

Review of Related Literature -- Family Wellness Research

The Family Wellness model for parent education was developed in 1980 and continues into the present, having served over 1,000,000 participations worldwide since its inception. Research of program efficacy was important from the beginning. Early efforts at research were conducted in terms asking participants to document what they learned and how the curriculum impacted their lives. Overwhelmingly, participants loved the Family Wellness program and provided encouragement regarding positive impact. The first study of the Family Wellness Program was conducted by the Drug and Alcohol Abuse Prevention Project in Santa Cruz, California, in 1987. This was a six-month follow-up telephone study that was conducted to understand the lasting nature of the knowledge and change resultant from participation in the program. That study showed 70% improvement in communication skills, 45% reduced or eliminated drug use, 80% increase in “closeness,” and 25% believed their families were solving problems better.

In 1990, a quantitative study was undertaken by Joseph L. Hernandez, Ph.D., with 72 participants and updated in 1991 with a sample size of 200. FACES III (Olson, Portner, and Lavee) was utilized to determine efficacy. Statistical significance was approached but not met in the direction of connection and increased structure. During that approximate period other studies were done utilizing FACES focusing on stepfamilies (Creighton, 1987) as well as a dissertation (1994) by Gena G. Rhodes, Ph.D.

More recently, independent research has been conducted on the efficacy of the Family Wellness model. For example, the St. Louis Healthy Marriage Coalition Evaluation Report (October 2006) conducted by Philliber Research Associates showed “Data suggest that the Family Wellness program is making progress toward the program objectives of improved relationships between parents and their children, increased parental involvement with their children, and decreased number of adversarial relationships between parent partners.”

The Healthy Relationships and Healthy Marriages: Final Report (2007) was written by the Center for Family and Demographic Research of Bowling Green University for the Healthy Marriages Grand Rapids and Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services to document the impact of the Family Wellness model. “Respondents were generally pleased with the program, and six months after the class there remained demand for additional classes and ‘refresher’ classes. Participants often reported recommending the classes to others. Participants were able to recall and implement class lessons with children, partners, friends, fellow employees, and extended family members.”

Over the past five years, independent research has been conducted at New Mexico State University on the Family Wellness model using a variety of validated nationally-known research instruments. The OFA Healthy Marriage Demonstration Grant Final Evaluation Report (2011) documents statistically significant growth in all three areas targeted: Increased couple or marital satisfaction, Improved parenting skills, and Improved family functioning.”By incorporating a multidimensional evaluation protocol, we were able to demonstrate that participants of the program made statistically significant growth and personally meaningful growth in couple skills, attitudes and knowledge. In addition, findings indicate that equally important growth was made in family functioning. Evaluation results are useful for a number of reasons. First, the evaluation

results give definitive support that indicates that this social intervention has utility if applied to families in communities. Specifically, exposure to the Family Wellness curriculum, under the guidance of an expert facilitator causes participants to make significant and meaningful growth in couple relationship skills, attitudes, and beliefs. Secondly, this information yields support to indicate that family functioning improves as a result of exposure to the Family Wellness curriculum. Taken together, this provides evidence to indicate that improvements to couple relationship, parenting and family functioning occur as a function of being exposed to the Family Wellness curriculum.”