

Advocating the Well-Being of Children and Families Through a Culturally Responsive Community-University Partnership

Alycia M Elfreich & Robert J. Helfenbein
Center for Urban and Multicultural Education
Indiana University—IUPUI School of Education

This poster presents a mixed-methods research study that focuses on school-community collaborative organizations in the promotion of child-rights and well-being of students, and utilizes an asset-based holistic approach to child development in education. The Westfield community-university partnership aims to properly identify needs and assets of the children in order to explore ways to empower children to excel in life after school, as well as provide an evaluation tool to support community partners to more effectively communicate across programs and schools. In order for schools to develop their programs in response to the needs of the children and those that work with them, the voice of children becomes a necessary component of this partnership. Few programs or evaluation tools foster the involvement of young people in the early stages of mental health, even though children have the capability of expressing distinct views and personal barriers to well-being.

This projects uses a case study design as this inquiry concentrates on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-world context. Case study methodology also incorporates many variables of interest, as opposed to specified data points, and relies on the application and combination of multiple sources of evidence to reinforce the study's findings (Yin, 2008). Qualitative data sources include school staff, students, parents, and community members involved in the Westfield Youth Initiative. Methods of data collection include interviews, focus groups, and school climate surveys, which will be coded and themed, reinforced through team member consensus, and entered into Nvivo © transcript analysis. Quantitative data analysis includes descriptive statistics on demographic variables and a comparison of results from school achievement data. We expect our research to indicate that children who experience a greater sense of well-being assimilate information in more effective ways, engage in healthy and fulfilling social behaviors, and invest in others' well-being as they advance into adulthood.

Thus, the anticipated final results will include a culturally responsive evaluation tool that illustrates the methods in which we incorporate the shared life experience and understanding of children and the community out of respect to the cultural context in which they live. This partnership strives to recognize and appreciate differences between gender, race, language, and class, while maintaining a firm commitment to the well-being of each and every student. Finally, we point to challenges of cross-cultural work, barriers to implementation, and lessons learned unique to this research study.