Potential and Limitations of Self-Regulated, Computerized, Social-Emotional Training to Improve Outcomes Among Students Behind Grade Level in an Unsafe and Chaotic School

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ABSTRACT

A study of Ripple Effects computerized, social-emotional learning intervention examined whether, under unsafe or chaotic school conditions, adolescents who had previously failed in school would comply with a mandate to use the software, and, if they complied, there would be objective and subjective impacts. One hundred and nine African American and Latino adolescents behind grade level were randomly assigned to treatment and control conditions. The intervention was self-regulated completion of 42 multimedia tutorials. Thirty-seven percent of treatment group students complied. Of those, mean dosage was 190% of required material. Students exposed to the intervention had significantly higher grade point averages (2.4 vs. 1.68, p<.05) and lower absenteeism rates. A 67% lower discipline referral rate was meaningful, but not significant. There was no significant impact on attitudes about marijuana, alcohol, or locus of control. If students used the intervention, they exceeded requirements and had positive outcomes. Absent baseline data, we cannot rule out factors other than the software, such as personal motivation, as being responsible for positive effects.