

New study looks at how educational culture impacts emotional stability

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Homicide and suicide are among the leading causes of death among

youth in the United States. Research has shown that school-based social and emotional learning interventions improve students' emotional and behavioral outcomes, including violence and suicide attempts.

Psychologists at the University of Alabama at Birmingham are partnering with the AlaQuest Collaborative for Education, Fairfield City Schools and Alabama School of Fine Arts to develop, implement and evaluate an innovative model of data-based coaching to change the [school](#) culture to improve student emotional and behavioral outcomes in middle and [high school students](#).

"Positive results of interventions with students are difficult to sustain without longer-term changes in the whole school culture," said Sylvie Mrug, Ph.D., chair of the UAB Department of Psychology. "We hope that this program will create an overall school culture to support sustained improvements in students' emotional and behavioral functioning with broader implications of a better education and life outcomes for Alabama youth."

Emotional and behavioral function plays an integral role in a student's ability to succeed socially, emotionally and academically. Students who struggle with emotional and behavioral regulation are at risk for a variety of adverse outcomes, including disengagement from school and potentially dropping out of school.

"Disruptive students interfere with other students' ability to learn and frustrate the teacher," Mrug said.

The UAB College of Arts and Sciences study collaborates with ACE to provide individual coaching to schools to help determine what their culture and social emotional needs are, which interventional programs to select, how to implement them, and how to modify the broader school culture to sustain the interventional programs' positive effect on students.

"It is clear that school culture has an effect on student success and that prioritizing social and emotional learning leads to improved attendance, behavior and academic outcomes," said Linda Coogan, board president of ACE. "We are working to develop data-driven systems that support school communities in fostering positive school cultures that create better learning environments for all students."

A culture coach placed at Birmingham-area schools will use data from surveys completed by students, parents, teachers and other [school personnel](#) to identify areas in need of [intervention](#). The coach will select evidence-based interventions addressing the students' needs and work with school personnel to implement these evidence-based strategies.

The Culture Coaching program is a systematic way of linking the assessment of needs, selection of evidence-based interventions and coaching procedures to help implement and evaluate school-based interventions addressing students' social and emotional learning. The program will be piloted in two local middle/high schools to assess its feasibility and acceptability among educators. The effectiveness will be evaluated by improvements in students' social and emotional learning and broader school [culture](#) through repeated surveys completed by students, parents, teachers and other school personnel.

Provided by University of Alabama at Birmingham

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