

Connections: Relationships and Marriage Evaluation Results

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Executive Summary

An evaluation of the Connections: Relationships and Marriage curriculum was conducted with 410 high school students in California. The sample contained an ethnically diverse cross-section of California. Students both in the Connections class as well as a comparative non-Connections class were surveyed both before and after the curriculum was taught. It is important to note that in the results discussed below, while the Connections students improved in the area in question, the non-Connections students either did not improve or in many areas showed significant deterioration.

The results of the evaluation suggest that the Connections curriculum is an effective curriculum in impacting students' knowledge, attitudes and actual behavior a number of areas. Specifically in the area of knowledge, students taking the curriculum improve in their overall knowledge of key relationship concepts and principles in comparison to those who do not take the curriculum.

Attitudes & Behaviors

The Connections Curriculum is effective as a violence prevention curriculum particularly in the area of boyfriend - girlfriend relationships. It is effective in decreasing the actual incidents of violence in close relationships as well as the amount of verbal aggression. It is also effective in improving parent-child communication and decreasing trouble at home.

The curriculum is also effective as a teen pregnancy prevention curriculum. Students taking the curriculum improve over students not taking the curriculum on 3 out of 4 teen pregnancy risk factors assessed in the evaluation. Students taking the curriculum improved in terms of their ability to resist sexual pressure. Students also improved in the area of feeling that their parents and close friends had positive attitudes toward abstinence. Lastly, students report better overall communication with parents including talking to their parents about relationships.

The Connections curriculum is effective in terms of improving attitudes toward marriage while reducing the likelihood that students see divorce as an ideal solution to problems in marriage. Attitudes also change over the course of the curriculum in terms of the students

becoming more willing to attend marriage preparation classes before marriage, marriage enrichment classes during marriage and to attend marriage counseling if their marriage has problems in the future. Additionally, students report that they are less likely to see cohabitation before marriage as a good way to prepare for a future marriage. This viewpoint is consistent with social science research, which suggests that cohabitation before marriage leads to increased risk of divorce, domestic violence and affairs after the marriage.

In summary, the Connections: Relationships and Marriage curriculum is effective as a violence prevention curriculum. It is effective as a teen pregnancy prevention curriculum in terms of its ability to reduce a number of the risk factors of teen pregnancy. Additionally, the curriculum is effective at preventing future relationship and marriage difficulties by improving key attitudes that should lead to students participating in behaviors and activities which are protective against future marital distress, domestic violence and divorce.