

Preface

If schools are to succeed in their educational mission, the threat of drug use and abuse must be recognized and effective preventive interventions implemented. (Bukoski, 1986, p. 112)

Prevention science refers to programming to deter adolescents from engaging in a variety of risk behaviors, from use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs (ATOD) to suicide, dropping out of school, and violence. Prevention researchers have hailed from a variety of fields—primarily medicine, public health, social work, and psychology—almost any field but education. Yet, the most efficient venue to reach the target audience of adolescents, who may be engaging in risky behavior, is and always has been in schools.

Historically, prevention programs have been separate curricula designed to be delivered outside the “regular” curricula in a school. These curricula are written by researchers with little or no experience in the day-to-day operations of elementary or secondary schools. These interventions are intended for delivery by teachers who have little knowledge of the principles of prevention. The result is a long-standing disconnect that has curtailed the potential success of prevention programming and has diminished opportunities for thousands of adolescents to have the prevention information and skills they need to make healthy lifestyles choices.

Prevention Science in School Settings takes a unique perspective on the history and current practice of prevention science. This volume is designed to provide both prevention researchers and educators with perspectives on the role of schools and educators in the practice of prevention. Additionally, educators can learn more about the principles of prevention science to have a deeper understanding of how the integration of prevention science into existing school structures can meet educators’ goals for academic success and a positive culture. This volume has several unique features. First, authors in this volume are respected researchers and practitioners from both education and prevention research. Another feature is that in each chapter, research is supplemented with anecdotes and case studies, illustrating the practice and pitfalls of prevention, putting a practical, real-world spin on the theory that is presented. Third, the majority of seasoned prevention professionals usually focus on one target field or issue—such as curbing drug abuse, bullying, suicide, or dropping out—the present volume encompasses all of these concerns and how

they can be addressed within a school setting. Nowhere else can both educators and prevention professionals, with an interest in school-based interventions, and education professionals, with interest in prevention, find such a comprehensive overview of the history and current practice of the prevention field, along with opportunities for cross-disciplinary collaboration.

The major aim of this volume is to build capacity in both prevention specialists and researcher and educators at the intersection of their interests. An underlying theme in the chapters is the opportunities to improve effectiveness of prevention programming through integrating prevention with educational goals and resources and opportunities to improve educational outcomes by engaging with prevention research and practice. The contributing authors explore both educational policy and prevention practices from 1970 to the present and offer some predictions for how prevention science might position itself in the next decades. The four sections address:

1. Setting the context for school-based prevention
2. Prevention science: Origins and evolution of practice
3. Research in and with schools: Toward productive prevention partnerships
4. School-based prevention: Protective schools at work

In Chap. 1, Bosworth discusses the parallel tracks of prevention and education and addresses some opportunities for a deepening relationship between the two disciplines. In the first chapter of the section on setting the context, Sugimoto and Carter outline the history, the stresses, and the accomplishments in the American education system from 1970 to the present. They frame their discussion in terms of the various discourses that are present and the challenges that educators are facing within the school context. In Chap. 3, Bosworth, Pena, and Judkins describe the various levels of leadership within American schools, ranging from the role of the school board and setting policy to the leadership standards for superintendents and principals. Nitza, Fineran, and Dobias, in Chap. 4, describe the impact of school counselors in schools and the opportunities for counselors to be key actors in prevention programming and activities. Dana and Hooser, in Chap. 5, use a case study of a hypothetical teacher to outline the responsibilities and stresses that typical teachers face in the twenty-first-century classroom. The chapter identifies opportunities for engaging teachers in prevention activities as well as a description of how teachers, in their daily interaction with students, become the “frontline” prevention workers. In Chap. 6, the final chapter in this section, Diane Allensworth describes the role of health education and health services, including nurses, school clinic in the schools, and where the interface is with the work of prevention.

The second section focuses on the origin and evolution of prevention science. In Chap. 7, Bosworth and Sloboda describe the history of activities built on expertise, theories, and strategies from diverse theoretical and disciplinary perspectives, such as social work, medicine, and psychology, melded together into a body of knowledge and theories that can be called prevention science. A discussion of curriculum development, which is the main approach that traditionally has been used in schools, is documented by Hecht and Pettigrew in Chap. 8. In Chap. 9, Rohrbach

and Dyal describe dilemmas and challenges of scaling up evidence-based prevention programming.

Research that documents the epidemiology of various risk-taking behaviors and evaluation research form the heart of prevention science. The majority of these studies are conducted in schools, so this section outlines various approaches to conducting research in schools. In Chap. 10, Sullivan and colleagues discuss schools as the venues for prevention programming and offer numerous case examples providing strategies for improving data collection within a school setting via partnerships. Kendziora, Dymnicki, Faria, Windham, and Osher discuss evaluating and researching school-based prevention in Chap. 11. In Chap. 12, Debnam, Bradshaw, Pas, and Johnson examine schools as the unit of analysis and provide many case examples of strategies to enhance relationships with schools during all phases of the research process.

In the final section, some current issues are discussed to illustrate how prevention science and education partner to enhance protective factors and reduce risky behaviors. Fletcher, in Chap. 13, focuses on projects and studies that have examined school climate and culture as the main prevention intervention in contrast to implementing a specific curriculum. This chapter provides detail on three environmental change projects in Great Britain, Australia, and the United States. In Chap. 14, Newman and Dusenbury focus on a set of programs and processes that are concerned with social emotional learning (SEL). They describe the basic principles of SEL, and they highlight specific programs, curricula, and activities that support student learning in this area. Eklund, Bosworth, and Bauman, in Chap. 15, explore various aspects of school safety, including issues of discipline, bullying, and dating violence. In Chap. 16, LaFromboise and Husain identify risk factors for youth suicide and describe the relationship of other risk factors to suicide. Elaine Allensworth, in Chap. 17, describes how dropping out of high school is a public health issue because of the relationship between lower educational attainment and negative health outcomes. Thus, dropout prevention is a critical issue in schools and is possibly the area where principles of prevention and academics are most closely aligned.

Taken together, these chapters provide the background for both aspiring and seasoned prevention scientists and educators to work more effectively together in reducing risk factors and enhancing protective factors in students. Each field has its own theoretical underpinnings, political pressures, and mission. Although, at times, it may seem like they move in parallel tracks, closer examination of the themes in this volume can help identify the common ground essential to promote positive youth development and support resiliency.

Reference

- Bukoski, W. J. (1986). School-based substance abuse prevention: A review of program research. *Journal of Children in Contemporary Society*, 18(1–2), 95–115. doi:10.1300/J274v18n01_06.

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