

Changing Maine Teens' Perceptions About Healthy Relationships



www.maine-teentalk.org

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Purpose of the Study

As part of its Healthy Relationships Initiative, Character Counts In Maine continues to evaluate the effectiveness of its core component, the MaineTeenTalk (MTT) program, at addressing three programmatic outcome objectives. These objectives are as follows:

- Increasing teens' awareness of the value of healthy relationships;

- Increasing teens' knowledge about the skills and behaviors that will improve their chances of having healthy relationships; and
- Creating positive behavior changes among teens by increasing healthy communication and conflict resolution skills.

The key component of determining this effectiveness has been the development and administration of a Pre and Post Survey designed to assess teens' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to dating relationships and marriage. This survey has been administered to teens in the program since the inception of MTT in 2006, and with minor modifications continues to be used to this day.

About Maine Teen Talk

The MaineTeenTalk (MTT) program was developed to increase teens' knowledge and build skills that will create positive behavior change resulting in respectful, healthy relationships. Furthermore, the MTT resources are designed to help teachers meet the State of Maine Learning Results in several content areas.

The MTT program uses a variety of strategies including a teen website

(www.maine-teentalk.org), research based information, interactive educational games, and role playing. These are designed to recognize an unhealthy relationship and learn research-based skills essential for good communication, as well as identify how to set goals for a healthy future.

The MTT program provides Healthy Relationships education to youth in grades 9 through 12 by MTT educators

and/or other educators who have completed the MTT train-the-teacher or teach out of the box (TOOB) training program.

As part of the TOOB training program, those who want to bring Healthy Relationships education to teens are provided relationship resources, including a student workbook, teacher's guide, DVD and continuous support via MTT program staff, all at no cost to the school.

Survey Methods and Procedures

During the past three years the MTT program has provided eight hours of face-to-face Healthy Relationships education to over 3,000 teens in approximately 37 locations throughout the State of Maine. These locations include both public and private schools, juvenile correctional facilities, and other community agencies.

As of February 2009, a total of 2,102 program participants have completed the MTT Healthy Relationships Pre and Post Survey; with approximately 850 additional surveys currently being scanned and processed.

The MTT survey is adminis-

tered in a standard test and retest method (before and after program participation). The survey is administered by either MTT educators or TOOB trained educators in a paper and pencil format.

The survey consists of 49 questions. The first six questions address demographic factors such as age, race and gender. The remaining 43 questions gauge attitudes, knowledge and intended behaviors related to healthy relationships, decision making skills, communication skills, and conflict resolution. The majority of these 43 questions use a four point response range of

poor, fair, good, and excellent. 15 of these questions use a five point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

After collection, the surveys are scanned into a statistical software program for data analysis. This analysis entails the generation of frequency distributions by demographic variables to determine trends, the formation of scales composed of similar content questions, and the comparison of question and scale mean scores to determine change from pre to post test.

“During the past three years the Maine Teen Talk program has provided healthy relationships education to over 3,000 teens in the State of Maine.”

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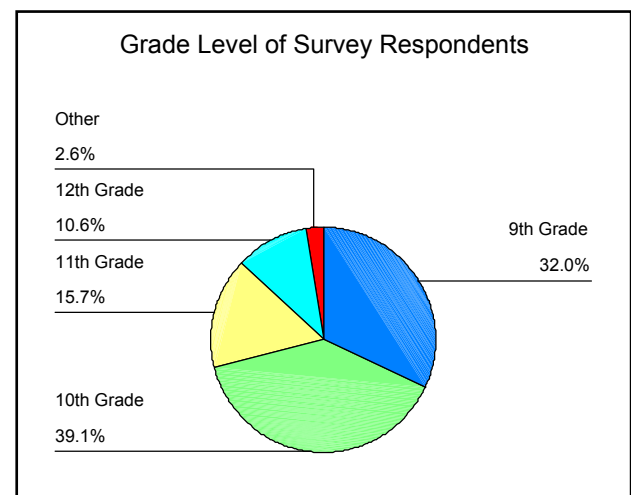
Who Participates in the Survey

Of the 2,102 teens who have completed the survey, 83.3% are Caucasian, 5.4% are African American and 5.3% are multi-racial. 32.0% are in 9th grade and 39.1% are in 10th grade.

The two largest groups of survey respondents are between the ages of 14 and 15 (50.6%) or 16-17 (41.9%), 41.2% report making “mostly B’s” in their regular classes.

Interestingly, males (50.8%) represent a slightly larger

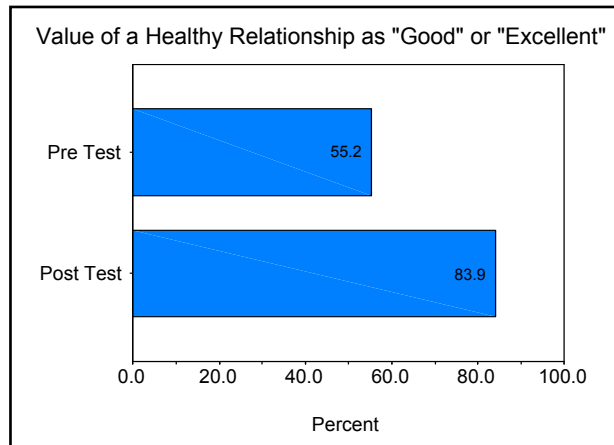
proportion of the survey population than females (49.2%).



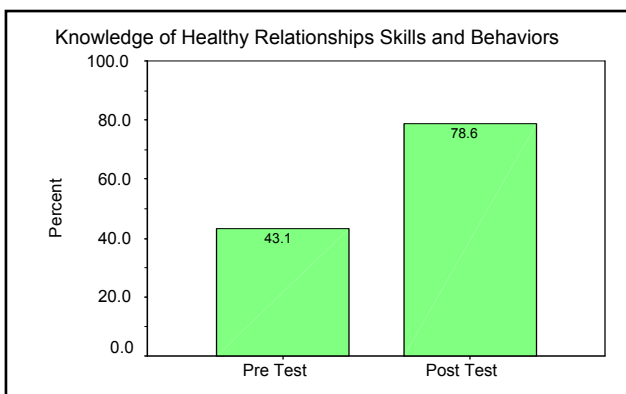
Teens' Attitudes Toward Healthy Relationships

Mean scale scores indicate that 83.9% of the teens surveyed rate the value of healthy relationships as "good" or "excellent" upon completion of the MTT program.

Conversely, prior to participation in the MTT program, only 55.2% of the teens surveyed rated the value of healthy relationships as "good" or "excellent."



Healthy Relationships Skills and Behaviors



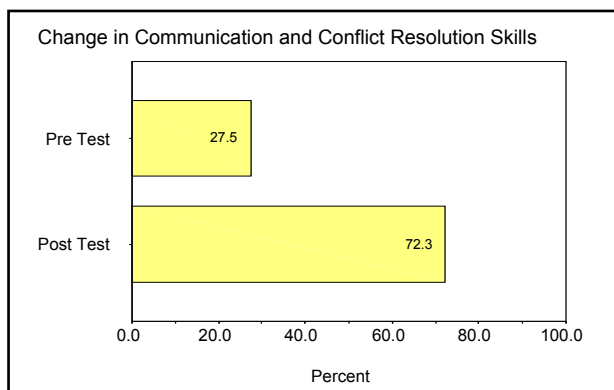
MTT program participants demonstrated remarkable increases in knowledge regarding healthy relationships skills and behaviors. Initially 43.1% of the teens stated their knowledge was "good" or "excellent" while 78.6% of the teens rated their knowledge as "good" or "excellent" after completing the program.

"MTT program participants demonstrated remarkable increases in knowledge regarding healthy relationships skills and behaviors."

Healthy Communication and Conflict Resolution Skills

Utilization of communication and conflict resolution skills is greatly enhanced through participation in the MTT program. In fact, this domain has witnessed larger changes than any of the other program focuses. Specifically after program participation, 72.3% of teens indicated "good" or "excellent" awareness and

use of these skills, as compared to only 27.5% of teens prior to program participation.



1st Annual "Pulling Together for Teens" Airplane Pull





Summary

Character Counts In Maine, has provided Healthy Relationships education to over 3,000 youth at a variety of locations in the State of Maine through its Maine Teen Talk (MTT) program. This has resulted in over 2,900 returned MTT Healthy Relationships Pre and Post Surveys.

The number of teens served demonstrate that the MTT program is achieving success toward its target popu-

lation. More importantly, survey results reveal that the program is achieving success toward its outcome objectives.

Specifically, survey results indicate that participation in the MTT program achieves the following: A) It increases teens' value of healthy relationships resulting in progressive change in their levels of commitment to healthy relationships; B) It increases teens' knowledge

of the skills and behaviors that will improve their ability to choose partners with whom to form and maintain healthy relationships now and in the future; and C) It enhances teens' awareness of and ability to use healthy communication and conflict resolution skills in relationships and other aspects of their lives.

"Survey results reveal that the Maine Teen Talk program is achieving success toward its outcome objectives."

Comments From Students:

"This program taught me strategies for listening to others."

"I really enjoyed it. The pictures, videos and brain teasers worked well to keep us interacting."

"Talking about the finances was really helpful. Before, I had no idea how to handle credit cards and debt."

"Informative, interactive and interesting."

"Although a lot of kids won't admit it, I think this program sheds light on a lot of problems that teens are either afraid to talk about or don't know how. The program helps kids on multiple levels."

"Thank you for coming. It helped a lot."

For additional information about Character Counts In Maine or

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