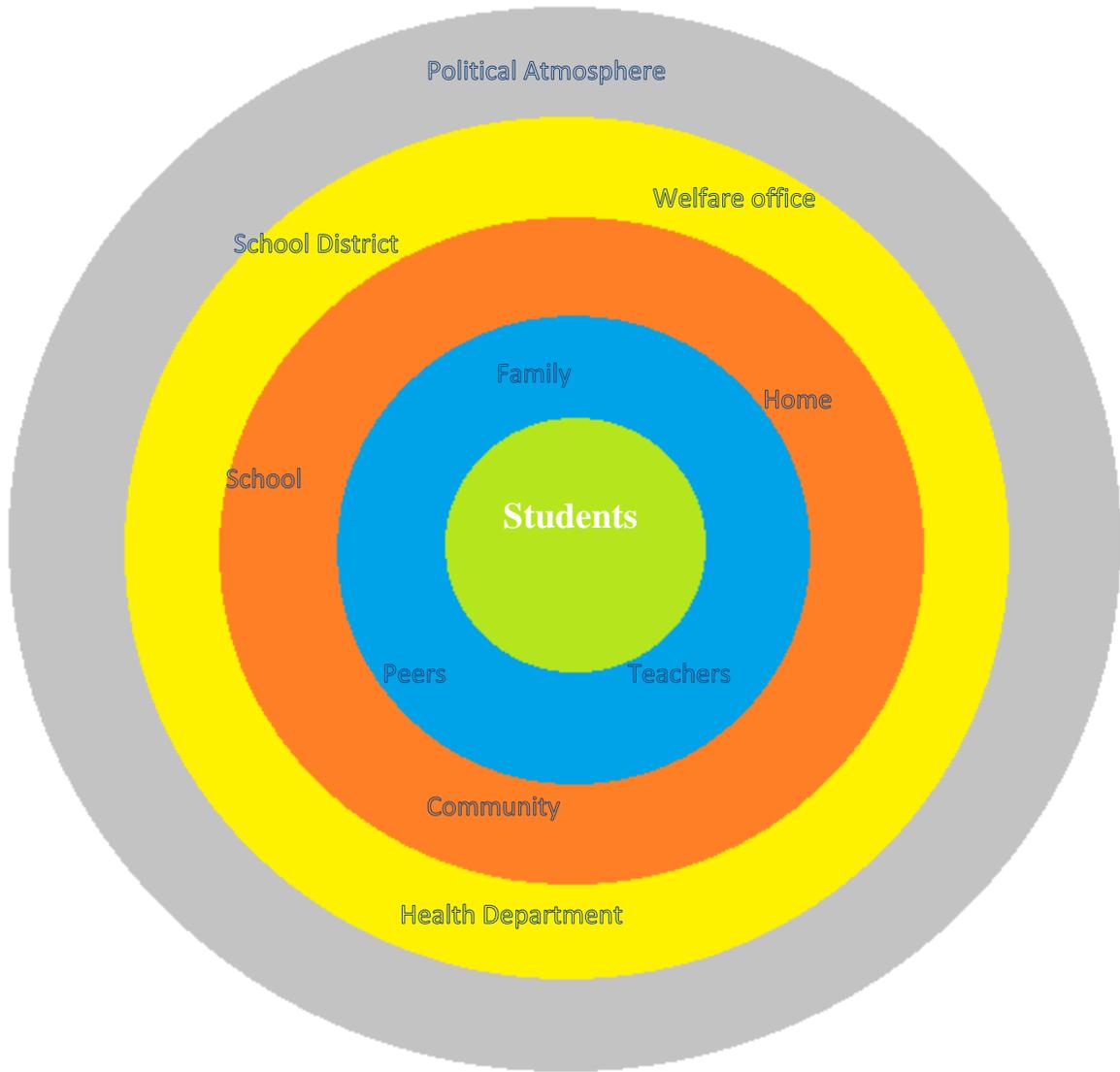
**Explanation of the ladder technique:** "One Rung at a time" is a technique helping children reach their goals. There are two different ladders, one with all of the habits/behaviors that you do to keep you staying the way you are (on each rung), the other ladder lists steps that you take (each step is a sequential rung) to reach the goal. Begin working at the bottom of the ladder one rung at a time (Ginsberg, 2011).

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**Appendix A**

Ecological Systems Model: The systems interacting with students at Miller Education Center



Macrosystem	Exosystem
Mesosystem	Microsystem

**Appendix B**

**Student Survey & Results: Student impressions of advisory program**

**Survey**

The purpose of this survey is to gather information relating to your feelings and opinions about your current advisory program. Currently you meet twice a week for 20 minutes each meeting. Some activities done in advisory have been: Team-building games, reviewing transcripts, and group discussions.

Please help us to improve the quality of advising by completing this survey thoughtfully and honestly. Your answers are fully confidential; there will be no way to link you to any of your answers. The information we collect will be used to evaluate the usefulness of the schools current advisory program. Thanks in advance for your help.

**1. How many years have you been a part of this Advisory Program? (Circle the appropriate answer)**

1 year	2 years	3 years	4 years
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**For statements 2-10, circle the best number that represents your feelings about that statement.**

Definitely Yes!	I think so	Not sure	I don't think so	Definitely No!
1	2	3	4	5

<b>2. We discuss important topics in advisory that I feel are helpful to my success in school.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>3. Advisory is a great place to get to know my peers.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>4. I feel like my advisor knows me well.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>5. I feel comfortable going to my advisor if I need help.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>6. I feel comfortable going to my advisory teacher if I need help with an issue related to life outside of school.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>7. I feel comfortable sharing information with my peers in advisory.</b>	1	2	3	4	5

<b>8. Skills I've learned in advisory have helped with outside the classroom.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>9. I enjoy attending advisory.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>10. I prefer to meet one on one with my advisor instead of in groups.</b>	1	2	3	4	5

**1. What are your interests outside of school?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**2. I would like MORE of these activities and topics in Advising Period (Circle all that apply)**

Current Events	College Prep	Team Building	Peer Pressure
Personal Identity	Group Games	Personality testing	Stress Management
Read Aloud	Goal Setting	Career Testing	Family Heritage Physical
Activity Self-Esteem	Safe Sex Discussion	Other _____	
Silent Reading	Problem Solving	Relationship Skills	

**3. I would like LESS of these activities and topics in Advising Period (Circle all that apply)**

Current Events	College Prep	Team Building	Peer Pressure
Personal Identity	Group Games	Personality testing	Stress Management
Read Aloud	Goal Setting	Career Testing	Family Heritage Physical
Activity Self-Esteem	Safe Sex Discussion	Other _____	
Silent Reading	Problem Solving	Relationship Skills	

**4. What are advisor qualities that help you feel comfortable to share in your advisory group?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**5. What is your focus or goal during advising most often?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**6. What is your biggest fear about getting a job or going to college?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Results**

- The majority of students showed that they had been a part of the current advisory program for 1 year (19/34 students).
- The next large group of students showed that they had been a part of the current advisory program for 2 years (10/34 students)

- The remainder students showed that they had been a part of the current advisory program for 3 years (4/34) and only one (1/34) stated they had been apart for a couple of weeks.

**Likert scale:**

- The majority of the students feel that important topics are discussed in advisory (16/34), it's a great place to get to know peers (17/34), feel like their advisor knows them well (18/34), and feel comfortable going to their advisor for help (23/34).
- When asked how comfortable they were with the following questions, the majority of students answered, "I think so."
- Going to advisor for issues relating to outside of school
- Sharing with their peers in advisory
- Whether they enjoy attending advisory
- There were a large majority that stated they would prefer to meet one on one with advisor instead of in a group setting.

**Open-ended:**

The major themes that came out of the completed open-ended relating to the interests the students held outside of the school environment included

- Drawing (art)
- Helping others
- Sports (soccer, skating, walking)
- Family/friends
- Spending time with their kids
- Web surfing

**Select all that apply:**

The main activities and topics students would like **more** of in Advisory period include: group games, college prep, relationship skills, stress management, and current events. The results from students was:

- Group games (13), college prep (12), Relationship skills (9), Stress management (8), current events (8), Physical activity (7), Goal setting (7), Team building (6), career testing (6), Safe sex education (5), Self esteem (4), Silent reading (4), Family heritage (4), Personal identity (4), Peer pressure (4), Problem solving (3), Read aloud (2),

The main activities and topics students would like **less** of in Advisory Period include: read aloud, personality testing, and silent reading. The results from students was:

- Read aloud (9), Personality testing (7), Silent reading (7), Family heritage (6), Group games (5), Stress management (5), Personal identity (4), Relationship skills (4), Current events (3), Career testing (3), Physical activity (3), Safe Sex Discussion (3), Problem solving (3), Self-Esteem (2), and (2) other students stated "We don't do anything in advising."

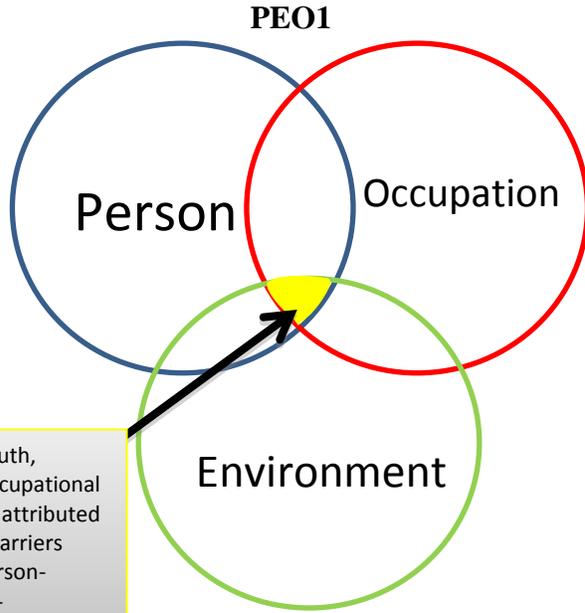
**Appendix C**

SWOT Analysis – Miller Education Center

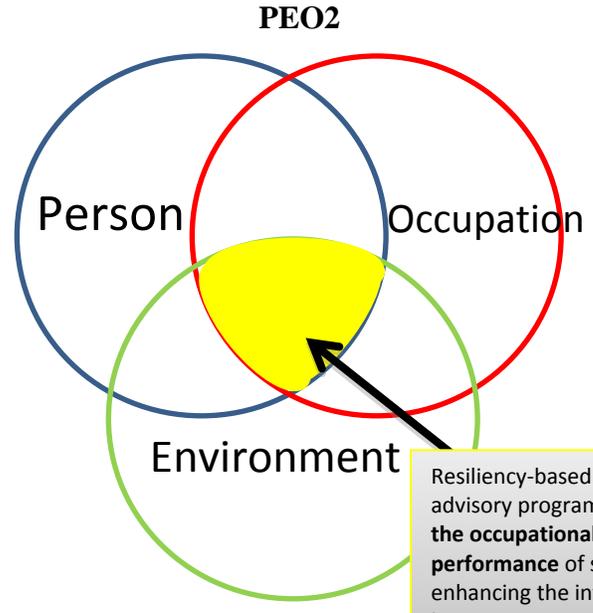
<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Small staff to student ratio</li> <li>● Resources (community)</li> <li>● In school day care (for student parents)</li> <li>● Modified curriculum</li> <li>● shorter school days</li> <li>● After school programs have established positive outcomes with building social interactions among peers</li> <li>● Sandra’s relationship with MEC</li> <li>● Regular student/staff meetings</li> <li>● Positive staff attitudes</li> <li>● Ambassadors club (student leadership mentored by Stan)</li> <li>● Staff members motivated to help students succeed</li> <li>● Students identified that advisory is somewhat helpful to them through survey</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Staff turnover</li> <li>● Lacking scheduling time</li> <li>● Lack of funding</li> <li>● Lack of interest from students</li> <li>● Lack of motivation from students</li> <li>● Limited number of staff</li> <li>● No prior advisory programming based on resilience</li> <li>● They need an established process for evaluating the effectiveness of new programs</li> <li>● Lack of graduation completion</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Development of a new advisory program based on resilience</li> <li>● Students will have the opportunity to learn new skills from activities within Advisory</li> <li>● Opportunities for peer-leadership and mentoring</li> <li>● The at-risk youth can potentially become mentors for other children as the program progresses</li> <li>● There is potential for social and cultural development</li> <li>● Students could discover new and productive roles that are otherwise undetected within school setting</li> <li>● Mentors</li> <li>● Strengthening relationships with community partners like Pacific</li> <li>● Teaching students new skills that will help them prepare for future career opportunities and higher education</li> <li>● Compare redesigned curriculum to other successful advisory curriculums</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Low graduation rate</li> <li>● Poverty stricken neighborhoods</li> <li>● Distribution of drugs</li> <li>● lack of faculty support (less than 100%)</li> <li>● Students may view advisory as part of the school day</li> <li>● Attendance and participation will be a factor with development of advisory</li> <li>● Overarching culture/society has negative perception/stereotypes of this population (at-risk youth)</li> <li>● Student/citizen issues (poor preparation/illiteracy)</li> </ul>

Appendix D

P-E-O model comparison: "Resiliency-Based approach" increases occupational performance for at-risk youth



For at-risk youth, decreased occupational performance attributed to different barriers related to person-environment-occupation factors.



Resiliency-based approach to advisory program **increases the occupational performance** of students by enhancing the interactions between person, environment & occupation

**PEO1 – Effect on occupational performance due to barriers for those labeled “at-risk youth”**

<p><b>Person:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behavioral issues</li> <li>• Lacking motivation</li> <li>• Low self-efficacy</li> <li>• Criminal behaviors</li> <li>• Insecure attachment</li> <li>• Exposure to emotional/physical abuse</li> </ul>
<p><b>Environment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poverty</li> <li>• Low SES</li> <li>• Lacking stability</li> <li>• Lacking supportive parents</li> <li>• Lacking access to healthcare</li> </ul>
<p><b>Occupation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students</li> <li>• Parents</li> <li>• Part-time employees</li> </ul>

**PEO2- Occupational performance after success in resiliency-based approach to advisory programs**

<p><b>Person:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceptiveness of social behaviors</li> <li>• Enjoy learning</li> <li>• Creativity</li> <li>• Positive expectations</li> <li>• Self motivation</li> <li>• Development of role identity</li> </ul>
<p><b>Environment provides:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caring and support</li> <li>• Opportunity to learn life skills</li> <li>• Communicates high expectations</li> <li>• Access to resources</li> <li>• Emphasis on building community</li> <li>• Reflective practice</li> <li>• Opportunity for meaningful occupation</li> <li>• Encourages social bonding</li> </ul>
<p><b>Occupation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic success</li> <li>• Gainful employment</li> <li>• Able to manage stress and anxiety</li> <li>• Improved confidence to care for self &amp; children</li> </ul>

**Appendix E**

Action Plan

<p>1. Develop 2-4 activity modules for advisory program based on resiliency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Narrow our focus to specific chosen areas of resiliency to be covered in the advisory program</li> <li>● Develop specific activities that relate to the characteristics of resiliency</li> </ul>	<p>February 1, 2014</p>
<p>2. Train MEC staff on resiliency based approach and pilot modules</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Teachers will incorporate the resiliency approach or model into their advising sessions with the youth.</li> </ul>	<p>March 1, 2014</p>
<p>3. Train OTD students on resiliency based approach</p>	<p>March 31, 2014</p>
<p>4. Pilot 2-4 activity modules with OTD students</p>	<p>April 1, 2014</p>
<p>5. Collect feedback from OTD students on the effectiveness of activity modules</p>	<p>April 1, 2014</p>
<p>6. Develop remainder of activity modules for advisory program</p>	<p>April 15, 2014</p>
<p>7. Use opportunities with OTD 625 to implement added activity modules with MEC youth</p>	<p>April 30, 2014</p>
<p>8. Develop and implement a pretest/posttest survey to test the effectiveness of the advisory program based on resilience.</p>	<p>May 1, 2014</p>

**Using mentor programs to improve resilience for at-risk youth in secondary schools:**

What are strategies for improving the quality and duration of school-based mentor relationships?

Jaclyn Sinauskas

Pacific University

The development and implementation of mentor and advisory programs within schools has increased significantly over the past decade to be one of the country's most popular interventions for improving the lives of disadvantaged and at-risk youth (Wheeler, Keller & DuBois, 2010). Mentor and advisory programs have been proven as effective strategies for working with at-risk youth to develop resilience by developing a supportive relationship with an adult outside of the family, providing young individuals facing adversity with guidance and encouragement in the form of mentoring. This interaction can be structured differently depending on the school; most programs use one-on-one while some use group interactions and the frequency at which they occur might be monthly or more regular. Research points out that the most beneficial relationships are between those that meet more frequently and for longer periods of time (Wood & Mayo-Wilson, 2012).

In a survey from a Colorado school district with a high rate of identified at-risk youth, students that reported they had a supportive adult relationship within the school were 3.5 times more likely to graduate or remain in high school than students that did not report having a positive relationship with an adult in school (Black, Grenard, Sussman, & Rohrbach, 2010). The at-risk youth population aged between 13-18 years faces a lower success rate of graduating from high school and overcoming life obstacles with a positive outcome due to a number of mental health and ecological factors such as poverty, abusive/violent homes, parents with addiction, maladaptive behaviors, and absence of supportive relationships (McKay, 2010; Wood & Mayo-Wilson, 2012). These risk factors have shown affect individuals by creating negative feelings of self-worth, maladaptive coping skills, and increased risk-taking behaviors. Resilience is a term used to describes one's ability to overcome such risk and more specifically refers to a set of

skills and characteristics that allows individuals to adjust and cope effectively with life's challenges (Alvord, Grados, & Zucker, 2011), leading to a more successful life.

Evidence produced regarding the effectiveness of school-based mentor programs in the past few years has been limited and a review of the literature suggests that the interplay of several different factors such as goals, structure, and culture, produces variable results (Karcher, Kuperminc, Portwood, Sipe, & Taylor, 2006). This inconsistency of findings suggests that by looking at how particular components support quality and thus benefit the program might be a better approach to understanding how programs can be improved. A majority of the youth mentoring literature illustrates that effective youth mentoring is fundamentally rooted in the quality of the relationship, the interactions that occur within it, and the developmental affordances that relationship provides for the mentee so the purpose of this paper is to review the literature regarding mentorships, focusing specifically on the contexts that support the quality and duration of the mentoring relationships (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010).

### *Developing a Framework*

The evidence published about school-based mentoring programs have all guided the development of their programs using suggested theories, models and theoretical frameworks that are intended to support the development of resilience in at-risk youth. Some of these approaches to structuring programs use well-developed models and others look at developmental domains of youth protective factors to integrate how a new approach can support the unique goals of a proposed program. Research in the past few years relies heavily on the components of risk and resilience, positive youth development, ecological systems, cultural competence, and cognitive behavioral models (Alvord, Grados, & Zucker, 2011, Kia-Keating, Dowdy, Morgan, & Noam,

2011, Keller & Pryce, 2012, Lee & Stewart, 2013). Goals and intervention for these programs tend to focus on academic improvement, improving resilience, supporting social/emotional/identity development and school connectedness (Smith, 2012). These models can help set up effective youth programs, but they are difficult to use after the fact in pinpointing what works. Very few studies have *focused* their model approach on how to improve the quality of mentor relationships but the analysis and results of several studies show that their framework *supports* the development of a higher quality and longer lasting relationship.

Positive youth development is one of the most frequently referenced approaches to resilience development, it aims to promote the development of strengths and skills to be able to improve future outcomes, using a preparatory approach. A risk and resilience approach also looks at how to improve protective factors and skills but its perspective considers healthy development in the face of significant adversity (Kia-Keating, Dowdy, Morgan, & Noam, 2011). While both of these approaches both identify the role of a supportive adult as a key to helping at-risk youth, the risk and resilience approach places a higher value on the quality of this relationship because it takes into consideration the specific risk factors that an individual is currently facing in their unique environment. One particular helpful strategy used with this approach and to improve the mentor bond is by pairing youth facing particular environmental risks with a mentor that has also experienced a similar level of risk (Karcher, Kuperminc, Portwood, Sipe, & Taylor, 2006; London & Guranz, 2010; Smith, 2012). The positive youth development approach is also important for supporting the development of strengths related to resilience but it needs to integrate current risk to increase quality of the mentor relationship.

Looking at the unique environments that at-risk youth face, many programs have integrated the ecological model as part of their structure. Resilience is described as a

developmental outcome that evolves from balancing risks and protective factors at both individual and external setting levels so it is important to consider the different systems and environments affecting the quality of mentorship (Lee & Stewart, 2013). All those involved in the school community should be part of the framework to positively influence the outcome of a mentor program by being part of or aware of the planning and initiation process. There is mounting evidence that school structures and relationships play a vital role in strengthening and sustaining this important protective factor and it is likely that it will also improve the duration of the specific mentor relationship. Therefore the use of socio-ecological principles seems like an essential component of the framework for a school-based mentor program.

### ***Using a Strength-Based Approach***

There is significant research to support the use of a strength-based approach to mentoring for students who exhibit high-risk behaviors as opposed to a risk reduction approach. A strength-based approach emphasizes that all students have unique strengths, encourages them to use and improve those strengths to plan for future success, and provides opportunities for meaningful participation, where as a risk-reducing approach focuses on fixing the “problem” (McKay, 2010). Research indicates that mentors should focus on the “thriving” factors because they support the development of self-efficacy and belief in ability (Nickerson & Fishman, 2013).

Mentors and other school personnel are potential agents of protective factors; they can notice and reinforce positive internal protective factors such as problem solving, communication skills, and perseverance. As they interact with students, they can help them to recognize and grow these traits with the support of an activity or conversation, thus becoming a resource they will be able to confide in and feel comfortable going to (Henderson, 2013). Students whose

strengths are recognized feel more empowered by this relationship and the more positive focus leads to mentor relationships characterized by mutual trust, supportiveness and goal-seeking (Nickerson & Fishman, 2013). To show the effectiveness of this approach based on the quality of mentor relationship, the program should focus on measuring outcomes that are most likely to be affected by the introduction of the adult relationship as opposed to measuring changes in school performance (Karcher et al, 2006; London & Gurantz, 2010).

This strategy could also be integrated with policies on how teachers respond to behavior violations that could be resolved in the classroom or with a mentor. Research indicates that suspensions actually increase the problem by creating more feelings of anger towards teachers and administrators as well as feelings of disconnectedness when the students return to school (Smith, 2012). Even though it is important for the mentor to communicate clear guidelines and set high expectations for students, having a positive outlook, good attitude, and willingness to work out the problem are mentoring styles that will strongly influence the course of relationship development (Keller & Pryce, 2012) and improve overall morale (Henderson, 2013).

### *Administrative Support*

Schools cannot serve as effective resilience-building environments unless they enable school personnel to function at an optimal level. Teachers who are stressed and not supported by their administrators report lower quality of a bond with their mentee/students and are less likely to be effective in supporting the development of resilience (Brooks, 2006).

The ability to maintain quality mentor relationships over longer periods of time is shown to be dependent on the level of support provided to the mentors from other teachers or administration which includes other school counselors or social workers. The more support

mentoring teachers/counselors are given, the longer the relationships with students will last which directly correlates with improved feelings toward the mentor (Keller & Pryce, 2012). One study that looked at how a socio-ecological approach to building resilience through mentoring programs, concluded that school structure and relationships play a vital role in strengthening and sustaining resilience and ensured that school-based resilience initiatives are most effective when appropriately planned and supported (Lee & Stewart, 2013). School staff may support mentors in one or more of the following ways: monitoring/feedback, recognition, training, ongoing personal development, peer coaching, group support, and planning efforts so that educator/mentors can maximize the time they spend on their main tasks (Whitney, Maras, & Schisler, 2012; Randolph & Johnson; Brooks, 2006).

Harnessing the skills of teachers and providing support in the school setting offers a sustainable and low cost method of improving student's emotional and behavioral wellbeing using mentor programs. Studies provide evidence that continued training interventions for mentors can result in significant benefits for the students and the quality of their interactions (Barry, Clarke, Jenkins & Patel, 2013). An advantage of school-based mentor programs over community programs is that administration is already present and the school district has policies in place that promote and enable the process of evaluation and research, making the school setting more feasible to support the process of monitoring program efficiency (Smith, 2012). It is important to note that the increased support from the school administration is only directly correlated with improving the duration of the mentor relationships (Karcher, 2008), though other studies indicate that a longer relationship is perceived with greater value by both the mentors and mentees (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010; Black, Grenard, Sussman, & Rohrbach, 2010).

### *Summary*

The purpose of this review was to identify specific organizational characteristics within school-based mentoring programs associated with longer term and higher quality interactions.

Specifically considered were mentor approaches, theory for developing mentoring programs, and qualities associated with longer mentor relationships. The evidence in the past few years has shown us that it is important for mentoring programs to use a developed framework or structure supporting resilience for at-risk youth, integrate the school community and use a strengths-based approach to interaction.

While there was enough research to gather information on how the structure of different programs might support the quality and duration of school-based mentorships, there is lacking evidence tied to how specific mentor qualities enhance relationships. An answer as to whether or not school-based mentoring programs are actually effective remains elusive because few programs are structured enough to provide evidence for best practice. Evidence that does exist varies depending on the program characteristics, outcomes of interest and evaluation methods. In order to build upon this knowledge and work towards an evidence-based best practice, it might be relevant to look specifically at how evaluation is effectively incorporated with the program or different types of training provided to school-based mentors that is associated with positive outcomes.

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Do Advisory Programs Affect Resilience In At-Risk Youth?

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The prevalence of at-risk youth is increasing and can be attributed to the many risk factors that exist across our nation impacting the very development of our children. The developmental stage of adolescence is an age of promise, but also a time of risk (Walsh, 2012). Currently, almost half of America's youth aged 10-24 are estimated to engage in at-risk behaviors such as abusing alcohol and other substances, committing crimes, or engaging in early unprotected intercourse (CDC, 2011). It is a belief of our society that youth who have been afflicted with many risk factors will drop out earlier than others and experience educational failure. That is why research and practice concerning outcomes for youth has focused more on the risk factors and the design of interventions to reduce those factors as well as the impact of them. Many children considered to be at-risk develop necessary coping skills enabling them to triumph over their adversities (O'Dougherty, Masten, Narayan, 2013). Therefore, it is critical to understand how some youth are able to succeed despite the overwhelming odds against them. This review is concerned with approaches that increase this resilience in at-risk youth.

The school setting is one environment, which reportedly allows for maximum resilience growth to occur in young individuals. This paper offers a review of the literature available on advisory programs in schools and their affects on resilience in at-risk youth. This paper will discuss the characteristics of resilient children and how to build protective processes within and around children within the school and other environments so that they overcome risk at critical times in their lives. The paper outlines a research-based definition of at-risk youth, resilience, and advisory programs in high schools. Finally, this literature review will cover a discussion of how the utilization of multiple interventions, including advisory programs in high schools can be used to affect resilience in at-risk youth. A range of settings, including school, family and community based, are considered.

Through reviewing the literature, several studies relating to interventions that influence resilience in at-risk youth are explored and suggestions are provided for future research in what best practice is for reducing risk in youth. The conclusion addresses the following question: *Do advisory programs affect resilience in at risk youth?* After reviewing the literature, it is clear that several studies relating to approaches that affect resilience in at-risk youth do not only focus on the individual, but school, family, as well as the community. Below are the results of the studies

included in this literature review relating to the various approaches used to affect resilience in at risk youth.

#### *Definition of at-risk youth*

An at-risk student is a student who, by virtue of their circumstances, is statistically more likely than others to fail academically. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) uses the term at-risk to define these youth as having been victimized by a number of health, social, emotional and economic related factors. The National Center for Education Statistics (2010) lists the following factors that lead to an “at-risk” label for youth: low socioeconomic status, negative peer pressure, poverty, exposure to domestic violence, physical and emotional abuse or neglect, and a wide range of other health issues such as poor mental and sexual health. These factors lead to at-risk behaviors such as abusing alcohol and other substances, failing school, committing crimes and much more. The term “at-risk” has been used in education as a descriptor of youth even though the term actually applies to the conditions of their lives, specifically these above risk factors such as poverty and socioeconomic status.

#### *Definition of resilience*

Resiliency is generally defined as the ability to thrive in spite of adversity (Brentro & Longhurst). Succeeding against all odds is the meaning behind this term. There are at-risk youth that despite the odds against them, and their hardships, have developed the necessary coping skills to succeed in school. The road to resilience lies in working through the emotions and effects of stress and painful events. A combination of factors contributes to resilience. Many studies show that the primary external factor in resilience is having caring and supporting relationships within and outside the family. Internal protective factors that foster resilience include: relationships, helpfulness, life skills, humor, inner direction, perceptiveness, independence, positive view of personal future, flexibility, love of learning, self-motivation, competence, self-worth, spirituality, perseverance, and creativity (Henderson 2013). The American Psychological Association defines resilience as *not* a trait that people have or do *not* have. It involves the above behaviors, thoughts and actions that can be learned and developed by anyone.

*Definition of advisory programs*

According to Benson & Poliner (2013), advisory programs are for high school students to meet regularly with a small group of peers and an advisor over multiple years. Advisory groups can include activities or discussions, but they are not academic classes. They are low pressure and supportive. In 2009, the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) published *Helping Students Navigate the Path to College*, a guide that describes evidence-based practices that improve postsecondary access for high school students (Tierney, Bailey, Constantine, Finkelstein, & Hurd, 2009). The guide specifies that advisory programs are considered to be an evidence based practice that helps to build community, promote academic success, social-emotional learning, postsecondary planning; and ultimately support the community when tragedies occur. (IES, 2009). The goal of high school advisory programs is to foster student's strengths and support organizational resilience, while improving these individuals quality of life.

**School-based interventions**

There are eight studies in this review looking at school-based interventions as a strategy to affect resilience in at-risk youth (Aspy, Vesely, Oman, Tolma, Rodine, Marshall, & Fluhr, 2011; Benson & Poliner 2013; Henderson, 2013; O'Dougherty, Masten, Narayan, 2013; Perkins, 2006; Theron, 2012; Walsh, 2012; Zimmerman, 2013). They all showed that schools are filled with conditions that promote resilience. These conditions included those such as caring, encouraging, relationships, role models and mentors, many conditions found within advisory programs in high schools. A theme found throughout these studies suggests student's resilience is fostered when his or her internal environmental protective factors are strengthened (Henderson, 2013). Six of the eight studies expressed the importance of caring advisors in a school environment as potential agents of these protective factors (Aspy, Vesely, Oman, Tolma, Rodine, Marshall, & Fluhr, 2011; Benson & Poliner 2013; Henderson, 2013; O'Dougherty, Masten, Narayan, 2013; Perkins, 2006; Theron, 2012; Walsh, 2012). Henderson (2013) reported how advisors have the abilities to reinforce students internal protective factors-such as easy temperament, good reasoning skills, self-esteem, and internal locus of control. Benson & Poliner (2013) reported how they also have the abilities to create classroom and school cultures that are infused with environmental protective factors such as opportunities for meaningful participation,

caring and support, social bonding, life skills, setting clear and consistent boundaries and high expectations.

In a comprehensive study on the importance of school climate, Perkins (2006) focused on the effects of advisory programs in school districts across the U.S. This study found that the use of advisory programs in schools led to higher student achievement, higher morale among students and teachers, more reflective practice among teachers, fewer drop outs, reduced violence, better community relations and increased institutional pride. The key elements of advisory programs align well with the six key environmental protective factors stated above. These are the most potent environmental conditions that showed up across the body of resilience literature, including the studies cited in this review.

The studies conclude that through the utilization of advisory programs, advisors can help create schools that act as sanctuaries in which fuels the development of resilience in at-risk youth (Aspy, Vesely, Oman, Tolma, Rodine, Marshall, & Fluhr, 2011; Benson & Poliner 2013; Henderson, 2013; Perkins, 2006; Theron, 2012; Zimmerman, 2013). Finally, these studies found that advisory programs are an important strategy within schools to support the success of all students as they encounter the inevitable adversities of adolescence. It seems that school-based interventions that utilize advisory programs can have a positive affect on not only the resilience of at risk youth, but also their overall quality of life and well-being. While it is clear that these studies support the use of school-based interventions to increase resilience in at-risk youth, there is not enough evidence that proves it should be the only intervention strategy relied upon. There are too many factors relating to why a child does not do well. One must recognize that just because advisory programs work for some at-risk youth, it does not mean it will work for all.

#### **Family-based interventions:**

Two studies reviewed discuss the effectiveness of family-based interventions to foster resilience in at-risk youth (Patterson, 2002; Ungar, 2004). The first study suggests that parents and caregivers play an important role for young people, including those at-risk, enabling them, through interactions with these adults, to develop constructions of themselves as resilient (Ungar, 2004). In order to prove this, relationships between 43 at-risk youth and their caregivers were

examined qualitatively. The study concluded that healthy parent-child interactions in particular were shown to be especially important to how at-risk youth achieve and sustain mental well-being and ultimately succeed academically (Ungar, 2004, p. 25). Even in families that face significant risk, such as those going through marital transitions, child and adolescent well-being was maintained when the home provides opportunities for children to feel in control of their lives and be protected against the risks confronting them.

The second study discusses the lack of family education that exists to support the use of these intervention approaches (Patterson, 2002). There is a need for further research to examine how to conduct these interventions. Using the family resilience framework has already shown promise engaging youth and their families in constructing healthy identities. The use of the family resilience framework as a strengths based approach rooted in the belief that individuals and families can adapt and manage basic or complex life situations when existing strengths, skills, abilities and resources are identified, nurtured and built upon (Patterson, 2002). This paper suggests this concept fosters problem solving, healing, growth and leads to resilience in at risk youth. According to Patterson (2002), caregivers who maintain a resilience approach are better able to enhance families coping abilities to adjust to daily life stressors and challenges. However, the need is great to educate families of at-risk youth how to maintain this approach. There is an increasing recognition of the need to enhance parenting skills and supports as well as include families in treatment services outside of the home, within schools and in the community (Patterson, 2002). Both studies show that family-based interventions can be successful in fostering resilience in at risk youth. However, both studies stress the importance of family education as a factor contributing to their abilities to promote their children's healthy development and abilities to thrive in the midst of life's challenges.

### **Community-based intervention:**

Two articles discuss the use of community-based interventions as a way to support the development of resilience in at-risk youth (Evans, 2007; Resnick, 2005). The first study discusses the benefits youth experience from increased opportunities to participate and contribute to society and the lack of opportunities that actually exist (Evans, 2007). This study discusses how youth development programs within the community creates contexts in which at-risk youth

can thrive incorporating proactive processes such as caring relationships, high expectations and opportunities for meaningful participation. The second study also discusses the importance of youth development approaches in the community as a way of enhancing young people's resilience before problems develop as well as giving skills to those who are already facing challenges (Resnick, 2005).

Both studies report the benefits of community-based interventions for fostering resilience and also the lack of opportunities that exist. These studies were similar in that they discussed how young people experience oppression in community settings and this is especially true for at-risk youth. Resnick (2005) reports, there is an obligation for adults within the community to support the development of resiliency in at-risk youth by helping to create social structures where they can gain skills and have meaningful opportunities to use them. It is clear that both studies show the potential for community-based interventions to affect resilience in at-risk youth but that there is a need for other methods when this approach fails as it has been proven to in these studies. The information provided in these studies relating to at-risk youth was limited due to the lack of research provided on individuals who are racially/ethnically and economically diverse. This is important to note as research has shown that minority youth are more vulnerable and more likely to live within a community where these supports are minimal or non-existent.

### **Discussion:**

The purpose of this literature review is to determine the affects advisory programs have on resilience in at-risk youth. The studies reviewed in this paper suggest that advisory programs are an effective intervention approach. Through researching this topic, other intervention approaches were discovered to have similar affects. A discussion will occur as to the implications of these interventions as they relate to at-risk youth and resilience as well as suggestions for future research. Based on the results of this literature review, it is clear that this topic is very complex and is impossible to prove that one approach is more effective then another at fostering resilience in at-risk youth. However, the literature proves that all three intervention approaches have the potential to do so.

The results indicate that healthy adolescent development has roots in multiple contexts. The body of evidence reviewed in this literature proves that at-risk youth who are involved in contexts that provide positive resources from important others including parents, schools and the community are less likely to exhibit negative outcomes; and show evidence of positive development. Benson & Poliner (2013) discusses the potential for advisory programs to create meaningful relationships, establish a sense of belonging to the school community and peer group simultaneously, and therefore fosters engagement, resiliency and motivation. Ungar (2004) reported that the family is a primary social support for youth and family closeness was related to fewer academic problems and the development of resiliency. Resnick (2005) explains how non-punitive social structures and supportive communities have the capacity to fill the important role in promoting resilience that at-risk youth so desperately needs. These findings provide important implications for intervention and prevention efforts for the promotion of resilience in at-risk youth.

Looking at this topic from an occupational therapy perspective, it would be most beneficial view the person holistically. Using all three of these approaches would take into account the person, the environmental contexts, and how these relate to their occupational performance as not only a student, but as a member of the community; and ultimately as a human being. Although compelling evidence was found that advisory programs could be an effective way to address national problems relating to at-risk youth; a multidisciplinary approach may be the most effective at fostering resilience in this population. However, this review provides only a small picture of a very complicated, multifaceted topic. More research on the topic of at-risk youth and holistic intervention strategies would be valuable to address these important issues. There is currently a lack of evidence that shows the affects on resilience in at-risk youth a multidisciplinary approach would have. However, these environments: school, community and family, provide the perfect opportunities to enhance protective factors in youth that will lead to the development of resilience; which would contribute to their occupational identity; ultimately improving their quality of life as they develop into adults.

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Role of Resiliency in Occupational Therapy Practice

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In the last four decades “resilience” has become a focus of research after it was observed that children and adolescents are capable of thriving and adapting in spite of adversity (Ahern, Ark & Byers, 2008). It is a trait that research is trying to identify in order to promote and enhance these characteristics in children and youth seen as “at-risk”. Resilience is fostered when an individual’s internal and environmental factors are strengthened (Henderson, 2013). In order to promote and build resiliency within an at-risk population one must focus on the strengths of the person and the supports within a person’s environment. Resilience has been found to be an interactive process between one’s own personal characteristics and how those characteristics interact within an environment.

At-risk youth are individuals who exhibit at-risk behaviors including: abusing alcohol and other substances, failing in school, committing crimes, and engaging in unprotected sex. Resiliency is a protective factor against at-risk behaviors. Professionals working in schools have started including resilience strategies and skills into their curriculum as they attempt to lower high-school dropout rates. The goal of this paper is to review articles that explain how the construct of resilience is conceptualized into occupational therapy practice. Thus far, resilience is a term used mostly in the fields of psychology and social work; however, the specific characteristics of resilience along with the resiliency model closely resemble areas that fall under occupational therapy scope of practice. This paper will make a connection between resilience, school-based practice, and specific areas of occupational therapy practice that promote the use of the resiliency model.

### **What is Resiliency?**

Resiliency theory is a strengths-based approach versus a risk-based approach in

understanding child and adolescent development. This model provides a conceptual framework for informing intervention design (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Zimmerman & Brenner, 2010). Henderson (2013) identifies specific internal protective factors that foster resilience. This list includes: relationships, flexibility, service/helpfulness, love of learning, life skills, self-motivation, competence, humor, inner direction, self-worth, spirituality, perceptiveness, perseverance, independence, creativity, and positive view of personal future. These are characteristics that an individual already possesses that are considered ones internal strengths. These are the characteristics to pull from and capitalize on in order to enhance resiliency within youth. Fergus and Zimmerman (2005) refer to these characteristics as “assets”. Assets are one of two promotive factors. The second promotive factor is “resources”. Resources are considered factors out-side of an individual such as parental support, adult mentors, and youth programs. The social ecology of resilience is an advance in the theory of resilience that focuses on the processes whereby individuals facing significant challenges interact with their environments to optimize their personal success (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2013). This social ecological construct puts more emphasis on an individual’s given environment. A particular environment that has been identified as a major contributor to resilience is the school environment. Occupational therapists work within the school system and are most likely to use the resiliency model for intervention in school-based settings.

### **Occupational Therapists Role in School Settings**

According to Werner (2003) schools are filled with conditions to support and promote resilience. Research has shown that a positive school climate can be one of the most powerful promoters of resiliency within the school setting. Perkins (2006) researched 108 urban schools across the United States and found that improvement in key elements of a school climate lead to:

higher student achievement, higher morale among student and teachers, more reflective practice among teachers, fewer dropouts, reduced violence, better community and increased institutional pride. Currently the leading program to incorporate resilience into the school curriculum is through an advisory program (Benson & Poliner, 2013). In an advisory program students meet in a small group with their peers and a faculty advisor and engage in activities or discussion. activities or discussions. Advisory programs help build community, promote academic success, teach socio-emotional learning, postsecondary planning, and provide support through tragedies (Benson & Poliner, 2013). Ungar & Liebenberg (2013) examined how cultural and community factors interact with individual level factors to predict school participation. They discovered that contextual factors associated with resilience were a stronger indicator for school engagement in comparison to individual or relational factors. This finding was particularly influential in the lives of minority youth. Their findings further support how important a school environment is in fostering resiliency within their youth.

Currently occupational therapy services within a school setting are directed toward students with disabilities. Students with disabilities could also be considered “at-risk” because they face similar barriers to their development. Michaels and Orentlicher (2004) explain the importance of occupational therapists providing transition services to adopt a “strength-based, capacity building perspective about transition that focuses on student empowerment, self-determination, and full inclusion in community life” (p. 216). The strength-based capacity building perspective is synonymous with the resiliency approach mentioned previously. These models both focus on looking at the student’s strengths rather than at their risks or weaknesses and helping them build on those skills and use those skills to feel competent to achieve their goals. Shea & Giles (2012) further support this strength-based approach through their research

on the differing beliefs between teachers and occupational therapists on how to assist “continuation” high school students with the transition to postsecondary education. Their study reveals that occupational therapists tend to focus on living skills and personal strengths while the teachers focus on academic skills and school rule-oriented behavior. Occupational therapists development of goal-setting skills and self-esteem within the school setting were found to be central to assisting these young people through the postsecondary transition process (Shea & Giles, 2012). Occupational therapy is an integral part of a transition team. Currently occupational therapy’s involvement in a transition teams is with students with IEP’s getting ready to transition from high-school to the community. Their intervention focuses on these specific areas: domestic goals, education goals, employment goals, leisure goals, and community goals (Rockwell, 2006). Depending on the individual an occupational therapist may also include life skills training as it relates to those five areas. Understanding occupational therapists role in the transition process helps identify those areas that resilience based approaches could be implemented through intervention with students. Particularly the area of life skills training could be used to incorporate a resilience model approach.

### **Occupational Therapy Scope of Practice within School-Based Practice**

Generalization of skills learned in therapy to real life situations is always a struggle with any type of therapy intervention. Gage & Polatajko (1993) attempted to explain this discrepancy through explaining the importance of perceived self-efficacy. They believed that perceived self-efficacy could explain the discrepancy between a person’s skill and the person’s actual performance outside of the therapeutic environment. School-based therapists on a transition team help students generalize life skills into their “real life”; a crucial part of the transition planning process. A current model of practice in occupational therapy is “The Model of Human

Occupation” (Oakley, Kielhofner, & Barris, 1985). This model explains a synonymous construct to perceived self-efficacy referred to as “personal causation”. However, even with this model of practice it is a common practice to explain this construct with the term “self-esteem”. Gage and Polatajko (1993) argue that these are related but different and distinct constructs. Perceived self-efficacy is made stronger by personal accomplishment in performing the actual activity (Gage & Polatajko, 1993). Enhancing perceived self-efficacy fits within the occupational therapy mindset that “doing” is the best form of intervention. Carrol et al. (2009) researched this construct in relation to academic achievement and found that there was a direct relationship between academic self-efficacy and academic achievement. These findings support the importance of including strategies to improve an individual’s self-efficacy in the therapeutic process. Ginsberg (2011) developed the seven C’s of resilience. They are: competence, confidence, connection, character, contribution, coping, and control. Competence is explained by Ginsberg as “the ability or know-how to handle situations effectively”. This skill is gained through actual experience. Competence in the resilience construct is similar to the definition of perceived self-efficacy. Perceived self-efficacy could be the link between occupational therapy and the use of resilience principles within practice. There is evidence to support the use of these constructs in occupational therapy practice. However, practice is currently missing a unifying term that connects these constructs in a meaningful way that can translate to other disciplines.

### **Summary**

Resiliency-based approaches to intervention with at-risk youth have gained a lot of attention within the last few decades through research. It has been found that resilience based approaches aim to enhance internal protective factors as well as external protective factors. The inclusion of resiliency programs within the school setting, particularly through advisory

programs, has become very popular. A particular aspect of resiliency that shows improved results in intervention is enhancing an individual's competence or self-efficacy. This particular aspect of resiliency is within the scope of occupational therapy practice and would contribute to closing the gap between resilience theory and occupational therapy practice. Currently, there is a variety of terminology used in literature to explain the same construct. Shea & Giles (2013) explained occupational therapies intervention with students through a "strength-based approach". They also explained how important goal-setting skills and enhancing self-esteem is when intervening with the at-risk population. Perceived self-efficacy was also an important construct when intervening with an at-risk population. It explains the potential discrepancy between skills and performance of skills outside of the therapeutic environment. All of these different terms and constructs could be unified through the resiliency model.

The goal of this paper was to find how resiliency principles are conceptualized in occupational therapy practice. Although, resiliency based principles are woven within the scope of OT practice and many specific areas of resiliency are worked on through-out therapy they are not referred to as "resiliency" principles. To better serve the at-risk population it is proposed that occupational therapy practice begin to use the resilience model as a way to explain their approaches within school-based therapy and transition teams. Zimmerman (2013) believes that a unifying theme like the resiliency theory would not only benefit school-based practice but public health education as well by providing a "common language and analytic approach that would build knowledge and inform practice" (p. 382). Using the resiliency model within occupational therapy will help inform the direction of programs, and policies for at-risk youth, further increasing the consistency and efficacy of intervention (Anthony, Alter, & Jenson, 2009). A unifying framework would also create consistency over many disciplines and would further

strengthen the efficacy of team-based intervention.

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