



From the Director

Resiliency-A Paradigm Shift for Schools



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Resilient-the word calls up such positive images as determined, vigorous, hardy, irrepressible. A resilient person can bounce back from disappointments and defeats; can turn losses into learning experiences; and can cope with settings and life events that are normally thought of as inducing hopelessness, or failure. The concept of resilience has, in the last decade, begun to change the way that we look at the lives of children. When policy discussions emphasize "children at-risk," the task of removing all of the factors that can create significant stresses for children seems overwhelming. Rather than promoting action, it tends to promote labeling and inaction.

In contrast, research and interventions that focus on resilience point to what should be added to children's lives to give them better tools for coping with diverse, stressful settings. While not ignoring the social circumstances that make modern life more difficult for children, it emphasizes more careful efforts to improve the conditions that most directly affect a child's ability to cope such as effective parenting and early efforts to increase learning.

This is the first of two issues CAREI will devote to this topic. This issue of Research/Practice addresses the benefits of thinking about the resiliency of children, rather than their risk factors and draws our attention to some of the levers that schools and social agencies can affect. In addition, it reviews some proven strategies that can work in schools and communities. Our hope, with this issue, is to carry an important, positive message about our ability to improve the cognitive and social development of children and youth.