



Research Snapshot

Predicting Implementation Fidelity and Sustainability in a School-based Prevention Program

What is this research about?

Schools across Canada and United States have incorporated the Fourth R, a curriculum-based social and emotional learning (SEL) program designed to promote healthy relationships among youth. Although the Fourth R program has demonstrated effectiveness in decreasing violence and increasing adjustment in adolescents, less is known about implementation quality and sustainability following training. This study assessed the Fourth R program's implementation fidelity and sustainability and looked at predictors of sustainability.

"...an effective program that is perceived to be efficacious by teachers is necessary but not sufficient to achieve a sustainable health promotion strategy that is implemented with fidelity. Future directions must focus on the mobilization of the school system in a way to maximize support and accountability for the teachers implementing the program...."

What did the researchers do?

Researchers explored implementation fidelity and sustainability of the Fourth R program. Participants included 197 teachers who were trained in the Fourth R prior to 2009. These teachers were selected from six Canadian provinces.

What you need to know:

Teachers that were trained in the Fourth R prior to 2009 were surveyed online to determine the extent to which they continued using the program, the modifications they made, and perceived barriers to implementation. Results indicated that most of the teachers were highly satisfied with the program and continued implementing it with fidelity after several years. Perceived readiness after training, support and accountability emerged as predictors of high quality implementation.

Following program implementation, teachers completed an online survey to assess the following:

- Implementation quality of the Fourth R program two years or more following training
- Types of modifications that teachers made to the program
- Barriers associated with the program's implementation and sustainability
- Perceived program benefits
- Predictors of ongoing high quality implementation.

What did the researchers find?

- Overall, teachers were highly satisfied with the Fourth R program and intended to continue implementing it in the future.
- The main reasons for modifying the program were time constraints or needs of specific student groups
- Modifications included shortening the program by dropping sessions or activities, and adding new activities, topics, and supplementary resources (e.g., guest speakers and videos)
- Teachers identified a number of challenges for the program's implementation and sustainability, including difficulties with role plays, timeframes, limited resource sharing and audio visual equipment, and dated materials
- Teachers indicated that the Fourth R increases knowledge and positive attitudes against violence, substance use and sexual health in adolescents through role-playing practice and promotes student engagement in school activities
- Teachers perceived a benefit for themselves in terms of increasing skills and ideas for other classes, and perceived benefits in classroom and school climate.
- High quality implementation was best predicted by self-reported readiness after training and perceived support and accountability rather than teachers' perceptions of the benefits of the program.

How can you use this research?

The findings of this study will help to improve the implementation fidelity and sustainability of school-based prevention programs, specifically the implementation fidelity and sustainability of the Fourth R program by:

- Creating a distribution system to inform Fourth R facilitators of available updates to the curricula.

- Developing an ongoing monitoring plan at the district level to assess implementation fidelity and facilitator feedback.
- Providing booster sessions, technical support, and more comprehensive materials for teachers facing difficulties.

Original Research Article:

For a complete description of the research and findings, please see the full research article: Crooks, C. V., Chiodo, D., Zwarych, S., Hughes, R., & Wolfe, D. A. (2013). Predicting implementation success of an evidence-based program to promote healthy relationships among students two to eight years after teacher training. *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health, 32*, 125-138.

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