



## REL Pacific Ask A REL Response

Other  
April 2019

### Question:

**What are some effective school-related interventions recommended for building resilience or other factors that contribute to positive life outcomes in children of vulnerable and marginalized communities?**

### Response:

Following an established REL Pacific research protocol, we conducted a web-based search for resources related to school-related interventions to build resilience and improve outcomes for vulnerable and marginalized children, with special consideration given to Pacific native and/or indigenous populations (see Methods section for search terms and resource selection criteria). While we focused our search in particular on studies in the Pacific and other indigenous contexts for greater relevancy to the Pacific region, we did include studies with more generalizable findings.

References are listed in alphabetical order, not necessarily in order of relevance. Descriptions of the resources are quoted directly from the publication abstracts. We have not evaluated the quality of references and the resources provided in this response. We offer them only for your reference. Also, our search included the most commonly used research resources, but they are not comprehensive and other relevant references and resources may exist.

### Research References

Ebersöhn, L. & Eloff, I. (2006). Identifying asset-based trends in sustainable programmes which support vulnerable children. *South African Journal of Education*, 26(3), 457-472.  
Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1150421>.

*From the abstract:* “In this article we argue that the asset-based approach is one explanation for sustainability in programmes supporting vulnerable children. We structure our argument by formulating five questions and then pursuing tentative answers to them. We start our contention by highlighting the particularity of the challenges faced in schools to support vulnerable children. We then consider the common denominators in programmes that have shown evidence of sustainable practices for supporting vulnerable children. This is followed by a deliberated link of the identified sustainability factors (e.g. common denominators) with the asset-based approach as a theoretical framework. Subsequently, we consider why the asset-based approach can be considered in terms of supporting vulnerable children in education. We indicate the similarities between the asset-based approach and current discourses focusing on the notion of schools as nodes of support and care. We conclude by suggesting that knowledge of asset-based good practices could be shared with families in school-based sessions, thereby developing schools', families' and communities' capacity to support vulnerable children.”

Flay, B.R. (2014). Replication of effects of the “Positive Actions” program in randomized trials in Hawai‘i and Chicago schools. Evanston, IL: Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED562840>.

*From the abstract:* “Several social-emotional learning (SEL) or social-emotional and character development (SECD) programs have been shown to be effective at improving SEL/SECD skills, and some have also provided evidence of effectiveness in improving student behavior and academic achievement (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). Very few SEL or SECD programs have replicated effects for all three of these domains of outcomes with students of different cultural/ethnic backgrounds in schools of different socioeconomic status and urbanicity. In education research, replication with different populations in different settings is important for understanding the generalizability of findings. In this paper, the author reports results from two cluster-randomized trials of the SEL/SECD program, "Positive Action" ("PA") across two very different groups of students and contexts: (1) 20 suburban and rural elementary schools (specifically grades 2/3 to grades 5/6) on three Hawai‘i islands in 2002-2006; and (2) 14 high-poverty, inner-city Chicago elementary schools (specifically grade 3 to grade 8) in 2004-2010. One table is appended. [The initial phase of the Chicago trial (R305L030072), a component of the Social and Character Development (SACD) Research Consortium, was a collaboration among Institute of Education Sciences (IES), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Division of Violence Prevention, Mathematica Policy Research Inc. (MPR), and awardees of SACD cooperative agreements (Children's Institute, New York University, Oregon State University, University at Buffalo-SUNY, University of Maryland, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, and Vanderbilt University).]”

Gafoor, K.A. & Kottalil, N.K. (2011). Within child factors fostering academic resilience: A research review. *Endeavors in Education*, 2(2), 104-117. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED574833>.

*From the abstract:* “The concepts academic resilience (AR) and protective factors (PFs) are important in academic vulnerability literature. This review is an attempt to identify, categorize and learn further from studies that dealt with factors which facilitate AR in children. This article attempts to clarify the concepts of academic at-risk, PF and AR in educational literature; to identify the PFs of AR referred to in the select educational literature and to categorize them into different groups for better conceptual clarity. Method was Collection, categorization and interpretation of related literature. Sample were 62 articles on the topic of AR during the period 1977-2007. 46 PFs were identified, listed in 19 categories belonging to within-child category. While it takes concerted effort of the various social institutions to foster the resilience by building an environment that protect the children at-risk at personal, domestic, school and societal levels, especially within-child factors can be fostered by teachers through short-term and medium term interventions.”

Jesse, D., Northup, J., & Withington, A. (2015). *Promising education interventions to improve the achievement of Native American students: An annotated bibliography*. San Francisco, CA: West Comprehensive Center at WestED. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED585865>.

*From the abstract:* “The purpose of this annotated bibliography is to identify interventions and supporting research that may benefit educators in their efforts to close the American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) achievement gap. It examines promising programs, policies, practices, and processes related to improving academic and nonacademic outcomes for AI/AN students in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. Collectively, the articles relate to a broad range of indigenous peoples, including American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders. Studies touch on Indians living on reservations, students in Bureau of Indian Education schools, students in tribally controlled schools, and English language learners. The 32 articles are categorized as follows: (1) School Improvement; (2) Literacy, Mathematics, and Science; (3) Language and Culture; (4) Behavioral and Social-Emotional Interventions; and (5) Parent, Family, and Community Involvement.”

Kendall, S., Straw, S., Jones, M., Springate, I., & Grayson, H. (2008). Narrowing the gap in outcomes for vulnerable groups: A review of the research evidence. *National Foundation for Educational Research*, 1-68. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED502360>.

*From the abstract:* “This report presents findings from a review of the best evidence on narrowing the gap in outcomes across the five Every Child Matters (ECM) areas for vulnerable groups in the context of improving outcomes for all. The review was commissioned to prepare the ground for work on ‘Narrowing the Gap’ with participating local authorities (LAs). Although the review sought out the best empirical evidence available, there was some variation in the robustness of the evidence reviewed. In general, there was a shortage of longitudinal, robust evidence on narrowing the gap for vulnerable groups that expressly linked outcomes with practice and effectiveness. Selected findings and conclusions include: (1) Strategies that promote children's health, safety and sense of safety, and economic stability all help to provide the necessary

conditions to promote effective and enjoyable learning and raise achievement; (2) Programmes and interventions to remediate disadvantage and narrow the gap in outcomes for vulnerable groups need a long-term focus; (3) There is a need for interventions to build on existing mainstream provision to aid sustainability and embed learning and effective and innovative practice; (4) Evidence supports a holistic approach to deal with the range of obstacles and negative influences that are holding children back, rather than single-issue interventions; (5) It is important to build upon the positive elements and experiences of children's and family lives; (6) Emphasis on interventions to increase resilience enables beneficiaries to develop the capacity and skills to resist adversity, cope with uncertainty and recover successfully from trauma; and (7) Interventions that focus on the whole family and involve children learning and working with their parents and care-givers are some of the most effective in supporting sustained improvements for children and preventing regression. Three appendixes include: (1) Search Strategy; (2) Literature Summary Template; and (3) Overview of the Research. (Contains 2 tables.) [For associated Executive Summary, see ED502361.]”

Swick, D. & Powers, J.D. (2018). Increasing access to care by delivering mental health services in schools: The school-based support program. *School Community Journal*, 28(1), 129-144. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1184769>.

*From the abstract:* “It is widely estimated that approximately 25% of school age youth face mental and behavioral health challenges. The vast majority of these youth are insufficiently treated, leaving them vulnerable to negative school outcomes such as attendance, behavioral, and academic problems. One common barrier to treatment is a lack of access to appropriate and consistent care including assessment and intervention. Often when students are identified in schools as potentially struggling with mental health issues, the child is referred out to the community for treatment. While well-intended, this approach is largely unsuccessful if families face challenges such as a language barrier, a lack of transportation or health insurance, or lack of flexibility with their jobs leaving them unable to make appointments. A unique school-community partnership in North Carolina attempted to overcome these obstacles by bringing mental health services to youth at the school campuses. The School-Based Support program largely mitigated problems with access to care and made a positive impact on school outcomes for youth. This report from the field describes the consequences of untreated mental health problems among children, barriers to receiving mental health treatment, and ways student mental health needs are currently addressed in schools. We then detail how the School-Based Support program was formed through a school-community partnership, the program components, evaluation results, and a case example.”

Thaman, K.H. (2013). Quality teachers for indigenous students: An imperative for the twenty-first century. *International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives*, 12(1), 98-118. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1017677>.

*From the abstract:* “This paper argues that all learners need teachers who are not only professionally qualified but also culturally competent. This is particularly so with teachers of indigenous students, who face the conflicting expectations of schools and

those of their home cultures. References to Pacific students will be used to illustrate some of the conflicts as well as attempts to address teaching and learning issues in Pacific Island Countries (PICs).”

Williams, S. (2018). Developing the capacity of culturally competent leaders to redress inequitable outcomes: Increasing opportunities for historically marginalized students. *Administrative Issues Journal: Connecting Education, Practice, and Research*, 9(1), 48-58. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1181505>.

*From the abstract:* “Objective: This study investigated the practices and impact of interdisciplinary faculty at a flagship university in the American Southwest who were engaged in the process of redesigning curriculum in order to center candidates on what they need to know and do as culturally competent school leaders. Method: Participants were 31 interdisciplinary faculty involved in preparing candidates for leadership in early childhood and elementary and secondary education, in diverse contexts including high need and Native American-serving schools. The qualitative study utilized document analysis of faculty's multi-year work in developing the capacity of candidates to increase opportunities for historically marginalized students. An external evaluation was conducted with focus groups of faculty and graduate students along with a follow-up discourse analysis of student reflective journals. Results: The redesign process involved several phases culminating in recommendations and next steps for preparing candidates to redress inequitable conditions and create a more hopeful future for America's diverse students. Conclusions: Developing the capacity of culturally competent leaders requires a fundamental change in the way institutions prepare candidates for equity and social justice work. Further research is needed to demonstrate that recommended activities and interventions will improve the cultural competence of educational leaders and make opportunity equity a reality for all children.”

## Methods

### Keywords and Search Strings

The following keywords and search strings were used to search the reference databases and other sources:

- “School interventions for vulnerable children” not “dissertations & theses”
- “School interventions for marginalized children” not “dissertations & theses”
- “School interventions” and “resilience” not “dissertations & theses”
- “School interventions” and “outcomes” and “vulnerable children” not “dissertations & theses”
- “School interventions” and “pacific” not “dissertations & theses”
- “Interventions” and “outcomes” and “pacific” not “dissertations & theses”
- “School” and “pacific” not “dissertations & theses”
- “Interventions” and “Hawaii” and “school” not “dissertations & theses”
- “SEL” and “Hawaii” and “intervention”

## **Searched Databases and Resources**

We searched ERIC, a free online library of over 1.6 million citations of education research sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences, for relevant resources. Additionally, we searched the academic database Google Scholar.

## **Reference Search and Selection Criteria**

REL Pacific searched ERIC and other academic journal databases for studies that were published in English-language peer-reviewed research journals within the last 20 years. REL Pacific prioritized documents that are accessible online and publicly available, and prioritized references that provide practical information based on peer-reviewed research for this Ask A REL requestor. Methodological priorities and considerations were given to descriptive data analyses and literature reviews, preferably with a target population of native, Pacific, indigenous, and other marginalized/ vulnerable populations. Limitations to findings included a lack of region-specific resources on the question, as REL Pacific first considers studies conducted in the Pacific region or similar contexts, but also includes relevant research with generalizable findings.

This memorandum is one in a series of quick-turnaround responses to specific questions posed by educational stakeholders in the Pacific Region (American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Hawai'i, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau), which is served by the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL Pacific) at McREL International. This memorandum was prepared by REL Pacific under a contract with the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES), Contract ED-IES-17-C-0010, administered by McREL International. Its content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.