

The Mid/Med Writing Project: Medical Students and Middle School Students Document Experiences of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Katherine Pemberton BS, Melanie Sutton MA, Liliana Treitz, Sheilah Jimenez BS, Meghan Treitz, MD

Background

- Worldwide, students wrote about experiences in the early phases of the COVID-19 pandemic
- At the University of Colorado, we brought together medical school and middle school students in a combined writing group

Objectives

- Explore lessons learned from a writing group of medical school students and middle school
- Compare themes of the student writings

Methods

Participants wrote to a given prompt and participated in "open mic" session x2 weeks

Students read pieces aloud, received feedback, and discussed

Students completed an anonymous survey detailing their experiences

Focus groups were conducted with both groups of students, and writings were collected

Data analyzed using survey and inductive content analysis

Survey Results

Representative Comments:

Middle School Students:

"I am self-conscious about my writing, but I improve my writing when sharing."

"Everyone was so supportive!"

Medical School Students:

"They (middle schoolers) had just as much to bring to the table as the medical students."

"I was surprised at the emotional maturity the younger students showed."

"I learned to be more comfortable with myself and some of the negative thoughts I was having related to the pandemic.... Through this I was able to become less critical of myself."

80%

Of middle schoolers would participate again

100%

Of medical schoolers would participate again

100%

Of medical students agreed to some degree participating helped them process thoughts and feelings about the pandemic

80%

Of middle school students agreed to some degree participating helped them process thoughts and feelings about the pandemic

80%

Of middle schoolers agree the project gave them confidence working with older students

Discussion

- Despite differences in age and experience, both groups of students wrote about similar themes, feelings and archetypes
- By creating, sharing and discussing reflective writing about the pandemic, students gained self-confidence, perspective and empathy
- Both groups gained understanding of the other group, as well as themselves, through participation
- Next steps include a writing group with medical school and middle school students over a longer timeframe to evaluate changes in writing and development of near-peer relationships and mentoring

Content Analysis Results

Themes Common to Both Groups of Students

Pressure to succeed

Friendship

Family

Hope for Future

Memories

Hobbies

Disclosures

None of the authors have any disclosures to report.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to the CU medical students and the LPS middle school students who participated in this project!