

In a June 2010 survey of 142 teachers in the Open Circle Core Program:

- 96% agreed that the training improved their teaching practice, and 92% agreed that it improved their ability to identify and address students' social and emotional needs.
- 80% agreed that using Open Circle made their classrooms safer, more caring, more cooperative, and more engaging.
- 75% reported having more time for academics, and 70% reported fewer office referrals while using the Open Circle Curriculum in their classrooms.
- 97% reported an increase in students' use of Open Circle skills such as cooperating, calming down, showing empathy, listening, problem solving, leadership, and appropriately expressing anger.
- 66% reported a decrease in exclusion of others, and 60% reported a decrease in bullying.

In an April 2007 survey of 130 principals:

- 68% felt Open Circle created more cooperative classroom environments in their schools.
- 90% agreed that Open Circle united their school communities with a common vocabulary to describe student behavior.

Recent research demonstrates Open Circle's impact

Increased Self-Assertiveness, Higher Social Skills, Improved Self Control, and Fewer Physical Fights

Taylor, C. A., Liang, B., Tracy, A. J., Williams, L. M., & Seigle, P. (2002). Gender Differences in Middle School Adjustment, Physical Fighting, and Social Skills: Evaluation of a Social Competency Program. The Journal of Primary Prevention, 23(2), 259–72.

Design: This study assessed the effects of Open Circle on 277 sixth grade middle school students with varying levels of exposure to Open Circle during elementary school. Data collected included students' self-reports and parents' and teachers' perceptions using the Social Skills Rating System and a modified version of the Survey of Adaptation Tasks—Middle School, which explores peer relationships, substance abuse, and interpersonal conflict.

Results: Middle school girls who had previously participated in at least two years of Open Circle showed a significant increase in self-assertiveness when compared to non-participants. Middle school boys with at least two years of Open Circle reported higher levels of social skill and self-control and fewer problems with physical fighting.

Improved Social Skills and Fewer Problem Behaviors

Hennessey, B. A. (2007). Promoting Social Competence in School-Aged Children: The Effects of the Open Circle Program. Journal of School Psychology, 45, 349-360.

Design: This study involved 150 fourth grade students and their teachers in eight classrooms at four elementary schools. Four classrooms used Open Circle and were compared to four matched control group classrooms. Data collected included pre and post-intervention students' self-reports and teachers' perceptions using the Social Skills Rating System. In the fall, students in the Open Circle classrooms appeared similar – both academically and socially – to those in their matched control classrooms.

Results: After one year of Open Circle, participants showed significantly greater teacher-reported improvements in both social skills and problem behaviors than did control group members. Although the largest gains were made by students in urban areas, significant positive effects of program participation were shown by all students, regardless of school setting.

Recognition

Open Circle is one of only several dozen evidence-based programs in the country to appear in the U.S. Department of Education Expert Panel guidebook of Exemplary and Promising Safe, Disciplined, and Drug-Free Schools Programs, which lists programs that show **“promise for improving student achievement.”**

Open Circle has also been named by the Collaborative for Academic, Social & Emotional Learning (CASEL) as one of only 22 programs nationally identified as **“Select SEL Programs** that are especially effective and comprehensive in their SEL coverage, their documented impact, and the staff development they provide.”

In addition, Open Circle fits CASEL’s criteria for strong SEL programs: well-designed, evidence-based, teacher-led, with rigorous and universal training, and using a curriculum that follows the S.A.F.E. Standards.

Open Circle’s Commitment to Ongoing Assessment

Open Circle continually assesses its program effectiveness through training evaluation forms, class and school observations, and surveys of teachers, principals, other school staff, and students. As one principal noted,

“The people at Open Circle work to make the program fit the school. The program is constantly being revised to respond to the needs of teachers and students. It’s not just a curriculum. It’s a live thing.”

CASEL Research on Social and Emotional Learning

Durlak, J.A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., and Schellinger, K. (in press). The Impact of Enhancing Students’ Social and Emotional Learning: A Meta-Analysis of School-Based Universal Interventions. Child Development.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) recently released a meta-analysis of 207 rigorous research studies. The studies evaluated over 700 SEL programs serving more than 288,000 children from urban, suburban, and rural schools. The meta-analysis indicated that school-based social and emotional learning (SEL) programs like Open Circle provide massive benefits to students who use them:

- Increased achievement test scores in reading and math by 11 percentile points
- Improved social and emotional skills by 23 percentile points
- Improved attitudes about self, others, and school by 9 percentile points
- Improved pro-social school and classroom behavior by 9 percentile points
- Decreased conduct problems by 9 percentile points
- Decreased emotional distress by 10 percentile points

These results are shown to persist over time, making SEL programming a worthwhile long-term investment.

The programs that provide these benefits are those which:

- Are well-designed and evidence-based.
- Are well-implemented by teachers, rather than by outside practitioners.
- Follow CASEL’s S.A.F.E. Standards:

Sequenced and grade-differentiated lessons

Active learning tools

Focused time for SEL

Explicit social and emotional skill development