Lead Peace
Outcomes of a Collaborative Service Learning Program for Urban Middle School Youth

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Background & Purpose
Youth violence & school failure have a devastating impact on young people, their families, their communities and society. Young people of color and low-income communities are disproportionately affected.

Prior research links service learning with better school performance and less violence
- Focus on building youths’ connections and contributions through meaningful activities that serve their schools and communities

Goals of the Lead Peace demonstration study
- Develop and implement a middle school service learning program to reduce risks for violence and school failure
- Evaluate impact of program on student outcomes

Purpose of this study
- Examine 8th grade student outcomes associated with involvement in Lead Peace

Healthy Youth Development
Prevention Research Center
DEPARTMENT OF PEDIATRICS
DIVISION OF ADOLESCENT HEALTH AND MEDICINE
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Lead Peace Program
Context
Lead Peace programming takes place in the most socially and economically challenged Minneapolis neighborhoods.
- Half of homicides citywide happened within 6 miles of Lead Peace partner schools.
- 91-95% of students in Lead Peace partner schools receive free or reduced lunch.
- In 2009, only 16-10% of students in these schools passed state math exams.

Partners
UMN Prevention Research Center
Minneapolis Public School District (MPS)
MPS K-8 Schools: Cityview, Hmong Academy, Lucy Laney & Nellie Stone Johnson Schools
Hennepin County Village Social Services
Community Partners: Kwanzaa Church’s Nia-Imani Youth Center, Beacons & ACDs After School Programs

Classroom service learning programming
- Utilized MPS service learning curriculum
- 40-45 sessions per year in 7th & 8th grades
- Focus on leadership, social & emotional skills

Small group format
- Allowed for development of supportive relationships with peers & adults
- Facilitated by team of youth-serving professionals from school & community

Youth-driven process
- Small groups identified social issues, developed, implemented and reflected on service projects.

Service learning projects
Mary Jo Copeland Compassion Project
Students selected the founder of Sharing Caring Hands and Mary’s Place-Sherlet as their hero of compassion. They researched her life and work, visited the shelter and worked with the younger children there.

SuperAdOlo
Students studied 1980 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Adolfo Esquivel and created a storyboard about him to read with third grade students.

Evaluation
- Design: quasi-experimental study
- Two intervention schools offered Lead Peace programming in 7-8th grades
- One control school (no programming)

Data sources
- Student surveys, end of school year in 2008 & 2009
- Student, staff, & school principal interviews

Outcome measures
- School connectedness (10 items, α=0.82, range 0-3)
- Peer connectedness (7 items, α=0.92, range 0-3)
- Cooperative behavior (11 items, α=0.76, range 0-11)
- Interpersonal skills (5 items, α=0.55, range 0-3)
- Violence involvement (4 items, α=0.78, range 0-3)
- Bullying perpetration (12 items, α=0.89, range 0-11)

Study Sample Descriptives
7th Graders Surveyed in 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Intervention Schools</th>
<th>Control School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean or %</td>
<td>Mean or %</td>
<td>Mean or %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed/other</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average age</td>
<td>12.96 (0.58)</td>
<td>12.97 (0.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Male</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of schools attended during school year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 school</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 or more schools</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years lived in neighborhood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1 year</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 3 years</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Suspended during school year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># School days</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>47%</td>
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<tr>
<td>School days unexcused absence</td>
<td>4.16 (4.94)</td>
<td>3.74 (4.29)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average GPA, 4 pt. scale</td>
<td>2.45 (2.02)</td>
<td>2.45 (1.03)</td>
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Analytic Approach
Mixed-model regressions tested for cross-sectional intervention effects from 7th to 8th grade, controlling for race, gender.

Findings

Lead Peace Students are More Connected

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Connectedness</td>
<td>+2.6%</td>
<td>-13.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer Connectedness</td>
<td>+8.4%</td>
<td>-6.2%</td>
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Lead Peace Students have Greater Interpersonal Skills

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% More Cooperative Behaviors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% More Connected</td>
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Lead Peace Students report More Cooperative Behaviors

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Conclusion
Lead Peace service learning program is effective in building skills and supports that protect young adolescents from violence involvement and school failure.

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