



Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Center for Community of Caring

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION | THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

COMMUNITY OF CARING® RESEARCH AND RESULTS

NATIONAL EVALUATION EFFORTS



An Evaluation of the Nationwide Community of Caring Program

This multi-year study conducted by Dr. Ann Higgins-D'Alessandro of Fordham University. The total sample consisted of 855 teachers and 578 students. The teacher sample came from 58 schools across 13 states. The majority of teachers were middle school teachers (45%), followed by high school and elementary school teachers (29% and 27% respectively). The student sample came from 12 elementary and middle schools (grades 5 – 8) across five states. The innovative, scientific model used in analysis was a dosage model, which allowed the number of participating schools to be graded along dimensions from none or little to extensive implementation of the Community of Caring program by assessing how many core elements and complementary activities that define the program have been implemented in Community of Caring schools. Implementation level was defined as the number of core elements and activities done frequently and routinely in a school with a possible range from 0 to 10.

Preliminary data analysis revealed that greater participation in Community of Caring's core elements and activities was *significantly related to positive student character*, including:

- ◆ trusting one another
- ◆ helping peers who are not their friends
- ◆ being friendly to other groups and to students school-wide
- ◆ being responsible and caring for others

Results were also positive for perspective taking, the cognitive ability shown to be necessary to character development. Teachers in *schools with greater levels of program implementation reported significantly higher rates of*:

- ◆ students perspective taking abilities
- ◆ students listening to others' ideas
- ◆ students' taking each other's points of view
- ◆ students stopping to think before speaking or acting
- ◆ student autonomy, with students feeling they have a say in their classrooms and their school

In addition, school climate, student behaviors, and teachers' attitudes showed significant relationships with level of implementation of Community of Caring. Specifically schools with *higher implementation reported significantly higher levels of the following*:

- ◆ better teacher relationships with students
- ◆ greater students' perception of the quality of educational opportunities
- ◆ greater attachment to school, including better student attendance and more completed homework
- ◆ more positive teacher-reported attitudes toward their schools as high quality workplaces for themselves
- ◆ more teacher-reported social inclusion of students with disabilities



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NATIONAL EVALUATION EFFORTS, CONTINUED



Attitudes Regarding Students with Mental Retardation

In 2003-2004, Dr. Ann Higgins d'Alessandro of Fordham University, conducted a study of attitudes toward students with intellectual disabilities and also assessed school climate. This research demonstrated that Community of Caring schools had significantly more caring school cultures than non-Community of Caring. Specifically, Community of Caring schools were significantly better in the following ways:

- ◆ student to teacher relationships
- ◆ student to student relationships
- ◆ students feeling they have a say in what happens in the school, and being able to speak up
- ◆ students feeling they have good educational opportunities in the school

Community of Caring Implementation Survey

In Community of Caring schools across the nation, lead teachers report on their school's level of involvement in the program in an annual Community of Caring implementation survey. Data from the 2004 survey, compiled and analyzed by Dr. Michael Hardman at the University of Utah, included the following findings:

- ◆ 98% of schools that completed their survey reported that every student participated in Community of Caring activities, including those with mental retardation.
- ◆ 90% of schools reported that every student within the school has the opportunity to participate in community service activities. About 68% of the students actually chose to become involved in community service/service learning.

Community of Caring schools reported, that as a result of the program, their school environment was more open and positive, there was greater understanding and acceptance of all students, there was more family involvement, greater students leadership, and more effective collaboration among teachers and students.

An Evaluation of the Community of Caring-In-Schools Initiative

In 1991, Brian J. Balicki of the Center for Health Policy Studies in Columbia, Maryland, completed a three-year evaluation of the Community of Caring middle/high school program. The evaluation compared over 1,700 students in Community of Caring versus non-Community of Caring schools in three school systems across the country, representing diverse ethnic, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. The evaluation found that students in Community of Caring schools that were fully implementing the program had:

- ◆ significantly higher grade point averages
- ◆ significant reductions in teen pregnancy
- ◆ significant reductions in at risk behaviors, such as the use of alcohol

An Option to 'Just Say No': Schools as Communities

Dr. Mary Voelker completed a research study for her doctoral program on Community of Caring in 1994 at the University of Utah. She studied how the program impacted the following elements in schools:

- ◆ leadership
- ◆ school climate
- ◆ integration of values in the curriculum
- ◆ experiential learning

She found *significant positive differences* for participants in Community of Caring schools versus control groups in all areas, at the school level, and for teachers, administrators, and students.



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LOCAL EVALUATION EFFORTS



The Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Center for Community of Caring at the University of Utah has partnered with school districts, other universities, and community agencies to produce empirical evaluations of the Community of Caring program.

Gulf Coast Community Foundation “Because It Matters” Initiative

We are currently evaluating Community of Caring as a district-wide initiative in Sarasota and Charlotte counties in Florida. This exciting initiative will evaluate the effectiveness of the Community of Caring program to produce outcomes for students, teachers, administrators and parents. Our initiative began November 2007 and will continue through October 2011.

New Jersey Caring Schools Inclusion Project

Community of Caring provides the professional development for this collaborative effort with The Center for Social & Character Development at Rutgers University. The evaluation of the program, with its emphasis on inclusion, is conducted by Dr. Ann Higgins-D’Allesandro at Fordham University. This project began in July 2006 and will conclude in June 2010.

The Colorado Trust's Teen Pregnancy Prevention 2000 Initiative

Dr. Kaia Gallagher, Ph.D., at the Center for Research Strategies, Denver, Colorado reported that the Community of Caring program is a very ambitious program in its efforts to change the values context in which young people make decisions about their behavior. Specifically, she found that Community of Caring:

- ◆ created a common language that promotes school unity
- ◆ built stronger connections between parents, schools and the community
- ◆ provided youth with a values perspective from which to view their behavioral choices

In addition, she found that Community of Caring does make important differences in school environments by:

- creating a common language that promotes school unity
- building stronger connections between parents, schools and the community
- providing youth with a values perspective from which to view their behavioral choices

The Impact of Community of Caring in Salt Lake City, Utah Schools: 1995-99

Jennifer Johns conducted an evaluation for the Utah Community Partnership for Character Development, a federal character education grant project. She found that participation in Community of Caring legitimized the teaching of values and contributed to a community-wide awareness of character education. She also found that:

- ◆ students showed an increasing awareness of values, which was associated with improved behavior
- ◆ school climate was improved, including improved collegiality and communication among staff members
- ◆ more positive relationships between students and staff
- ◆ better relationships with parents, included increased parental involvement

In addition, Community of Caring schools in her study reported the following statistically significant findings:

- ◆ decreases in negative behaviors such as discipline referrals, suspensions, and teen pregnancy
- ◆ increases in positive behaviors such as interacting more kindly and respectfully with students and teachers, and showing care and concern for others