



## **ARISE LIFE-MANAGEMENT SKILLS PROGRAM (Formerly Titled the “Secrets of Success Program”)**

### **A FIVE YEAR EVALUATION**

ARISE Foundation is a not-for profit educational foundation established in 1986 for the sole purpose of giving at-risk youths the life management skills and knowledge society demands of them. The Secrets of Success (SOS) program provides at-risk populations with the information, know-how and guidance they need to survive and succeed. ARISE Foundation started with an elementary school program in Miami Dade County public schools in 1986 and has expanded to reach a large number of alternative schools and juvenile justice facilities throughout the State of Florida. The Secrets of Success (SOS) program consists of over forty life management skills curricula for pre-kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Since 1997, the Secrets of Success program has been evaluated by two independent reviewers/researchers from the University of Miami (Florida) and from Queen’s University (Northern Ireland). The purpose of these evaluations has been twofold:

- To examine “success” rates among various groups of learners
- To monitor learner knowledge of program components closely, at times altering aspects of the program based on evaluation results

SOS program data from entry and exit interviews have been collected at six different time periods, from 2,122 learners between January 1997 and June 2001. Data were drawn from several program sites including alternative schools and facilities under the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice. Since 1997 participants in the SOS program have included African-American, Hispanic and White non-Hispanic learners whose ages have ranged from 13 to 18 years (with the majority of learners falling within the 15 to 17 age category).

Evaluation data over a five-year period show significant improvement in knowledge of issues included in the program’s content: violence reduction, goal setting, anger management, drugs and alcohol avoidance and other life management skills. Based on results found in six evaluation reports covering the five-year period from 1997 to 2001, the data show that the overall test scores improved significantly after program completion (see Table). Other evaluation data demonstrated that learners increased their scores for the vast majority of the 30 test items that were included in the entry-exit interviews.

The tabular data also include summary evaluation data for ethnic and gender groups. These data show that test scores improved significantly among learners of all ethnic groups for each of the six time-periods examined. The consistency of this result suggests that the program content is sensitive to and able to reach members of various ethnic backgrounds. The data also indicate that both female and male learners significantly improved their attitudinal scores after completing the SOS program. It is important to emphasize that since 1997 a number of learners have represented youth from high risk populations. The results from each of the six evaluations, however, indicate that program test scores improved across all program sites for which a sufficient number of cases was available for analyses, including those facilities that served primarily high risk youth.

To date, the SOS program has been contained within the State of Florida. Future plans are to present the Secrets of Success program to Departments of Education and Departments of Juvenile Justice around the county, targeting frustrated, bored youth who would rather be any other place than school.

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