

Report on Outcomes of Relationship and Marriage Education Programs for Youth

Relationship and marriage education curricula effectively address some of today's most pressing social problems including adolescent pregnancy, violence, poor parent-child relations, and marital distress. Prevention is the key and the place to start is by teaching youth these skills, behaviors and attitudes before they marry.

The following list of pioneering current empirical research shows the benefits of teaching youth relationship and marriage skills. Such programs can:

- **Significantly reduce the onset of sexual activity by increasing self-awareness, self-discipline, the ability to delay gratification and develop long term goals.** *The Art of Loving Well curriculum was developed at Boston University under a five-year grant from the Office of Adolescent Pregnancy Programs (OAPP) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It consists of an anthology of compelling literary selections along with activities to enable students to learn vicariously from their readings and from conversations with teachers, parents, and friends. www.bu.edu/education/lovingwell (Amelia Kreitzer, Project Evaluator, CSTEPP, Boston College 1992.)*
- **Decrease peer-to-peer physical violence, improve communications with parents, change negative attitudes towards marriage and marriage education.** *The Connections: Relationships and Marriage curriculum appears to be beneficial in changing attitudes and actual behaviors in high school students from diverse racial backgrounds. It decreases the use of verbally aggressive and violent tactics in interpersonal conflicts. It tends to improve parent-child communication. The students taking this course become less favorable toward divorce, more favorable toward marriage, and more favorable toward preparing for and protecting their marriage. (Scott Gardner, PhD, South Dakota State University. 2005.)*
- **Improve students' ability to resist sexual pressure and decrease negative behaviors at home and at school.** *The Connections: Dating and Emotions curriculum is effective as a teen pregnancy prevention curriculum by increasing teens' ability to resist sexual pressure. 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. The curriculum also shows promise in reducing violence in relationships and negative behaviors at school and at home. (Scott Gardner, PhD, South Dakota State University. 2005)*
- **Reduce teen dating violence and abuse.** *The students who participated in the Love U2 Relationship Smarts program experienced significant improvements in terms of increases in relationship knowledge, decreases in destructive verbal and physical conflict strategies, increases in reasoning strategies, and positive changes in relationship beliefs regarding healthy relationships. Furthermore, analyses indicated that the adolescents benefited in similar ways, regardless of race or income. A significant interaction effect also was found for the verbal aggression subscale showing that the students decreased their use of verbal aggression in their relationships. In contrast, comparison group participants showed an increase in verbal aggression in their relationships. (Francesca Adler-Bader, PhD, and Jennifer Kerpelman, PhD, Auburn University, 2005.)*

Complete research briefs are available at www.DibbleInstitute.org.