Summary of Research Findings

The following two research studies have demonstrated Open Circle's positive impact on students’ skills and behavior. The first study found, after receiving one year of Open Circle instruction, both urban and suburban students demonstrated significantly greater social skills and significantly fewer problem behaviors than students in control groups. The second study examined middle school students with at least two prior years of Open Circle participation and found that girls showed a significant increase in self-assertiveness and boys showed higher levels of social skill and self-control and fewer problems with physical fighting.

**Study 1: Found improved social skills and fewer problem behaviors**


**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.

**Study 2: Showed increased self-assertiveness, higher social skills, improved self control, and fewer physical fights**


**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.
Key results from a June 2013 survey of 460 teachers are represented below.

Survey responses from the 460 Open Circle teachers:

- 98% agreed that the training improved their teaching practice, and 96% agreed that it improved their ability to identify and address students’ social and emotional needs.
- 95% agreed that their students were engaged in the Open Circle lessons and 80% saw an increase in positive student problem solving in class.
- Teachers reported a 87% increase in cooperation among students, a 83% increase in the use of calming down strategies among students, and a 74% decrease in physical aggression among students.
- 79% agreed that their students increased their ability to appropriately express their anger, and 68% saw a decrease in teasing.