OPTIMIZING ACADEMIC OUTCOMES OF HIGH-ACHIEVING HIGH SCHOOL FRESHMEN VIA A MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS FOR MENTAL HEALTH

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PRESENTATION OBJECTIVES

1. Provide a rationale for a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) to foster the mental health of AP/IB students, based on research identifying factors related to AP/IB students’ academic and emotional success.
2. Describe preventative universal interventions (Tier 1 services) for students, teachers, and parents to increase AP/IB student use of effective coping strategies and school engagement.
3. Describe screening procedure using data from students, teachers, and records students to identify AP/IB students at-risk emotionally or academically.
4. Describe a selective intervention (Tier 2 services) using motivational interviewing for at-risk AP/IB students to increase effective coping strategies and school engagement.
5. Describe the collaboration, leadership qualities, and implementation procedures necessary to provide a MTSS for AP/IB students that involves youth, parents, and teachers.

WHY PROVIDE SUPPORTS TO HIGH-ACHIEVING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS, LIKE THOSE TAKING AP/IB COURSES?

• MTSS can provide additional support and tiered systems for students at-risk for academic or emotional decline.
• High-achieving students, such as students taking AP/IB classes, may be overlooked due to positive characteristics such as economic wealth, family resources, or high academic achievement.
• Recent research suggests AP/IB students:
  o Higher levels of stress compared to general edu. students (Suldo & Shaunessy-Dedrick, 2010), primarily due to their academic demands (Suldo et al., 2009).
  o Students in AP/IB report juggling multiple academic demands (a heavy academic workload), high teacher expectations, and difficulty managing time (Milburn, 2011; Taylor & Porath, 2006).
  o As students’ stress increases, their risk for internalizing and externalizing symptoms and reduced life satisfaction increases (Suldo et al., 2009).
• Currently, there are no evidence-based interventions developed to address stressors AP/IB students experience.

WHAT DOES MTSS LOOK LIKE FOR HIGH-ACHIEVING STUDENTS?

What supports should struggling 9th grade AP/IB students receive?
What factors should we target to identify at-risk AP/IB students?
What skills should ALL 9th grade AP/IB students be taught?

STEP 1. DEFINING “STUDENT SUCCESS”

Academic Success

Grades in Courses (semester GPA)
Average Score on AP and/or IB End-of-Course Exams

Mental Health

Happiness (high life satisfaction)
Emotional Distress (minimal)
School Burnout (minimal)

STEP 2. IDENTIFYING FACTORS LINKED TO STUDENT SUCCESS

Grades in Courses (semester GPA)
Average Score on AP and/or IB End-of-Course Exams

Happiness (high life satisfaction)
Emotional Distress (minimal)
School Burnout (minimal)

Classes and grades from Middle School
Extracurricular Activities
School Relationships
Teacher, Peer, School Pride
Family Relationships and Support at Home

Suldo & Shaunessy-Dedrick, 2010
OUR RESEARCH ON AP/IB STUDENTS: STUDY DESIGN

- Surveyed over 2300 high school students in AP and IB classes
- Diverse sample
  - Grades 9 – 12
  - > 50% from a racial or ethnic minority group
- 19 large public high schools across Florida
- 10 IB + 10 AP Programs

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS: PREDICTORS OF STUDENT SUCCESS

Promotive Factors
- Coping with Stress through Problem-Focused Strategies
- Connections to Teachers, Schools, and Program
  - Parenting (Supportive, Encourage Independence)

Risk Factors
- Coping with Stress via Avoidance and Withdraw/Relying on Self
- Minimal Connections to School, Program, Teachers
- Low Involvement in Extracurricular Activities
- Parenting (Overinvolved or Not Understanding)

STEP 3. DEVELOP MTSS MODEL FOR SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS

TIER 1 SUPPORTS FOR ALL 9TH GRADE AP/IB STUDENTS

Universal Stage: Module Content

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Family</th>
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<tr>
<td>Adjusting to AP/IB: Role of Stress</td>
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<tr>
<td>Factors Related to AP/IB Success</td>
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<td>Coping</td>
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<td>• Time and task management</td>
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<td>• Seeking support from school and beyond</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>• Minimizing use of ineffective strategies</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Booster Sessions (Eustress + Strengths/Values)</td>
<td>XX</td>
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STRATEGIES EMBEDDED IN THE ACE CURRICULUM

- Didactic Presentation of Data
- Guessing Games
- Self-Assessments
- Role Plays
- Large and Small Group Discussions
- Think-Pair-Share Activities
- Student Vignettes and Quotes
- Videos

HANDOUTS

- Adjusting to AP/IB: Role of Stress
- Factors Related to AP/IB Success
- Forming Strong Connections to School, AP/IB Program, and AP/IB Teachers
- Engaging through Extracurricular Activities at School and Community
- Coping
  - Time and task management
  - Relaxation and positive thinking
  - Seeking support from school and beyond
  - Minimizing use of ineffective strategies
- Booster Sessions (Eustress + Strengths/Values)
- Supportive Parenting Practices
- Home Environment Conducive to Learning
- Promote Connections to School at Home
Problem-Solving Common AP/IB Stressors

Meet Taylor, a 9th grade AP student. She’s preparing for next week’s AP mid-term exam. It is the first big test of the quarter and she’s feeling a bit overwhelmed.

Step 1: Recognize signs and symptoms of stress
Step 2: Determine the primary stressors

Step 3: Think of solutions and evaluate the pros/cons of each option
Option 1: Take a mental break from school and go shopping with my friends.
Option 2: Copy friends’ study guides and use Cliff Notes to study for the test.
Option 3: Break the test content up into sections and make a study schedule.

Step 4: Select the best solution and try it out

Step 5: Evaluate the outcome and try again as needed

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ACE Student Modules (FALL)

#1: Adjusting to AP/IB: Unique Stressors
#2: Factors Related to AP/IB Students’ Success: Coping and Engagement
#3: Pride in AP/IB Program and School
#4: Relationships with Teachers and other AP/IB Resources
#5: Extracurricular Activities
#6: Time and Task Management – Organization and Planning
#7: Time and Task Management – Focusing and Limiting Procrastination
#8: Seeking Support from Family, Teachers, and Community
#9: Positive Thinking and Relaxation
#10: Limiting Ineffective Coping
#11: Promoting Eustress
#12: Strengths, Values, and Goals

ACE Modules on Developing Effective Coping Strategies

Module 6: Time and Task Management Part 1
Module 7: Time and Task Management Part 2
Module 8: Seeking Support from School and Beyond
Module 9: Positive Thinking and Relaxation
Module 10: Minimizing Use of Ineffective Coping

Student Module 2

Coping Chart

Step 1: Recognize signs and symptoms of stress
Step 2: Determine the primary stressors
Step 3: Think of solutions and evaluate the pros/cons of each option
Step 4: Select the best solution and try it out
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Problem-Solving Common AP/IB Stressors (cont.)

Step 3: Think of solutions and evaluate the pros/cons of each option

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IDENTIFYING 9TH GRADE AP/IB STUDENTS AT-RISK

MID-YEAR SCREENING: DATA COLLECTION METHODS
- School Records
  - Grades in AP/IB classes
  - Fall GPA
- Student Self-Report
  - Stress (Perceived Stress Scale)
  - Emotional Well-Being at School (School Satisfaction scale)
- Teacher nomination
  - At-risk students?

INDIVIDUALIZED COACHING MEETINGS FOR STUDENTS (SPRING)
- Identifying At-Risk Students
  - Students with high stress, few positive feelings about school, or grades < B are offered 1-2 individual meetings with an ACE coach
- Individual Meetings
  - Coaches discuss students’ strengths, values, and goals, and help them problem-solve and develop action plans that target areas in need of growth

TIER 2 SUPPORTS FOR SELECTED 9TH GRADE AP/IB STUDENTS
- MOTIVATION, ASSESSMENT, AND PLANNING (MAP) MEETINGS
  - Goal of MAP meetings: Help students reflect on and further develop healthy coping and engagement skills that are linked to emotional and academic success in AP/IB courses.
  - Intended Population: Students who, at mid-year, show or report signs of academic or emotional risk in AP/IB and thus may benefit from brief, individualized support to address academic or emotional challenges in AP/IB.
    - Academic risk: GPA < 3.0, grades < C in AP/IB classes; scores < 3 (AP) or 4 (IB) on end-of-Course exams
    - Emotional risk: elevated stress, negative feelings about schooling experiences (low connectedness)
  - What the Intervention is NOT: Long-term therapy; Crisis intervention; Mental health support to address issues beyond the ACE Program targets.

MAP INTERVENTION MULTISTEP PROCESS
- Students identified through the screening process are invited to take part in MAP
  - Students fill out a survey packet on their current coping strategies, school engagement, and perceived parenting practices.
  - Research team member enters student’s survey data into computerized scoring system to compare his/her responses to a sample of 2000+ AP/IB students across the state of Florida.
  - Students meet individually with a MAP coach for a 1-hour coaching session (MAP meeting).
  - Students are offered a second session to review their progress on their goal and/or work towards a new goal.
FOUR STAGES IN MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING

planning

evoking

focusing

engaging

COACHING HANDOUTS FOR STUDENTS

SUMMARY OF MTSS FOR HIGH-ACHIEVING STUDENTS

MAP meetings to help at-risk students identify strengths and weaknesses in coping and engagement skills and create an action plan to reach their goals

Identify students at-risk based on self reported perceived stress and school satisfaction + grades from school records

ACE curriculum; Universal student, teacher, and parent modules addressing effective coping and school engagement

EXAMPLE HANDOUT

KEY CONSIDERATIONS: HOW TO BRING MTSS TO YOUR STUDENTS

Leadership

• Present a compelling rationale to key stakeholders
• Organize job roles for facilitators and coaches
• Plan for outcomes assessment to provide evidence these supports are achieving desired goals

Collaboration

• Need buy-in from teachers, administrators, and youth
• Partner with content experts to help develop materials and serve as possible interventionists

Intervention Supports

• Procure or create intervention materials
• Develop and sell side time for facilitator trainings
• Monitor fidelity of implementation of intervention and trainings
QUESTIONS