

DANCING CLASSROOMS PROGRAM MAKES SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON FIFTH GRADERS' SOCIAL AWARENESS

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ARLINGTON—Research conducted by Dr. Larry Nelson of The University of Texas at Arlington College of Education found that fifth graders who participated in a pilot outreach program called “Dancing Classrooms North Texas” in fall 2006 had a significantly increased awareness of their social support systems.

Dr. Nelson measured the potential impact of the Dancing Classrooms model using two pre- and post-surveys, which included questions in the following areas:

- Optimism & Confidence
- Self-Efficacy & Motivation
- Health & Wellness
- Trusting Others
- Social Support
- Comfort & Connectedness
- Diversity & Compassion for others
- School Environment

Dr. Nelson compared the responses from children who participated in the program to those who did not.

“The research shows we can be 99 percent confident Dancing Classrooms impacted the kids’ idea of a social support structure,” said Dr. Nelson. “We were able to determine they not only feel supported and that people accept them for who they are, but that they also know people are available to help them.”

Dr. Nelson’s research also found the children showed a higher awareness in their self-efficacy, motivation and school environment.

“We can statistically say the program helped these kids believe they get a lot of encouragement at school and that school will help them be successful,” said Dr. Nelson.

UT Arlington and the Tarrant County Youth Collaboration (TCYC)—in collaboration with Fort Worth Independent School District (FWISD) and the Hurst-Euless-Bedford Independent School District (H-E-BISD)—piloted Dancing Classroom in three FWISD and three H-E-BISD elementary schools. The classes were conducted at participating schools by “Guest Artists” drawn from among the ranks of the area’s professional dance instructors.

Tarrant County Youth Collaboration serves as the Dancing Classrooms North Texas Coordination Center to ensure the successful launch of the program in the pilot districts and other Metroplex school districts in the years to come. This spring, the program was extended into Dallas ISD.

Dancing Classrooms originated in the New York City Public Schools in 1994 by world-renowned ballroom dancers Pierre Dulaine and Yvonne Marceau. The award-winning social development program is a not-for-profit project of the American Ballroom Theater Company and uses a curriculum-based teaching approach to achieve social awareness and build self-esteem. Dancing Classrooms students are taught the vocabulary of various contemporary social dances in a classroom setting. Each class in the series introduces new steps, reinforcing what has been previously learned through practice and repetition.

For more information on his research, contact Dr. Nelson at (817) 905-8668 or lnelson@uta.edu. For more information about Dancing Classrooms North Texas, contact Tacia Torres with TCYC at (817) 496-6099 or taciatorres@tcyc4kids.org.

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