

## ***Connections: Relationships and Marriage*** **Four-year follow-up evaluation results**

### **Executive Summary**

The Connections: Relationships and Marriage curriculum was used for this study with 213 high school students from California and South Dakota. All of the students were given a survey prior to beginning the curriculum and after completing the Connections class (approximately 3 months later). An additional control group of students from the same high schools (who did not take the curriculum) were given identical surveys. Further, 1-year and 4-year follow-up surveys were collected.

### **Promising Trends**

The most promising results fall in the area of how the curriculum impacts future marriage. Although only eight students were married at the 4-year follow-up, a positive trend is apparent (statistically significant differences are noted).

- Those Connections students who were married by the 4-year follow-up have higher marital satisfaction (18.5 versus 15.0 on the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale) and fewer problem communication patterns (9.2 versus 15.5, on the Relationship Dynamics Scale, statistically significant) compared to the married Non-Connections students.
- With the entire sample of 213 students, the Connections students are less likely to have chosen cohabitation (35% versus 39%), and are less likely to have had an affair on their boyfriend/girlfriend (15% versus 32%).
- The Connections students are more likely to have participated in some kind of marriage preparation activities post-high school.

Another potential long-term impact of the Connections curriculum appears to be on family closeness.

- Connections students tend to grow closer and closer to their family of origin whereas the Non-Connections students tend to grow more distant over 4 years (Connections students increased 1.8 points on the FACES Cohesion scale whereas the Non-Connections students decreased 2.0 points).

Lastly, one of the strong findings after the original posttest was that Connections students increase in their ability to resist peer pressure to become sexually active.

- Students do maintain the gains they made in their ability to resist sexual pressure over the 1 and 4-year follow-ups compared with the Non-Connections group (statistically significant).

### **Maintaining Gains**

Apart from the ability to resist sexual pressure, the results indicate that the other gains made by the Connections students over the Non-Connections students immediately after taking the course, generally wane by the 1-year and 4-year follow-ups. This would be expected if the students do not seek additional training in the years following the Connections curriculum.

### **Impacts**

The overall findings suggest the following with regard to the Connections: Relationships and Marriage curriculum:

- It appears to have a positive impact on future marriage preparation and marital quality
- It has a positive long-term impact on family closeness in one's family of origin
- It has a positive long-term impact on one's perceived ability to resist sexual pressure and thus is a viable teen pregnancy prevention curriculum