

It is my CHOICE (Det er mitt VALG, DMV)

- A training program about school environment, social skills and preventive work for compulsory school and advanced studies.

A SUMMARY OF THE EVALUATION 2001-2007

Systematic and long-term preventative efforts work

The evaluation shows that the training program “It is my choice” generates positive results:

- Improves the self-perception and social competence
- Children and youth talk to their parents
- Fewer say that they have used alcohol

BACKGROUND FOR THE EVALUATION

1. A committee, appointed by the Church, Education and Research Department and by Children and Family Department, and with Thomas Nordahl from NOVA as Chairperson, presented in summer 2000 a proposal of different programs and initiatives to reduce problem behaviors and improve social competence. The 56 programs were evaluated and 9 of them were selected to be used in the school system. “It is my choice” was one of the programs. The report states that “It is my choice” is focusing on important aspects when it comes to equip the students with basic social skills and social competence. The focus on the student environment is mentioned in a positive manner. It was recommended to perform a research based evaluation to see the effects of the training program. The Foundation IT IS MY CHOICE has picked up on these signals and since 2001 comprehensive evaluations have been performed in different areas.
2. In 2006, several preventative efforts in Norway were evaluated by research groups appointed by the Social and Health Department and by the Education Department. The research groups were to evaluate problem behaviors, drug preventive efforts, teachers as a leaders and implementation strategies. DMV was recommended the following: “The program has been evaluated to belong to Category 2: Programs with high likelihood for results. The research group estimates that the training program is very likely to generate results and to improve social competence.” The research group recommended a new evaluation of the data, to include an analysis from pre to post testing. It is this recommendation that the DMV Foundation has followed. The research group says in its revised recommendation that the analysis indicates that the training program can document the effects when it comes to the students’ self-perception.

RESULTS FROM THE EVALUATION

Report 1

TEACHER TRAINING (March 2001)

To be able to use the “It is my choice” materials, it is required that the teachers participate in training conducted by certified trainers. The report summarizes the teachers’ evaluations of the training that they have participated in. The evaluation shows that 9 out of 10 participants are very satisfied with the training. The teachers said that the training was an important condition to be able to present the training for their own students. More than 25,000 teachers have so far been trained since the training started in 1990. During the last few years, many courses have been held at Teachers’ Colleges in Norway. The teacher students confirm the same things as the teachers, which is that they are very satisfied with the training. Many teacher students want the course to become a permanent part of the teacher training curriculum.

Report 2

HOW THE TRAINING HAS BEEN USED (May 2001)

This report has studied and evaluated a systematic use of the training over time. A selected number of teachers across the country have responded to a survey. The survey results show that only 20% of the teachers, who had participated in the training, use the training systematically. This is in spite of that the majority of them see it as a valuable tool when it comes to drug prevention initiatives, reduction of problem behaviors, improvement of social competence and student environment. To motivate the schools to a more long term and more systematic implementation, it is important to arrange follow-up sessions. 4 out of 5 teachers state that they have seen improved behavior among the students after using the program for one year. The teachers report improvement when it comes to better ability to be responsible, feel comfortable, openness, care about others, better self-perception and critical thinking. It should be emphasized that these results are based on teacher observations over time.

Report 3

EFFECTS ON STUDENT BEHAVIOR – PRE PROJECT (January 2002)

An important part of the evaluation is to find out if the training program has effects on student behavior. This report contains results from a concept with intervention groups (students who have participated in “It is my choice”) and control groups (students who have not participated in “It is my choice”). The weakness here is that pre testing has not been performed and therefore the results have to be interpreted with caution. The evaluation can be considered as a pre project to test the survey form and the approach to the problem for the next evaluation study. Several circumstances can explain why the intervention groups have better results on certain variables compared with the control groups. For example, it is possible that the type of schools were different to begin with. With this reservation, students in intervention groups have better self-confidence, more empathy and better relations with other students. In addition, there are fewer students in the intervention group, who state that they have tasted alcohol, and fewer students state that they have been exposed to bullying.

Report 4

EFFECTS ON STUDENT BEHAVIOR – WITH PRE AND POST TESTING (February 2005)

This is a three-year plan for 5th to 7th grade with intervention groups and control groups. The evaluation showed that the intervention schools have better results in several areas than the

control schools. Students, who have participated in “It is my choice” have significantly better results when it comes to unique issues, such as self-perception and also social comfort at school. In addition, it is reported that they have experienced more positive cooperation with peers, more self-assertion and empathy. There is a significant higher number of students at the intervention schools, who have talked to their parents about alcohol. The evaluation also states that there are fewer students at the intervention schools, who say that they have tasted alcohol. 81% of the students at the intervention schools say that they have never had alcohol without having an adult around, but the number for the control schools is 66%. These are interesting results. Research show that if the alcohol debut for youth can be delayed, it will result in less experimentation with alcohol and drugs later on.

Report 5

EFFECTS ON STUDENT BEHAVIOR – REANALYSIS OF REPORT 4 (April 2007)

The 2006 research group was asked by the Foundation to perform a new analysis of the data. A statistical procedure has been used to determine if there is a change from pre testing to post testing. The intervention schools have the most favorable results in many areas:

- For the question “What do I think about myself?”, the intervention group has the best results. The research group states after the evaluation: “The analysis of the evaluation of 5th to 7th grade indicates that DMV can document effects when it comes to the students’ self-perception.”
- The intervention group has the best results when it comes to social comfort at school. This is a significant difference. The same development can be seen when it comes to the relationships between the students in the class.
- Regarding the question social competence and problem behavior at school, the analysis of the data shows there is no significant difference between the schools. We have seen the same development in both the intervention schools and the control schools. This may indicate that the schools work systematically with social skills and that the same progress is made regardless which program that is being used.
- When it comes to talking to parents about alcohol and drugs, the intervention schools have a significant better result. The dialogue in this area between adults and children has been positive.
- There is no difference when it comes to bullying issues. This means that the intervention schools show the same results as schools working with other programs.

Report 6

EFFECTS ON STUDENT BEHAVIOR – MIDDLE SCHOOLS (August 2007)

This is a two-year evaluation of middle schools with an intervention group and a control group with pre and post testing.

- The intervention group has the best results when it comes to social comfort at school. It is a significant difference in progress. We can also see the same progress when it comes to the relationships between the students in the class. We could also see this trend in 5th to 7th grade.
- When it comes to questions about social skills and problem behavior, the analysis of the data does not show any difference between the schools. We can see the same progress in both the intervention schools and the control schools. This may indicate that the schools work systematically with social skills and the same progress can be seen, regardless of which program that is used.

- There are fewer students at the intervention schools, who say that they have had alcohol without an adult being around.
- There is no difference between the schools when it comes to bullying. This means that the intervention schools have the same results as schools that work with other programs.
- When it comes to bullying through cell phones, the intervention group has the best results.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

1. Most teachers, who have participated in the training, say that they are very satisfied with the training. The teachers say that the training is necessary to be able to use the program.
2. Follow-up sessions are necessary for the program to have a long term perspective.
3. The 2006 research group has determined that the program "It is my choice" belongs to Category 2: "Programs with high likelihood for results. The research group estimates that the training program is very likely to generate results and to improve social competence."
4. The research group also states that "It is my choice" seems to focus on important aspects when it comes to equipping the students with a foundation of social skills and competence. In addition, it was seen as positive that the program is also focusing on student environment and various concepts and methods.
5. The research group states that the analysis of the improvement in 5th to 7th grade indicates that "It is my choice" can document effects when it comes to students' self-perception.
6. The evaluation report indicates that the intervention schools have better results than the control schools when it comes to social comfort and relations between the students.
7. Schools using the program "It is my choice" have the same reduction in bullying as the control schools that use other programs.
8. When it comes to certain questions about problem behavior and social skills, there is no difference between the schools. This may indicate that all schools work with social competence and problem behavior.
9. The evaluation report shows that there are significantly more students at the intervention schools, who say that they have talked to their parents about alcohol.
10. There are fewer students at the intervention schools, who say that they have had alcohol without having an adult around.

CONDITIONS AND RESERVATIONS

A few important conditions for the results:

- The teachers have to work systematically with the program over time
- The schools have to include preventive initiatives in their plans
- All staff at the schools should participate in the "It is my choice" training
- Commitment from the schools and public officials

On certain variables, we can see that the intervention schools have better results than the control schools. On many of the variables, the differences are significant. The results can be credited to the systematical work by the training program, but it is hard to say that the program

can be credited to 100%. Therefore, it is fair to include the reservations. There are different explanations, for example:

- Working with other programs
- Increased teacher motivation after the training
- Intensive efforts in the local community
- Better follow-up by parents
- Natural maturity process
- Influenced by and expectations from being part of an evaluation project

ABOUT THE TRAINING PROGRAM

The program has a broad preventive perspective with focus on student environment, social competence and preventive initiatives regarding alcohol, drugs and problem behavior. A nice and comfortable student environment is a condition for a good learning environment. It is natural that the schools currently have a focus on professional learning and education as their primary duty. In addition, the schools have a growth function, for example based on the general teaching curriculum and education laws. It is also important to give children and youth a foundation, so that they are able to handle any problems they may face. Many schools are asking for a hands-on tool, which can be easily used among students and parents. Those are the reasons this training and research program has been developed.

THE PROGRAM CONSISTS OF THE FOLLOWING COMPONENTS

- Part 1 for 1st to 4th grade
- Part 2 for 5th to 7th grade
- Part 3 for 8th to 10th grade
- Part 4 for High School
- A Parent Handbook
- A Booklet on how to plan teacher conferences
- An Idea Booklet for teachers about activities
- The musical "The Hunt for Self-Confidence"

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