



**Jefferson Parish Public School System
Social Responsibility Training (SRT®)
Program**



Intensive Evaluation Report:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

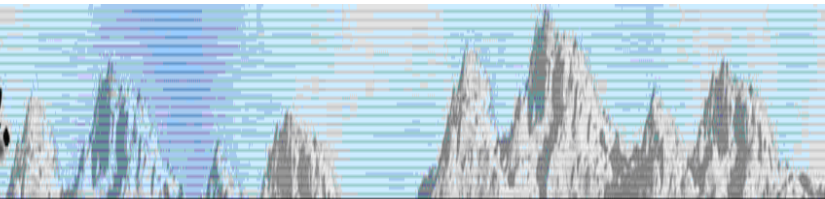
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY¹

Jefferson Parish Public School System (JPPSS) has begun implementing an important prevention/early intervention initiative targeted for all sixth graders in the District in order to decrease unexcused absences, decrease school discipline referrals, and enhance school academic performance. Beginning with 2007-2008 school year, most sixth graders participated in the Social Responsibility Training (SRT) curriculum during the school year. The only exceptions were sixth graders in two schools that are treated as program as usual, and did not receive the SRT intervention, in order to establish a control group to enhance the research design of the project.

SRT is an evidence-based cognitive behavioral curriculum developed in 2001 for dropout prevention and critical life skills development for high risk students. SRT is now used in 20 states in schools and community agencies. This important prevention initiative in Jefferson Parish provides a valuable opportunity to evaluate SRT program implementation, to collect outcome data, and provide information on the program's effectiveness and impact in this community.

JPPSS contracted with Glacier Consulting, Inc. (GCI) for program evaluation services during the early stages of their planning for program

¹ See full report: Robinson, Gregory, and Robert A. Kirchner (2009) *Jefferson Parish Public School System Social Responsibility Training (SRT) Program: Intensive Evaluation Report*. Annapolis, MD: Glacier Consulting, Inc.

implementation. The independent evaluation team² performed analysis of early SRT implementation steps, and conducted an initial evaluation visit to Jefferson Parish on October 29-November 2, 2007.

Following the submission of the initial evaluation report³ which established the basis for the evaluation to develop more intensive evaluation design as presented in this report, the first intensive study of program implementation. A final report will include both intensive process and outcome evaluations results to be completed at the end on the 2009-2010 school year.

Nationally there is a significant need for information on school and community early intervention and prevention programs that work, as well as confirmation on why they work. Gathering outcome results for SRT as an innovative prevention program designed for schools will prove valuable guidance to school administrators and community decision-makers in Jefferson Parish. Systematic research evaluation provides important information to guide future implementation of SRT within the complex political and bureaucratic environment of public schools as they work to accomplish numerous and sometimes conflicting goals with limited resources.

² The team was comprised of Drs Gregory Robinson and Robert A. Kirchner, Glacier Consulting, Inc., with advice of other GCI Research Associates who will be directly involved in final evaluation efforts. The views of the authors do not represent the opinions, policies or official positions of Jefferson Parish Public School System, personnel or other offices and organizations included in the report.

³ See: Kirchner, Robert A. (2007) *Jefferson Parish Public School System Social Responsibility Training (SRT) Program: Initial Evaluation Report*. Annapolis, MD: Glacier Consulting, Inc.

Assessment and evaluation are important tools to improve the effectiveness and quality of education programs. A systems approach to program evaluation helps ensure that: (1) effectiveness and efficiency are maintained within the Program and (2) progress on the JPPSS SRT objectives is communicated to key policy makers, administrators, and the public. Building evaluation into program implementation allows evaluation activities and methods to be useful and relevant, and provides for on-going program improvement as well as opportunities for future, more intensive evaluation. Practical needs dictate that evaluations answer the questions of decision makers, and deliver information and recommendations that are readily useful to practitioners.⁴

The first two years of implementation have produced numerous achievements in improving the delivery of SRT, as well as in the development and institutionalization of the SRT modality itself. First, the first year of introducing the intervention, training facilitators and teachers, and testing its use with 6th Graders produced useful feedback

- The evaluation team found strong support for the program at administrative levels as well as within the visited schools.
- Character Development Systems, LLC (the curriculum developers), used the feedback to modify the workbooks and lesson plans for the

⁴ Based on: The approach and definitions presented here are fully explained and demonstrated in: Kirchner, Przybylski and Cardella (1994). This publication is available as part of the “Electronic Roadmap for Evaluation,” and can be found on the INTERNET at: www.bja.evaluationwebsite.org.

2008-09 school year. This exemplifies the role of formative evaluation early in a project's life cycle. Indicated program improvements "tuned up" the intervention, readying it for the more intensive scrutiny of in-depth process evaluation and a preliminary look at outcomes in the following school year (2008-09).

- The value of SRT with high-risk, low achieving students is apparent from the interviews with these two alternative middle school teachers.
- Interviews conducted by the evaluation team at these three schools in December, 2008 confirm that SRT is perceived by teachers to be an asset, and to be an effective intervention for many students.
- For the 2008-09 school year, the four-level academic performance indicator shows that although the mean number of disciplinary infractions is lower in the SRT condition ($M= 1.78$) than in the comparison condition ($M= 2.17$), the main effect for SRT is not statistically significant. There is a significant main effect for academic performance, as the combined mean number of disciplinary infractions rises steadily as academic performance becomes poorer ($M= 0.281$ in the highest achieving category; $M= 0.958$ among 6th graders in the second highest category; $M= 1.942$ infractions in the third highest achievement category, and $M= 4.24$ among the lowest achieving 6th graders); $F(3, 3705) = 170.123, p < .001$.
- An important feature of this analysis is the significant interaction between SRT and academic performance. That is, the effect of SRT depends upon the level of academic achievement (as illustrated by

Figure 3, SRT has the most effect in the lowest-achieving student group); $F(3, 3705) = 4.884, p < .003$. This important quantitative result is consistent with the strong anecdotal testimony provided by teachers in the system's alternative middle schools, which educate students that have been suspended from other campuses.

- This analysis shows that across all academic achievement categories, the mean number of days missed is lower in the SRT condition ($M = 9.79$) than in the comparison condition ($M = 12.43$). The main effect for SRT is statistically significant; $F(1, 3705) = 14.045, p < .001$. There is also a significant main effect for academic performance, as the mean number of days missed rises steadily as academic performance becomes poorer; $F(3, 3705) = 92.538, p < .001$.