

Summary of Evaluation Findings on the Child Development Project

The Child Development Project (CDP) has been extensively and rigorously evaluated in several studies over the last 20 years.¹ These studies consistently found that in schools where the program was widely implemented, students showed significant benefits in a number of areas, including attitudes toward school and learning, feelings about the self, social and ethical attitudes and values, and behavior, relative to students in closely matched comparison schools.

All of the program effects noted below are statistically significant differences between program and comparison students. In order to convey some idea of how large these differences are, they are expressed in terms of the percentage of program students who scored better than they would be expected to have scored if they had not experienced the program (i.e., if they were in the comparison group rather than the program group).

The largest and most recent study of CDP involved an ethnically and socio-economically diverse sample of over 14,000 students from 12 program and 12 comparison schools in six districts across the US. By the end of three years of CDP implementation, students in five high-implementing CDP schools, relative to their comparison school counterparts, showed:

- a greater sense of the school as a caring community (33% higher than would be expected if they had not experienced the program)
- more liking for school (12% higher than would be expected if they had not experienced the program)
- stronger academic motivation (24% higher than would be expected if they had not experienced the program)
- more frequent reading of books outside of school (8% higher than would be expected if they had not experienced the program)
- higher sense of efficacy (6% higher than would be expected if they had not experienced the program)
- stronger commitment to democratic values (12% higher than would be expected if they had not experienced the program)
- better conflict resolution skills (17% higher than would be expected if they had not experienced the program)
- more concern for others (10% higher than would be expected if they had not experienced the program)
- more frequent altruistic behavior (8% higher than would be expected if they had not experienced the program)
- less use of alcohol (13% lower than would be expected if they had not experienced the program)

¹These evaluations were conducted on an earlier version of CDP, which included all components of the *Caring School Community*[™] program and a literature-based reading program. The reading program has since been extensively revised and strengthened to provide a specific scope and sequence of instruction and a central emphasis on explicit teaching of reading comprehension strategies. See *Making Meaning*[™] section of our website for more information.

- less use of marijuana (19% lower than would be expected if they had not experienced the program)

A follow-up study of former students from three of the high-implementing CDP elementary schools in two districts showed that when these students were in middle school, they continued to show significantly better attitudes and behaviors than former comparison students. Specifically, during middle school, program students showed:

- higher grades in core academic classes (English, mathematics, science, social studies)—(average of one-half a grade-point; 25% higher than would be expected if they had not experienced the program)
- higher achievement test scores (25% higher than would be expected if they had not experienced the program)
- a greater sense of community (15% higher than would be expected if they had not experienced the program)
- higher educational aspirations (18% higher than would be expected if they had not experienced the program)
- more liking for school (19% higher than would be expected if they had not experienced the program)
- greater trust in and respect for teachers (18% higher than would be expected if they had not experienced the program)
- greater involvement in positive activities such as sports, clubs, and youth groups (20% higher than would be expected if they had not experienced the program)
- less misconduct at school (19% lower than would be expected if they had not experienced the program)
- less delinquent behavior (13% lower than would be expected if they had not experienced the program)

In addition to these positive outcomes for former program students themselves during middle school, they also reported that they had significantly fewer friends who were involved in school misconduct or delinquency, and significantly more friends who were positively engaged in middle school than comparison students.