Teen Relationships Matter: Research and Practice with Relationship Smarts Plus (Georgia)

September Webinar Q&A

**Q1: Cindy, what has been one of your favorite success stories from students that have been through the program?**

**A:** I would have to say that it's always nice to see former students and have them tell me

what a difference the curriculum has made for them. Another one of course is seeing the

students using the skills like the young man in the video using the speaker/listener technique in high school.

**Q2: Hi from NJ. Does decrease in pregnancy rates delayed reflecting high school pregnancy for kids in programs in jr high?**

**A:** We unfortunately cannot conclude "causation" from these trends. The pregnancy rates

did drop among high school students in Washington County, and as of 2017 every high

school student (freshmen to senior) had received the "6 core lessons" of Relationship Smarts in middle school during 7th grade, and all freshmen and sophomores also received the remaining 6 lessons during 8th grade. Currently, it's just a correlation. We plan to continue to follow the trend and compare this trend to similar counties where Relationship Smarts (and not other program) was delivered.

**Q3: Are there parent permission or parent information sent out? Opt-out option?**

**A:** We originally sent home parent permission slips that had to be returned for the students to participate. We now send home letters with an opt-out option.

**Q4: What do you think is the best timeslot to teach in school?**

**A:** Cindy is teaching this class in social studies classes because the school sees the value of the content.

**Q5: Ok, after school as the program progressed, what was the dropout rate?**

**What incentive was there to keep the children showing up weekly?**

**A:** Since 2015, the focus in Washington county has been to deliver the program to every

middle schooler. Since they all have to be at school, retention is high; the graduation rate from the program (70% completion) has been around 90%, with the exception of this past year where we only had a 65% program graduation rate due to school shutdown in March-April. Retention in after school programs is more challenging, but we have found that the host site plays a key role in maintaining rapport with the youth (AND parents/caregivers), and snacks really help too.

**Q6: How many weeks was the program?**

**A:** I taught on a monthly basis and covered one lesson per month. You could teach weekly or daily or even have a two or three-day workshop where you teach the curriculum. I've taught it each way.

**Q7: Thanks for the talk. Two questions: In the U.S. 44,291 births (1% of U.S. births) were to teen mothers aged 15-17. How did your program help teen parents in GA? Did you feel that the relationship smart curriculum addressed the lack of a vision of commitment to prevent depression, second pregnancy, and violence?**

**A:** Unfortunately, we do not have data to determine how the program helped teen parents

in Georgia. Looking at the trend data provided by our state, teen (age 10-19) pregnancies represented 7% of all Georgia pregnancies in 2015 and 6% of all pregnancies in 2019; very little change. In Washington county, teen pregnancies represented 15% of all pregnancies in 2015 and 8% in 2019 - a substantial drop. Again, at this time we cannot conclude that this was due to Relationship Smarts, but it sure is a great turn-around for the county!

**Q8: How are you able to receive compensation for delivering the program in school or OST? Do you have community partners where the cost is covered via grants? Do you have a staff to support full coverage of all students?**

**A:** We are fortunate to have a great partnership with DFCS and we currently receive

State Title V funding to deliver the program in several counties. Also, UGA Extension is funded by various sources, but mostly state and local tax dollars and our educators work with schools and agencies in their counties to deliver several programs to youth and adults. This resource is available in every state, I encourage you to reach out to your local Extension office to learn more.

**Vanessa:** Perfect, thank you.

**Q9: Can you speak on how you've changed the ways you are presenting since coronavirus?**

**A:** In Georgia, it currently varies. Cindy is currently able to still teach in school. She is

also going to reach the students that are virtual only using the virtual format the school uses which is Google Meets. Our team of Extension agents is currently working together to prepare materials with different virtual resources to deliver the program virtually. Also, take a look at the Dibble Online Teaching Toolkit which is under free resources on our website. Although the specific ways in which one would adapt the activities will vary based on the platform/apps you use, Dibble does provide a few general tips along with links to various platforms and apps to consider. You can also view the August webinar which was all about teaching online.

**Q10: What have you found to be the benefit of evidence-based curriculum over other forms of curriculum when it comes to teaching relationships?**

**A:** With an evidence-based program you can be confident that what you are doing will

actually make a difference.