

The CHOICES Impact



EDUCATION GROUP

*Interactive Workshops. Engaged Communities.
Keeping teens "into" school!*



"You gave us an education about why we need education." –Evan, middle school student, Washington

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Who We Serve

*Middle and High School Teens in
their school classrooms*

At CHOICES Education Group we strongly believe in measuring our impact on teens, and have a long history of research dating back to our origins.

Early Research on Workshop Effects

When we first began delivering CHOICES in 1985, we secured a grant from the U.S. Dept. of Education to study the effects of the program. In a time series study of 11 urban, suburban and rural schools, we found that one month after attending CHOICES, 38% of students who indicated intentions to put more effort into their attendance reported actual increases, and 56% of students self-reported putting more time and effort into their grades at school.

Current Student and Staff Surveys

At the end of every CHOICES session delivered since that time, presenters administer self-report survey instruments from that study for both students and school staff to determine their response to the program and the presenter.

The student survey investigates how important the program content is to them, as well as how interesting the seminar is, how easy it is to understand, how believable it is and how useful the material is, and what they thought of the presenter's effectiveness.

The staff survey asks how appropriate the content is for students, how effective the teaching strategies are, what the value of the program is for students, and what the strengths and weaknesses of the workshop are. The staff survey also inquires about the presenter's preparedness, clarity, monitoring of students' comprehension and credibility with students.

In four client surveys conducted for three recent academic years in NC, GA and LA, 4,364 students were asked to indicate if CHOICES was relevant, effective and realistic. The composite approval rating (4 or higher on a 5-point scale) from these students was 88%. Similarly, 41 teachers were asked about the program's effectiveness, and if the presenter was relevant and credible. Their composite approval rating (4 or higher on a 5-point scale) was 97%.



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Formative Engagement Study

During the 2006-2007 academic year, Russell Investments of Tacoma, Washington funded a "formative" study for CHOICES led by a research professor from the Experimental Education Unit at University of Washington who specializes in at-risk students. This study tested evaluation procedures for assessing the impact of the CHOICES workshop on school engagement of at-risk youth. This approach is based on evidence from independent research demonstrating that increased school engagement is a strong indicator of on-time high school completion.

The procedures for our school engagement study included pre and post workshop observations by researchers regarding engagement levels of students, an interview with teachers regarding the perceived impact of CHOICES on student engagement, and the self-report student survey currently used by CHOICES after each workshop. The school selected for the study was Bethel School District's Spanaway Junior High School in Spanaway, WA.

Results of the study indicated continuing positive ratings of CHOICES by students via the current survey instrument. In addition, independent observations of focus students indicated a 9% increase in appropriate classroom engagement and a 9% decrease in inappropriate engagement and non-engagement coincident with their participation in CHOICES. Observations also revealed more instances of students contributing information in class, fewer instances of students disrupting the class, and more instances of teacher praise.

Teacher Administered Engagement Study

In the 2008-2009 academic year we conducted a new, teacher-administered study in three locations (Madison, FL, Danville, IL and Helena, MT) to measure increases in positive school engagement by CHOICES participants.

One aspect of this study investigated changes in 60 "focus students" that were identified by their teachers as being at-risk of dropping out of school, but that would be participating in CHOICES. The criteria for selection of these students were poor attendance, grades, conduct and/or class participation. Study instruments were completed by the teachers one week prior to CHOICES delivery and again four weeks after CHOICES delivery.

The results were as follows:

- Teacher-Reported students: (n = 60; scale range = 1-5)
- Average Engagement Score 1 week prior to CHOICES: 2.98 (Baseline)
- Average Engagement Score 4 weeks after CHOICES: 3.22
- Average Engagement Score Delta: 0.24
- Average Engagement Score Percent Delta: 8.02%

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In the Helena study site we conducted a Control Group study that completed the same pre and post instruments at the same times as the Study Group, but did not participate in CHOICES until after completing the post instrument. The results for this portion of the study were as follows:

Control Group

- Teacher-Reported students: (n = 15; scale range = 1-5)
- Average Engagement Score 1 week prior to CHOICES: 2.66 (Baseline)
- Average Engagement Score 4 weeks after CHOICES: 2.85
- Average Engagement Score Delta: 0.19
- Average Engagement Score Percent Delta: 7.21%

Study Group

- Teacher-Reported students: (n = 30; scale range = 1-5)
- Average Engagement Score 1 week prior to CHOICES: 2.97 (Baseline)
- Average Engagement Score 4 weeks after CHOICES: 3.25
- Average Engagement Score Delta: 0.28
- Average Engagement Score Percent Delta: 9.35%

Percent Difference in Engagement Score Delta (Study Group over Control Group): 47.37%

Not only do these results corroborate our 2007 study by indicating an average 8% increase in school engagement among at-risk youth, but the controlled study demonstrated that students who participated in CHOICES increased their engagement 47% more than those in the Control Group (Control Group students increased their engagement by .19 points, while Study Group students increased their engagement by .28 points, a 47% higher score).

This indicates a strong correlation between participation in CHOICES and increased school engagement.