



Cripple Creek-Victor School District

"About 170 kids have gone through the program and only one of those students has gotten pregnant. The effectiveness of the program is very, very high."

Dr. Wanda Eppes
School Psychologist

Highlights

Class:

8th Grade Health

Goals:

- Encourage healthy life choices
- Reduce teen pregnancy rate
- Help students focus on learning and improving life skills

Class Topics:

- Exercise and nutrition
- Reproductive health
- STDs
- Self esteem
- Teen pregnancy prevention
- Partner danger

Achieved Results:

- In six years over 170 students have gone through the program and they know of only one teen that has gotten pregnant
- Dramatic attitude change seen from pre- to post- tests

Health Class Incorporates Experiential Learning to Help Students Make Healthy Life Choices

School Psychologist Dr. Wanda Eppes arrived in Colorado in Sept. 2005. She was struck by the disproportionate number of pregnant teens in the tiny Cripple Creek-Victor School District. She couldn't accept that people weren't doing anything to teach teen pregnancy prevention and decided she wanted to change the culture there. Dr. Eppes began investigating ways to confront the problem. Even though it was not part of her job, she felt the issue needed to be addressed.

The Solution

Dr. Eppes saw an opportunity with the 8th grade health class and became determined to renovate the program. The health class now encompasses an entire semester, and is dedicated to helping students focus on learning and improving life skills. Topics covered include exercise and nutrition, reproductive health, STDs, self esteem, teen pregnancy prevention and partner danger. Four weeks of the nine-week course are dedicated to a section called Baby Think It Over.

The Baby Think It Over section brings in guest speakers on topics like domestic violence, toddler care and teen pregnancy. It also incorporates the RealCare Baby infant simulator experience. For one week, each student cares for a computerized Baby that tracks how it is cared for and wakes them up throughout the night. While caring for Baby, students participate in an intensive assignment to calculate the cost of the first year of a baby's life.

Recognizing that students respond well to learning experiences outside the classroom, Dr. Eppes organizes an all-day field trip at the end of the section. The field trip has two parts: a visit to a hospital and a shopping expedition. At the hospital, students tour the neonatal unit and listen to a nurse give an information-packed presentation.

The second part of the field trip – the shopping expedition – teaches teens to help others. Students' grades from the RealCare Baby experience are turned into points. After being split into small groups, students use their points to shop for diapers and other necessary baby care products. In partnership with three community organizations, the items are then donated to families who are experiencing an unplanned pregnancy.

The Results

Each year Dr. Eppes hopes that 100 percent of the eighth-grade students will take a RealCare Baby home. During 11 semesters, she has met this goal three times. Prior to this, only 20 percent of the students participated. Now the program averages 85-90 percent participation. Around 170 kids have gone through the program and only one of those students has gotten pregnant.

Students who participate in the class also take pre- and post-tests about teen pregnancy. Dr. Eppes reports a dramatic attitude change in the students after the Baby Think It Over section.