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A Multi-Study Examination of the Validity of a Risk & Protective Factor Model for Young Adolescent Drug & Alcohol Use

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ABSTRACT

Issues associated with drug and alcohol use as well as other delinquent behaviors among adolescents are of utmost importance to those concerned with student success in middle grades settings. In order to target preventive interventions for these problems, research suggests that educators should examine the risk and protective factors associated with these behaviors. Federally funded programs, such as the Safe Schools, Healthy Students initiative specifically target interventions in order to increase protective factors and reduce risk factors for alcohol, tobacco, other drug use and violence among students. While many states make use of data collected via survey instruments based on a risk and protect factor model, an empirical verification of the theoretical factor structure should also be considered in order to better understand the predictive relationship among factors and behaviors. This article examines three studies that lend support to the use of the risk and protective factor model proposed by Hawkins and Catalano (1992) which provides a framework for understanding the behaviors and attitudes most often associated with the use of drugs, alcohol, tobacco and violence among young adolescents. The validity of the risk and protective factor model is tested through an examination of three data sets across different states and years. Findings suggest that while the overall model does indeed appear to be supported, future studies should examine the ways in which factors differ across age groups.