

Recommendations for Fostering Educational Resilience in the Classroom

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ABSTRACT: Research has identified many factors that can foster the educational resilience of students who are at risk for academic failure. Educators have organized many of the recommendations that arise from this data into curricula and programs for implementation at the district and school levels. Researchers and educators have given less attention to compiling recommendations for daily classroom practice. Thus, the present project reviewed findings from current educational resilience research that examined students and teachers in classroom contexts. The synthesis produced 12 specific recommendations for classroom practices that can help foster educational resilience and support the academic achievement of students placed at risk for failure. The author organized the 12 recommendations into 4 clusters—(a) teacher–student rapport, (b) classroom climate, (c) instructional strategies, and (d) student skills—and presents with them the insights and perspectives of over 30 practicing teachers who work with at-risk students every day.

KEYWORDS: *academic success, at-risk students, classroom practice*

STUDENTS TODAY ARE BEING EXPOSED to increasingly difficult life environments that can significantly obstruct their path to academic success (Condly, 2006). Research has identified a wide range of risk factors (e.g., racial discrimination, psychological difficulties, community violence, familial difficulties involving poverty, disruption, alcoholism, violence) that can negatively affect students' lives, interfere with learning, and increase the likelihood of school failure (Borman & Overman, 2004; Frieman, 2001). However, many studies have shown also that a probability estimate of risk does not necessarily determine future outcomes. Many factors and interactions in students' lives can help them defy the odds and experience educational resilience (i.e., academic success despite adverse environmental conditions; Waxman, Gray, & Padron, 2003).

Educational Resilience: Academic Success in the Presence of Adversity

In 1979, Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, and Ouston published the results of a longitudinal study of more than 3,000

students who were living in poverty. Their investigation was one of the first to identify specific school characteristics that were related to positive outcomes for students who are at risk for academic failure. They found that (a) high academic standards, (b) incentives and rewards, (c) appropriate feedback and praise, (d) teachers' modeling of positive behavior, and (e) offering opportunities for students to experience responsibility, success, and the development of social and problem-solving skills were significantly related to positive academic outcomes even when students encountered difficulties that are associated with poverty (Rutter et al.).

In the years that followed, researchers continued to identify various elements of schools and classrooms that related to successful academic outcomes for students who were experiencing adverse life circumstances (Condly, 2006). This field of study came to be known as *educational resilience* and was defined as "the heightened likelihood of educational success despite personal vulnerabilities and adversities brought about by environmental conditions and experiences" (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1997, p. 2). Educational resilience is neither the result of an individual personality trait nor the outcome of a single intervention (Franklin, 2000). Rather, this construct is considered to be a dynamic set of interactions between the student and resources in his or her environment that work together to interrupt a negative trajectory and support academic success (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000).

Educational resilience has been studied in a variety of arenas that range from alcohol and drug prevention (Brown,

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2001) to educational leadership (Ainscow & West, 2006) to gifted education (e.g., Reis, Colbert, & Hebert, 2005). Across this array of research areas, investigators have also used a diverse set of approaches that range from longitudinal and empirical designs (e.g., Borman & Overman, 2004; Werner, 1993) to ethnographies and case studies (e.g., McGinty, 2004; Rouse, Bamaca-Gomez, Newman, & Newman, 2001). The variety of fields of study and methodologies has provided much-needed depth in our understanding of the factors that can foster academic achievement despite adverse environments and has served as the basis for several different district- and schoolwide intervention programs for students who are at risk for academic failure (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1998). However, one of the limitations of these district- and schoolwide resilience initiatives is that the programs have been either short-lived or poorly organized because of financial and time constraints (Doll & Lyon, 1998). Students who live amid difficult life circumstances are not well served by ephemeral or peripheral programming; rather, they need firm, consistent sources of support that are fully integrated into the daily life of the classroom (Doll & Lyon). Thus, teachers need to know how their daily work in classrooms can be infused with interactions and instructional strategies that research has shown can make a positive difference in the lives of students who are at risk of academic failure. Thus, the present study aimed to examine findings from the current literature on educational resilience and compile a set of recommendations for classroom practices that foster educational resilience and can be integrated into regular classroom practice.

METHOD

The initial phase of the present study involved an examination of current research that concerns fostering academic success when students experience adversity. I examined recommendations offered by published programs (e.g., Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1998), literature reviews (e.g., Condly, 2006), and primary investigations (e.g., Borman & Overman, 2004) designed to foster educational resilience at the classroom level for K–12 students in the United States. Studies that examine preschool-aged or international students and factors not relevant to daily classroom activities were not included in the present study. A synthesis of the findings revealed 12 specific recommendations for classroom practices and instruction that can foster educational resilience for students who are at risk for academic failure.

In the second phase of this project, I organized the 12 recommendations into 4 clusters and invited 32 practicing classroom teachers to provide their perspectives on the strategies. At the time of the study, all of the veteran teachers were working with students who were considered at risk for academic failure because of adverse environments involving factors such as poverty and family disruption.

RESULTS

I used a content analysis approach to data analysis to organize the 12 recommendations into the following four clusters (a) teacher–student rapport, (b) classroom climate, (c) instructional strategies, and (d) student skills. These four clusters represent a set of classroom practices and instructional strategies that teachers can use on a daily basis to foster the educational resilience of students who face serious adversity.

Teacher–Student Rapport

A teacher’s personal interactions with his or her students can make a significant difference for students who are at risk for academic failure. Research indicates that students’ experience of educational resilience is clearly linked to students’ connection with their teachers. At-risk students need teachers to (a) build healthy interpersonal relationships with them, (b) focus on their strengths to increase positive self-esteem, and (c) maintain high, realistic expectations for academic performance. Table 1 shows a summary of teachers’ insights.

Build Healthy Interpersonal Relationships With Students

The importance of teachers’ relationships with students who are at risk for academic failure cannot be overstated. Research findings overwhelmingly indicate that at-risk students who achieve academic success in the presence of significant obstacles tend to have at least one teacher who believes in them and serves as a role model and supportive adult (Borman & Overman, 2004; Werner, 1990). At-risk students need to work with teachers who can develop strong, positive, and personal relationships characterized by respect, trust, care, and cohesiveness (Brooks, 2006). Forming a meaningful connection to a significant adult appears to contribute most to the academic success of at-risk students (Johnson, 1997); this connection is equally important for children and adolescents (Benard, 2004).

Practicing teachers supported the significance of this recommendation for the academic success of students who experience adversity. Their experiences revealed that “the closer a teacher can get to these kids, the better. If they have a positive relationship with you, they will work for you and make a good effort.” Other teachers said, “More and more I find myself in the role of a counselor. So many kids need a consistent reliable adult and often that is their teacher” and “Students can’t perform to their full potential if they don’t feel cared for and respected.” The role of caring is central to the teacher’s day-to-day work in the classroom. These teachers reported that “kids know if you care, and if you do, respect and trust will follow” and that “I don’t believe students will care what you know until they know that you care. When they feel cared about, they will go that extra mile and not give up or shut down.” These teachers

TABLE 1. Teacher–Student Rapport

Recommendation	Examples	Teacher insights
Build healthy interpersonal relationships with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop strong, positive, personal relationships with students that are characterized by respect, trust, caring, and cohesiveness 	“The more comfortable students are with the teacher, the better able they are to ask questions and seek real help. The reduced stress level leads to better study modes.”
Set and communicate high, realistic expectations for academic performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain can-do attitude • Emphasize effort and success • Provide support for academic success 	“Set goals for students to ensure they are striving to climb higher; feature comparisons to show growth. Interlace tough, academic work with hands-on, enriching experiences that guarantee success.”
Use students’ strengths to promote high self-esteem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build individual self-esteem by focusing on personal achievements and strengths 	“When students know their strengths are appreciated they are more willing to strengthen low areas.”

caution, “It’s important that it does remain teacher–student, adult–adolescent relationship. Don’t cross the line.”

Set and Communicate High, Realistic Expectations for Academic Performance

Students who are at risk for academic failure need teachers who can (a) maintain a can-do attitude, (b) emphasize the importance of effort and success, and (c) provide adequate support for academic success. Dunn (2004) reminds educators of the importance of holding high expectations for at-risk students because “even though they’re at risk doesn’t mean they’re not good students and they don’t want to learn” (p. 38). This recommendation can correspond also to the cultural background of diverse students. For example, research indicates that teachers need to expect Native American students “to do the very best possible—that excellence would be striven for without praise . . . [then] appreciation is shown, not by vocalizing praise, but by asking people to continue doing what they are already doing” (Peavy, 1995, pp. 2–3).

Classroom teachers who work with struggling students confirm the pivotal role of the recommendation in supporting students’ academic success. They have found that “most students will work to the level of expectation” and “if they believe they can achieve, in most cases they will.” Teachers also convey the importance of logical follow-through in that they need to maintain “high expectations and [have] consequences for not fulfilling obligations.” They also believe that students “need to be expected to work up to their ability, but shouldn’t be frustrated by asking them to go places they are not ready for.” Other insights from teachers’ day-to-day practice include: “Students need encouragement; sometimes they get little from anywhere but school” and “set goals, record grading criteria and use rubrics that

address criteria set before assignment is due. Students assist in working out point weight and criteria.”

Use Students’ Strengths to Promote Positive Self-Esteem

Research has clearly demonstrated a relation between at-risk students’ academic achievement and self-esteem (Alves-Martins, Peixoto, Gouveia-Pereira, Amaral, & Pedro, 2002; Wickline, 2003). Because of the strong relation between positive self-perceptions and academic achievement (Masten, 2001), students who face adverse environments need teachers who will help them recognize and value their unique abilities, strengths, and personal achievements. These students do not benefit from artificial ego inflation; instead they need teachers who can help them ground their self-esteem in academic competence, accomplishments, and coping skills (Reis et al., 2005).

Practicing teachers offer the following insights on the importance of a strengths-based focus when working with students who are at risk for academic failure. For example, one teacher stated that the strengths-based approach makes a difference because “students need praise and need to believe in themselves and their abilities.” A different teacher shared, “I have witnessed kids fighting school because they struggle with the material and always getting in trouble . . . but when someone else is clearly more disabled than them, they are wonderful. They become role models, helpers, etc. with other students who are worse off than them.” Another teacher offered, “Self-esteem should be built by being honest about what needs improvement and what is being done well. There should be no empty compliments. Feedback should be direct and honest.”

Classroom Climate

Research suggests that there are many specific recommendations for classroom culture and environment that can

support academic success for students who face difficult life circumstances. Students who are at risk for academic failure appear to be more successful when they belong to a classroom in which a teacher (a) has clear behavioral expectations, (b) conveys to students that they are personally responsible for their success, (c) creates a caring classroom community, and (d) provides opportunities for meaningful student participation. The recent examples of bullying, alienation, and school shootings indicate the need to build classroom and school environments where at-risk students have a sense of belonging and responsibility. Table 2 shows a summary of teachers' insights.

Show Students That They Are Personally Responsible for Their Success

At-risk students need to belong to a classroom in which teachers foster personal goals and a sense of pride in accomplishments. Teachers can establish reference points by which students can identify their achievements and continually relate success to their efforts (Brooks, 2006). Academic achievement can be supported through projects that center on students' autonomy and choice. Students who take control of projects and incorporate their own ideas and interests into the final product develop a healthy sense of agency and internal locus of control, both of which contribute to students' experiences of educational resilience (Borman & Overman, 2004).

The experiences of classroom teachers have supported the significance of this strategy. For example, one teacher stated, "It is important for [students] to realize [the impor-

tance of self advocacy] and take control over their lives." Teachers also suggest practical ways to implement this strategy in the classroom such as "Maintain a daily assignment notebook based on a wall chart; use preplanning and short term/long term goal setting via calendars." Teachers also offer the following insight on helping students develop personal responsibility: "[Students need to have] realistic consequences; sometimes students need to fail before they get serious. I don't think as adults we should be rescuing them all the time."

Develop a Caring Classroom Community

At-risk students need to be part of an effective classroom environment marked by encouragement, trust, and a sense of belonging (Dunn, 2004). Research indicates that academic achievement is enhanced when the classroom environment reduces anxiety, encourages camaraderie, and promotes safe, orderly interactions (Borman & Overman, 2004).

Classroom teachers have found that "students need to feel safe and respected within the classroom to do their best learning" and that "the more they are comfortable and can trust, the better they do." Building a sense of classroom community among students is also important. Teachers say, "This needs to include building a sense of responsibility to self and others" and "I believe in developing tolerance for differences, respect for individuality and caring for one another." Practical advice includes recommendations such as "I encourage students to name the problem and work out a solution." Another teacher offered this insight: "Confidentiality is a must. My

TABLE 2. Classroom Climate

Recommendation	Examples	Teacher insights
Tell students that they are personally responsible for their success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help students develop personal goals and sense of pride in accomplishments. • Foster development of an internal locus of control. 	"We teach our students their rights and responsibilities as students. We emphasize the importance of self-advocacy in class, on the job, and in going on to higher education."
Develop a meaningful, caring community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize encouragement, trust, caring, and a sense of belonging 	"A sense of group responsibility and cooperation in various activities. I have used the class meeting technique to solve social issues."
Provide opportunities for meaningful participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give students purpose and responsibility for what goes on in the classroom and school • Value students' participation 	"Students must see the relevance of classroom activities to their lives in order to buy in and to do their best."
Set clear and consistent expectations of students' behaviors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain clear structure for classroom (academic and social) behavior 	"Most of these students lack structure in their lives and school is one place where they get it. Following the same pattern has helped me teach and reach them."

kids have a say about whether groups can tour our rooms while they are present.”

Provide Opportunities for Meaningful Participation

Students who are at risk for academic failure need to develop a sense of purpose and responsibility for what goes on in the class and school. They need to know that active participation is valuable and to understand how the content relates to their lives (Finn & Rock, 1997). Learned information and solved problems need to be embedded in familiar contexts (Dunn, 2004). Teachers need to contextualize knowledge by making specific connections to students’ lives. An example of a contextualized writing assignment involves asking students to brainstorm, outline, sketch, and write original comic books that represent their lives (Bitz, 2004).

Practicing teachers report success with this strategy. They have found that “students need to have an investment in what they are doing” because “if students value what happens in the classroom, they participate willingly and effectively.” Teachers make three recommendations for effective implementation of this strategy in the classroom. First, teachers should ask students, “How will you use this in life?” They recommend that educators “have kids answer this [question] and tie it into their personal goals.” Second, teachers recommend that educators obtain student input by “asking for students’ help in determining class schedule.” Teachers recommend doing this by “always giv[ing] students opportunity for their input. Students will be more involved in and take better care of their class and school if they feel a part of it.” The final recommendation is to use “problem solving and brainstorming with no bad suggestions; work to eliminate nonworkable possibilities and try to use a piece of all students’ suggestions or input.”

Set Clear and Consistent Expectations for Students’ Behaviors

Students who are at risk for academic failure need to have a clear structure and expectations for behavior in class and in the larger school setting (Borman & Overman, 2004). Teachers need to consistently communicate these rules

and responsibilities to students (Brooks, 2006). Unwavering expectations about students’ behaviors reinforce their beliefs that they are regarded as capable of academic performance, good behavior, and creative contributions (Wang et al., 1997).

Teachers who work with students who are at risk for academic failure support the importance of this strategy. Teachers’ experiences have shown them the importance of explicating behavioral expectations: “[Students] need to learn what behaviors are acceptable and which are not and why” and “Students need to have ‘comfort’ in rules and expectations to succeed. They need the line in the sand.” However, teachers need to avoid rigidity and to “make things clear and stick with them but be flexible for those occasions when something happens that is beyond anyone’s control.”

Instructional Strategies

The third cluster of recommendations involves the use of instructional and collaborative strategies. The research indicates that at-risk students experience more academic success when they are involved in activities such as cooperative learning projects and cross-age tutoring. The value of these instructional strategies appears to lie in students’ opportunities to work with others and build a supportive network in the context of learning. Table 3 shows a summary of teachers’ insights.

Use Cooperative Learning Strategies

Research indicates that students who are at risk for academic failure need to participate in learning teams with group goals and individual accountability to motivate learning (Waxman, Padron, & Arnold, 2001). Educational resilience can be supported with learning approaches such as problem-based learning and reciprocal teaching. Students need to be encouraged to share their strategies for finding answers and to explain new ways of solving problems (Dunn, 2004). Researchers suggest that teachers should engage students using a hands-on, inquiry-oriented approach to curriculum (Waxman, Gray, & Padron, 2004).

TABLE 3. Instructional Strategies

Recommendation	Examples	Teacher insights
Promote cooperative learning strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use learning teams with group goals and individual accountability to motivate learning 	“I believe this is very critical, and it applies directly to future workplace situations.”
Encourage students to tutor other students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage older students to read with younger students daily • Encourage advanced peers to tutor others 	“This is valuable as an investment in other people because it develops social responsibility.”

Practicing teachers' insights on the use of cooperative learning in classrooms focused primarily on the importance of effective implementation. One teacher said, "I think cooperative learning groups need to be used more often, if done correctly." Veteran teachers also offered tips such as "Learning is enhanced when students can communicate and relate learning situations with each other. First, they need personal responsibility" and "I think this is a useful tool that should be used along with many other individual activities."

Involve Students in Cross-Age Tutoring

Older students who are at risk for academic failure benefit when they are given the opportunity to read, study, or work with younger students. An example of this kind of experience involved an assignment in which students were asked to write a letter that conveys their advice for academic success to younger students (Commander & Valeri-Gold, 2003). Cross-age tutoring does not need to be set aside for high-achieving students only; rather it seems to be most effective when tutors of all ability levels receive ongoing training (Robinson, Schofield, & Steers-Wentzell, 2005). In one example, the older students prepared twice a week—with the teacher's help—two 25-min reading sessions with younger students. The training includes (a) selecting the book, (b) practicing word recognition, (c) identifying appropriate comprehension strategies, (d) creating story maps and character sketches, and (e) formulating discussion questions to share with the younger student (Cunningham & Allington, 2003).

Classroom teachers have found that cross-age tutoring "works well and is great for self-esteem and to reinforce skills that struggling readers may be experiencing" and

"improves schoolwide relationships and fosters a sense of civic responsibility." Teachers maintain that "there is a place for this and a lot to learn doing this." However, teachers' experiences also substantiate the need for training and support for the tutors: "This needs to be carefully planned to benefit both sides" and "This works well if older students are mature enough to make it work."

Student Skills

The final cluster of recommendations focuses on acquiring and using personal skills. Daily interactions in classroom environments provide prime opportunities for students who are at risk for academic failure to develop transferable life skills that include (a) communication skills and social and interpersonal skills, (b) extracurricular interests and activities, and (c) effective literacy skills. Table 4 shows a summary of teachers' insights.

Teach Transferable Life Skills

At-risk students tend to experience educational resilience when they have opportunities to develop skills in communicating, coping with stress, managing conflict, problem solving, decision making, and critical thinking (Brooks, 2006; Reis et al., 2005; Thomsen, 2002). Students are more likely to succeed when they recognize that "the skills they are learning in class are directly relevant for many occupations in the real world [and this] helps them to develop a strong sense of future" (Kinney, Eaton, Bain, Williams, & Newcombe, 1995, p. 22). Furthermore, researchers identified the development of prosocial skills as "essential to the capacity of at-risk students to compensate for risk factors" (Johnson, 1997, p. 41).

TABLE 4. Student Skills

Recommendation	Examples	Teacher insights
Teach transferable life skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social skills • Conflict resolution • Assertiveness skills • Communication skills • Problem solving • Critical thinking 	<p>"This is needed for all students not just at-risk kids, but in many cases, they are behind in this process so you have to work doubly hard with them."</p>
Encourage students to participate in extracurricular activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage positive use of time in a variety of activities 	<p>"There are many non-academic skills that are learned through extracurricular activities and keep students out of trouble."</p>
Emphasize effective literacy skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that students are reading and comprehending on grade level 	<p>"Most of these students are functioning at lower than grade level so while it would be nice to get them to grade level, getting them to increase or move up from where they are is more important so they achieve some success."</p>

The experience of practicing teachers substantiates the value of this recommendation. Regarding their work with students who are at risk for academic failure, they say, “To become well adjusted contributing members of society, good social skills are critical” and “Students need to learn skills that generalize into adulthood, careers, and society.” However, they have also found that “too often kids have no idea how to even make an appropriate apology. They don’t always understand why anyone should apologize!” Practicing teachers concern is that although “these skills are very important nowadays, [they] often don’t fit into regular curriculum so they are frequently neglected.”

Encourage Students to Participate in Extracurricular Activities

Students who are at risk for academic failure need opportunities and encouragement to use their time positively in a variety of extracurricular activities (Gilligan, 2000). Research has shown that extracurricular participation can increase student motivation and academic achievement (Hawkins & Mulkey, 2005; Nettles, Mucherach, & Jones, 2000) and may help to strengthen students’ connection to school. Extracurricular involvement offers opportunities for students to spend out-of-school time in new activities and thereby to develop instrumental and social skills (Gilligan) and to avoid negative behavioral choices.

The experiences of classroom teachers who work with students who are at risk for academic failure substantiate the research. They view extracurricular activities as a way for students to strengthen important skills, use their time positively, and gain a broader set of experiences in the community. Teachers’ statements reflect that “extracurricular activities are a very good way to further develop social skills and conflict resolution that is not always possible in a classroom situation.” Furthermore, teachers have found that “students need activity and positive use of their energy. The brain is challenged in a variety of activities—all are beneficial.” Teachers also recognize that it is “important to broaden students’ experiential base” and to “expand their horizons—let them experience.” Teachers also understand the value of extracurricular activities “not just at school but in the community as well” because “there are a limited number of extracurricular activities available for fifth- and sixth-graders, but we have sports programs, a very active 4H and church group and all of these greatly contribute to the development of the whole child.”

Teachers also recognized some of the real-life constraints that students face when they participate in extracurricular activities. Teachers shared these insights: “There are so many wonderful extracurricular activities available for kids to participate in, but I do know that many kids work out of necessity and do not have time to participate” and although “it is important for these students to feel like they are a part

of something positive, unfortunately, it is very difficult for them to get involved because of the lack of esteem” [*sic*].

Emphasize Effective Literacy Skills

Research clearly indicates that students who are at risk for academic failure need to progress toward reading, writing, and comprehending at grade-level proficiency. Teachers who focus on developing students’ language and literacy skills across all subject areas use direct instruction regarding phonemic awareness and decoding (Foorman & Torgesen, 2001) and strategic instruction regarding cognitive strategies that improve comprehension (Katims & Harmon, 2000).

In their day-to-day classroom experiences, teachers recognize that curricula “are becoming much more involved with problem solving and applications. Reading comprehension is critical.” Teachers believed that literacy skills could be strengthened through daily, focused work in language arts classes through “at least 20 minutes of independent reading, oral reading experience, teaching of skills and modeling strategies for comprehension and journaling.” They also acknowledged the need for shared responsibility across the school because “reading and writing across the curriculum needs to be emphasized so that all teachers become responsible for developing literacy skills.”

CONCLUSION

There is little reason to doubt that students who live amid threatening and adverse environments encounter major obstacles in their path to academic success. Because of the dire lifelong economic and social disadvantages for students who experience academic failure (Barton, 2006), considerable effort has been directed toward identifying factors and approaches that can be used to support students’ academic success and foster educational resilience. These efforts have resulted in the development of a variety of programs and curricular supplements that help support students’ academic success in the presence of risk and adversity.

However, students who are identified as at risk of academic failure also need to experience sources of support that can be fully integrated in the daily life of classrooms (Doll & Lyon, 1998). Thus, the present study examined the current educational resilience literature to gather recommendations for classroom practices and instructional strategies that teachers can use in their daily efforts to make a difference for students who are at risk of academic failure. The findings from this study identified 12 classroom practices and instructional strategies that can buffer the negative effects of a stressful environment and foster students’ educational resilience.

An important caveat is that the 12 recommendations cannot be considered as new or earth-shattering discoveries; veteran teachers will recognize them as principles of sound

pedagogy. However, I remind teachers that they possess the tools to introduce at-risk students of all ages to the life-changing experience of educational resilience.

The voices of the practicing teachers represented in this article declare that dedicated educators do not have to depend on external programs or added microlessons to foster academic success for at-risk students. Rather, this study shows that sound pedagogy is a powerful mechanism for both learning and protection in students' lives. According to Masten (2001), there is a sense of ordinary magic in the daily life of the classroom, and in a world full of stresses on both students and teachers, the present study serves as a powerful reminder that everyday interactions in the classroom do matter.

NOTE

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