



Transforming the Work of Schools to Embed Health Promotion: building on the Gatehouse Project

Thursday 13th March 2008

Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London

Dr Lyndal Bond, Research Director, Adolescent Health and Social Environments Program, Centre for Adolescent Health, Australia

Schools are not just convenient places to deliver health promotion and health education. Educational and behavioural research has consistently shown that the school environment impacts both on young people's educational achievements and health behaviours. School environments are complex.

This workshop draws on 10 years research working with schools to facilitate the development of health promoting school environments in Australia.

This workshop will provide an overview of the Gatehouse Project and explore ways of working with schools that not just takes account of, but actively utilises complex school environments. The workshop will conclude with reflections and discussion on the challenges for design and evaluation of this approach. Participants will be invited to critically reflect on our questions of research and practice.

1. The Gatehouse Project: a multi-level integrated approach to promoting wellbeing in schools
The Gatehouse Project was a multi-level school-based intervention aimed at promoting wellbeing and reducing substance use. The Project was evaluated using a randomised controlled trial involving 26 secondary schools. We found significant reductions in young people's risk behaviours in the intervention schools during the trial with sustained effects in subsequent years. This presentation gives an overview of the elements of the Project, the evaluation and outcomes and describes our subsequent approach to research and practice.

2. Messy and meaningful: questions of practice
Taking an ecological approach to school-based interventions recognises the advantages and challenges of complex school environments. This component of the workshop will provide examples and explore ways of working with schools to assist in the integration of evidence into practice.

3. Process and outcome: questions of research and evaluation
An ecological approach to evaluating school-based interventions offers an opportunity to capture the complex relationships and changes at multiple levels of the system, not just individual outcomes. But it also requires us to significantly rethink research objectives, methods and practices. The workshop will conclude with a discussion about the challenges for research and evaluation of complex interventions.

Learning Outcomes

1. Understanding the challenges of issues based interventions in complex school environments
2. Understanding the Gatehouse Project approach
 - a. Core components
 - b. Process of change
3. Understanding the implications of taking an ecological approach to school based interventions on design and evaluation