



Framework for Prevention



This framework for prevention depicts The SPARK Initiative's view on cultivating human and creative potential within all lives through understanding of the mind and the human experience. **Much research has been conducted around the implications of understanding how the mind works to create the human experience.** This understanding has been proven to naturally **reduce risk around high-school dropout, teen delinquency, bullying, teen violence, suicide, depression, and anxiety, while building resiliency around academic success, emotional well-being, and social-emotional skills.** (Kelley, T. M., Lambert, E., & Pransky, J.).

According to the *Theory of Planned Behavior* (TPB), by Icek Ajzen, predictors of dropout, delinquency, academic failure, depression, and teen violence are *attitudes, subjective norms* and *perceived control*, meaning a person's perception of his or her own capability to perform specific behaviors and/or meet specific results. Therefore, unlike many popular prevention models, this framework is individual-based, because resiliency and success in these areas is created from the inside-out. Consequently, if the participant understands the mind and the human experience, success will not **require** the participation of environmental factors. Yet, through the powerful research organized and presented in the *Social Development Model* (SDM), by R.F. Catalano and J. D. Hawkins, we found that active participation and connection to a mentor, school, and community have been proven to contribute to increased positive outcomes of the overall program.

Target Audience: Youth

The SPARK Program increases connectedness, reduces risk factors and builds resiliency to promote emotional well-being and school success in youth.

Though TPB predicts undesired behavior in youth that can be identified and addressed through attitudes, subjective norms and perceived control. The SPARK Core Curriculum is specifically designed to teach an understanding of the human experience, which subsequently creates desired changes around attitudes, subjective norms and perceived control.

Inputs

Core Curriculum: The Core Curriculum consists of 10 lessons that focus on an understanding of the mind and human experience for the purpose of reducing risk, uncovering resiliency and potential, and increasing a feeling of connectedness within oneself. The curriculum teaches youth an understanding of the mind and it connects knowledge and skills learned in order to help youth navigate their personal life experiences and circumstances.

Modules: Modules are supplemental lessons used after the participants have been taught the foundation through the Core Curriculum. They are optional lessons that are separated into groups (modules) by topic and should be chosen based on the participant's specific needs. All modules were created to connect the knowledge and skills learned through the Core Curriculum to the participants' personal life experiences and circumstances.



Facilitators/Mentors

Research states that it takes approximately 6-12 months to see desired outcomes from mentoring. Additionally, mentoring relationships that last one year or longer have shown the biggest improvements in academic, psychosocial, and behavioral outcomes. Finally, research also states that mentor pairs should spend at least 1-2 hours together, per week, for at least one school year. Because of this, adding modules that are relevant to your participants and providing one-on-one and/or group mentoring in addition to the Core Curriculum are both encouraged.

One-on-One/Small Group Mentoring: Facilitators/Mentors act as guides to the participants, helping them connect the dots of learning and providing weekly opportunities for positive interactions with an adult in their lives. Facilitators/Mentors also provide a healthy space to build a relationship and connectedness that supports youth and the skills learned.

If incorporating one-on-one or small-group mentoring, it is suggested that the mentoring be facilitated by recruits who have been trained in the curriculum. Also, because of the bond formed through the teaching of the curriculum, it is strongly suggested that the mentor/s be the same person/s facilitating the Core Curriculum. If the Core Curriculum is being taught every other week, participants may receive one-on-one or small group mentoring on the alternate weeks. If the Core Curriculum is being taught weekly, the mentoring may occur before, after of in between the lessons.

School/Organization

School/Organization support for the purpose of disseminating the Core Curriculum is essential. Research suggests that the quality and longevity of any mentoring program is directly tied to communication with staff and sufficient availability to resources and safe spaces. Mentoring programs require buy-in from the schools/organizations they work with and can help achieve this by involving the school/organization in setting outcomes, providing a safe and dedicated classroom, and using best practices to set these standards (Burrus, J., Roberts, R.).

SPARK Facilitator Training: Facilitator Training in the foundation and implementation of the curriculum, is highly suggested for any educators or mentors who will facilitate the program. The SPARK Initiative, Inc. provides access to teacher-training resources, as well as on-site and virtual training opportunities.

For more information on SPARK certified facilitator training, please contact us at info@thesparkinitiative.com or call 1 (813) 662-6920.

Community

According to research done by the National Assembly on School-Based Health Care and the SDM, a feeling of connectedness within the community was also a protective factor in reducing the risk of anxiety, depression, disruptive behavior, dropout and substance abuse.

Therefore, the SPARK Mentoring program also provides a community-involvement component within the Leadership Module of each SPARK curriculum level.

Community Involvement: The SPARK program empowers youth to utilize their leadership capability and creativity in giving back to their community. All participants being taught the Leadership Module will choose a community project they would like to complete as a group. They will discuss and decide upon their projects during the Community Engagement lesson of the Leadership Module. Completing this lesson and project provides participants the opportunity to bond with their community, and it empowers them to see that they can be a vital asset to that community.

SPARK Curriculum/Materials

Teaches youth an understanding of the mind and connects knowledge and skills learned to help youth navigate their personal life experiences and circumstances.

Increases a feeling of connectedness to themselves.

Facilitators/Mentors

Connects the dots of learning and increases positive interaction.

Builds a relationship and connectedness that supports youth and the skills learned.

Increases a feeling of connectedness to a positive adult in their life.



The SPARK Program increases connectedness, reduces risk factors, and uncovers resiliency to promote emotional well-being and school success in youth.



Community

Empowers youth to utilize their leadership and creativity in giving back to their community.

Increases a feeling of connectedness to their community.

Schools/Organizations/Classrooms

Hosts a safe space for youth to gather.

Creates a sense of buy-in via trained facilitators.

Increases a feeling of connectedness to their school/organization.






<p>Target Group</p>	<p>Youth: Ages 5-22</p>
<p>Goals</p>	<p>The SPARK Program reduces risk factors and uncovers resiliency to promote emotional well-being and school success in youth. The SPARK program addresses the following protective factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Academic Success ♥ Emotional Competency ♥ Self-Efficacy Skills ♥ Communication Skills ♥ Conflict-Resolution Skills ♥ Connectedness to Family, School and Community
<p>Objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Teach youth an understanding of the mind in order to reduce risky behavior and uncover resiliency (Lessons) ♥ Connect skills learned to life experiences and circumstances (Generalization) ♥ Build a relationship and connectedness that supports participants and the skills learned (Mentoring) ♥ Empower participants to utilize their leadership capability and creativity in giving back to their community (Community Involvement)
<p>Challenges</p>	<p>Many young people come to school with an array of the following risk factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Aggressive/Reactive/Impulsive Behavior ♥ Poor Academic Success ♥ Lack of School Commitment ♥ Depression, Anxiety ♥ Low Confidence/Self-esteem ♥ Low Social Skills ♥ Disrespect Towards Authority <p>Many schools do not have the resources to implement social-emotional learning programs or curricula in social and communication skills, and in emotional competency</p>
<p>Activities (Strategies)</p>	<p><u>Curriculum Lessons</u></p> <p>Core Curriculum: The SPARK Core Curriculum is designed to be taught during or after school, throughout the school year, by classroom teachers or certified SPARK facilitators. It can be taught once a week throughout the school year, or once every other week when implementing the <i>one-on-one mentoring</i> component in between lessons. The Core Curriculum consists of lessons that focus on an understanding of the human experience in order to teach participants personal and interpersonal skills needed to navigate life successfully</p>



Activities (Strategies)

Topic-Specific Modules: Additional lessons, also taught in a classroom setting. Based on the needs of the audience, topic-specific modules can be included into the program.

Example modules:

-  Healthy Relationships
-  Leadership
-  Life Skills
-  Sex Education and Teen Pregnancy Prevention
-  Teen Parenting

Curriculum Techniques:

-  Group discussions
-  Role plays
-  Student Activity Books
-  Thought chain / decision making
-  Creativity challenges
-  Videos
-  Trivia
-  Teachable moments / stories
-  Relatable story sharing
-  Real-life examples
-  Demonstrations

One-on-One Mentoring: If the Core Curriculum is being taught every other week, participants receive mentoring, on the bi weeks, in various life areas (goal setting, rapport building, social and emotional skills).

Community Involvement: The SPARK Mentoring curriculum also provides a community-involvement project through the Leadership Module. Participants complete various volunteer projects to help support local nonprofits. All participants being taught the Leadership Module will choose a community project they would like to complete as a group. They will discuss and decide upon their projects during the Community Engagement lesson of the Leadership Module. Completing this lesson and project provides participants the opportunity to bond with their community, and it empowers them to see that they can be a vital asset to that community.

SPARK Facilitator Training: Foundational training is strongly suggested for of any schools, organizations or educators who plan to facilitate the program. The SPARK Initiative, Inc. provides access to online training resources and webinars, as well as on-site and virtual training opportunities.

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Theory of Change (Outputs)

The SPARK Program reduces risk factors and uncovers resiliency to promote emotional well-being and school success in youth via an understanding of the mind and human experience. Through this the participants acquire:

- 💡 Insight into thought recognition;
- 💡 Insight into inner resilience, clear-mindedness, and mindfulness;
- 💡 Understanding of the dynamics of feelings;
- 💡 Insight into self-esteem;
- 💡 Ability to use “thought chain” in decision-making;
- 💡 Increased positive connection with themselves, others and their community.

Short-Term Outcomes

Participants who complete the SPARK program, demonstrate:

- 💡 Increased resilience;
- 💡 Increased inhibition and impulse control;
- 💡 Increased problem-solving, decision-making, and conflict-resolution skills;
- 💡 Increased communication skills;
- 💡 Increased positive outlook and greater sense of well-being.

Long-Term Impact

Participants who complete the SPARK program demonstrate:

- 💡 Increased academic success;
- 💡 Increased self- confidence and self-worth;
- 💡 Increased self-regulation;
- 💡 Increased engagement in positive relationships;
- 💡 Increased acceptance in differences in others;
- 💡 Engagement in pro-social behaviors.

Measurements

Inputs:

- 💡 Fidelity Scales
- 💡 Teacher feedback

Activities:

- 💡 Service Delivery Documentation

Outputs:

- 💡 Pre-and post-curriculum surveys
- 💡 Student Feedback
- 💡 Teacher Input

Short Term Outcomes:

- 💡 Resilience, DERS, CDP, 3PI and UP scales

Long Term Impact:

- 💡 School Attendance Reports
- 💡 School Discipline Reports
- 💡 Student Grade Reports

