



Measuring resilience and youth development: the psychometric properties of the Healthy Kids Survey



Institute of Education Sciences
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Summary

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Prepared by

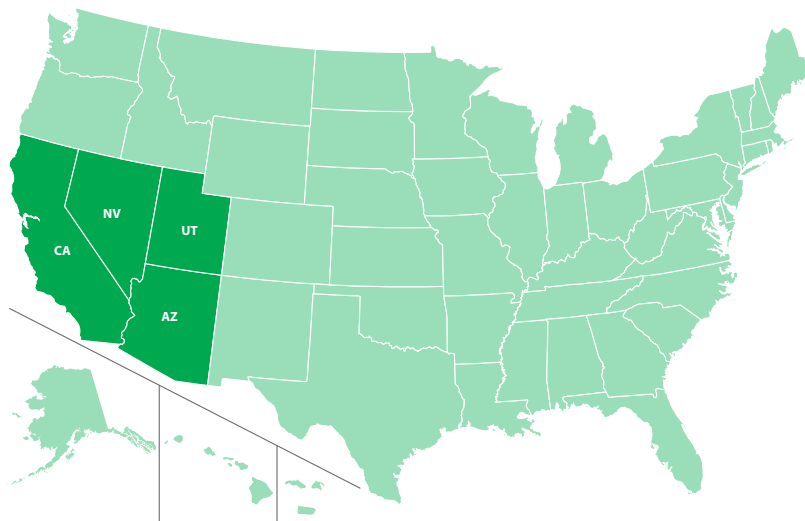
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Summary

Measuring resilience and youth development: the psychometric properties of the Healthy Kids Survey

This report summarizes findings from a study of the psychometric properties of the resilience and youth development module, a key component of the Healthy Kids Survey. The study aims to improve resilience assessment and research so that educators can shape the school environment to promote academic resilience.

The Healthy Kids Survey (HKS) is a comprehensive student self-report tool for monitoring the school environment and student health risks. This report focuses on one module of the survey, the resilience and youth development module (RYDM), which assesses environmental and internal assets associated with positive youth development and school success. Environmental assets refer to meaningful and pro-social bonding to community, school, family, and peers. Internal assets are personal resilience traits, such as self-efficacy and problem-solving skills.

A part of the resilience and youth development module is administered to 600,000 students in California every year. School districts and schools, which receive both single-year prevalence data and trend data gathered by the module, use the data to evaluate their local programs and guide decisionmaking. The Healthy Kids Survey and the resilience and youth development module were designed as an

epidemiological surveillance tool to track aggregate levels of health risk and resilience. The module increasingly is being used in evaluation work to assess student-level changes over time.

However, widespread use of the module, particularly for evaluation, may be premature. The psychometric properties of specific scales assessed by the elementary school module have yet to be established. The secondary school module has not been validated since 2000, when the instrument was first tested in the field. The instrument has since undergone several modifications, however, and must be re-validated. Moreover, measurement equivalence across different grades, males and females, and racial and ethnic groups has never been examined. Given California's diversity, demonstrating the cultural appropriateness of the module for different racial and ethnic groups is critical.

Using HKS data processed for school districts by WestEd's Health and Human Development Program, Regional Educational Laboratory West analyzed the module's psychometric properties. This report describes the results of this analysis, provides recommendations on the proper use of the instrument, and suggests modifications to the module.

For the secondary school module, the results are consistent with the instrument's current

use as an epidemiological tool and with its conceptual foundation. It provides comprehensive and balanced coverage of eight environmental resilience assets and four internal resilience assets; its subscales exhibit good internal consistency and are associated with student risk factors in expected ways. And if certain items are dropped, the module also demonstrates measurement equivalence across racial/ethnic groups, males and females, and grades. The secondary school RYDM scales exhibit low test-retest reliability, however, which suggests that the module is not well suited for examining student-level changes over time. The instrument was not designed to examine individual differences across students and should not be used this way. Moreover, two of the six internal assets that the secondary

school module was designed to measure—cooperation and goals/aspirations—could not be assessed validly. Several measures would benefit if additional items were included in derived scales to increase domain coverage.

The elementary school module was designed to assess seven environmental resilience assets and three internal resilience assets, but it can reliably assess only two environmental assets and one internal asset. Most of the scales measured by the elementary school instrument have poor psychometric properties. The elementary school instrument should thus be modified considerably to make it suitable for research.

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