REDUCING ANXIOUS STRESS IN YOUTH USING THE COPING CAT PROGRAM

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What made Coping Cat a Reality at Rundlett Middle School?

- Rundlett Middle School adopted PBIS in 2012

- Concord Trust Grant
  - School psychologist applied for grant to purchase the Coping Cat program (manual and student workbooks)

- Safe Schools/Health Students (SS/HS Grant)
  - Interconnected Systems Framework (ISF) made the convergence of education and community mental health systems possible
    - ISF is a framework for designing, organizing, and monitoring NH’s SS/HS implementation
  - Mental Health Counselor from Riverbend Community Mental Health available to co-facilitate groups
Convergence of Education & Community Mental Health Systems

- Schools are recognizing the importance of creating a continuum of evidence-based mental health supports to the academic and social/emotional outcomes for all students.

- Community mental health is recognizing the importance of the system of care framework and of schools as key, if not primary, environments for the delivery of evidence-based prevention, early intervention and tertiary supports to children, youth and their families.
Emphasis on Evidence-based Practices

Evidence-based interventions

- Using a continuum of integrated policies, strategies, activities, and services whose effectiveness has been proven or informed by research.

EBIs can be identified through the following sources:

http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/
  - (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, “National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices” [NREPP])

http://www.dsgonline.com/mpg2.5/mpg_index.htm
  - (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, “Model Programs Guide”)

6TH, 7TH, & 8TH GRADE

ENROLLMENT:
1,010

RACE/ETHNICITY:
WHITE: 85.8%
BLACK: 5.6%
ASIAN: 5.9%
Rundlett Middle School PBIS Implementation

- Began implementation in 2012
  - "PRIDE" Universal System
- Tier 2 Behavior Systems Team
  - Behavior Intervention Team (BIT)

_The mission of the RMS BIT is to provide additional, practical, organized and timely support to students in conjunction with PBIS Universal school-wide systems. This team also serves as a support system for faculty in guiding these students to make behavioral progress in school-wide settings._
Rundlett Middle School Pyramid of Interventions

Tier 3: Individualized Supports - Structured Interventions for the few students with the greatest need
- 3 R (Respectful, Relevant, Realistic) Plan(s)
- Enhanced Academic Seminar
- Individualized Family and Youth-Driven Planning and Support
- Community Supports (WRAP, DCYF, Mental Health, and Child and Family Services)
- Complex Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) and Behavior Support

Tier 2: Behavioral Interventions & Supports - Supports for some students who struggle with meeting the expectations
- Simple Behavior Support Plans
- Simple Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBA)
  - Coping CAT
  - Academic Seminar
  - Check In/Check Out,
  - Recovery Room

Tier 1 Interventions & Supports - Structured Behavior Interventions for all students
- PRIDE Expectation Matrix,
- PRIDE Classroom Expectations & PRIDE Classroom Lessons
- Guidance Services,
- Homeroom Guidance
- Continuum of Discipline Responses
- Student/Parent Conferences,
- Before & After School Program (21C)
- Project Success (Substance Use)

Individualization & Intensity of Interventions Increases

A Few Students >5%
Some Students >15%
ALL Students 100%
Nomination Criteria for Tier 2 Supports

- Absences (5 days in a quarter)
- Tardy to class (5 office discipline referrals in a quarter)
- Tardy/Dismissed from school (5 events in a quarter)
- Office Discipline referrals (3 ODRs resulting in 6 days out of class [ISS and/or OSS])
- Nurse Visits (excessive requests when compared to peers)
- Academic Failure (not due to lack of ability or skill deficit)
- Counselor Visits (frequent and unscheduled)
- Out of School issues that impact the student’s ability to “do school”
Spring 2014: Identified Need

- A small group of students were asking to go to the office on a daily basis or were frequently absent.
  - Most behaviors were internalizing: anxiety, withdrawal, avoidance of others.
  - These were students who performed academically, not special education.

- School psychologist researched small group (evidence-based) interventions for students who present with problematic levels of internalizing behaviors.

- Found Coping Cat
  - Applied for Concord Trust Grant to purchase the program materials
Coping Cat Program Overview

- Coping CAT is a Cognitive Behavioral Intervention
- The focus is to help students recognize and analyze feeling related to stress and develop strategies to cope with stress provoking situations.
Elements of the Coping Cat Program

- Affective education
- Awareness of bodily reactions when anxious
- Identification and modification of anxious self-talk
- Relaxation training
- Mastery and coping modeling
- Role plays
- Homework assignments ("Show That I Can" tasks)
Cognitive/educational component of treatment

- Cognitive-behavioral strategies are presented as a 4-step plan to cope with anxiety.

- To facilitate recall of the steps, the FEAR acronym is used:
  - Feeling Frightened?
    - Begins with awareness of bodily reactions to feelings and developing recognition of those reactions which are specific to anxiety
    - Physical reactions become “cues” to the presence of anxiety
  - Expecting Bad Things to Happen?
    - Focus on analysis of self-statements
  - Attitudes and Actions that will Help?
    - Making modifications to self-talk
  - Ratings and Rewards
    - Self-rating and rewards
    - “Show that I Can” tasks are assigned to practice and reinforce
Coping Cat Program at Rundlett Middle School

Coping Cat

- 18 sessions
  - Skill-building segment (9 sessions)
  - Practice segment (9 sessions)
- Recommended group size
  - 3 to 5
  - greater than 5, requires a co-therapist
- Gender
  - Single-gender groups recommended
- Each session projected to last an hour and a half

Adaptation at RMS

- 8 sessions
  - Skill-building and practice combined
  - Students had weekly “homework” assignments that focused on practice and generalization of skills
- Group size
  - group size ranged from 7 students to 3 students per group
  - each group co-facilitated by a Riverbend Community Mental Health Counselor and either an RMS grade-level counselor or school psychologist
  - total of 18 students; 4 groups
- Groups met on a weekly basis for 45 minutes
Responsibilities Associated with the Intervention

- Student responsibilities include participating in weekly group sessions, completing homework assignments (using coping strategies), and self-monitoring progress.

- Teacher responsibilities include prompting students to use their coping strategies and a willingness to participate in professional development regarding stress management and/or anxiety.

- Coping Cat instructor responsibilities include implementing the Coping Cat curriculum with fidelity and monitoring student progress with students and teachers.
Data Sources

- **Screen for Child Anxiety Related Disorders (SCARED)**
  - Author: Birmaher, B
  - 41-item inventory rated on a 3-point Likert-type scale
  - Purpose of the instrument is to screen for signs of anxiety symptoms/disorders in children
  - non-proprietary (public domain)

- Absences (frequency)
- Nurse Visits (frequency)
SCARED Pre/Post Student Report

[Graph showing SCARED Pre and Post results for students]
SCARED Pre/Post Student Report [Rate]
Number of Absences (Full Days)
Pre (7 weeks prior to group); During (8 school weeks of intervention); Post (7 weeks after group)
Number of Absences (Full Days) [Rate]
Number of Nurse Visits
Pre (7 weeks prior to group); During (8 school weeks of intervention); Post (7 weeks after group)
Number of Nurse Visits [Rate]
Case Example # 1
8th Grade Female Student

![Bar Chart]

- SCARED Pre
- SCARED Post
- Attendance Pre
- Attendance During
- Attendance Post
- Nurses Pre
- Nurse During
- Nurse Post
Case Example # 2
6th Grade Female Student

![Bar Chart](image-url)

- SCARED Pre
- SCARED Post
- Attendance Pre
- Attendance During
- Attendance Post
- Nures Pre
- Nurse During
- Nurse post
Case Example # 3
6th Grade Female Student

Graph showing pre and post SCARED scores, attendance, and nurse presence.
Thank you!

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