

## ***Choosing the Best* Research Summary**

### **Preliminary Results**

#### **Background**

An ambitious and rigorous evaluation of the *Choosing the Best* 9<sup>th</sup> grade classroom curriculum was initiated in September 2009. The curriculum is designed to encourage pro-abstinence knowledge, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors among 9<sup>th</sup> graders as they move through their high school years. The primary objective of the study is to evaluate the efficacy of *Choosing the Best* in preventing sexual involvement among high school students.

#### **Study Design and Participants**

The two-year study is considered a “gold standard evaluation” because it uses a randomized, controlled study design.

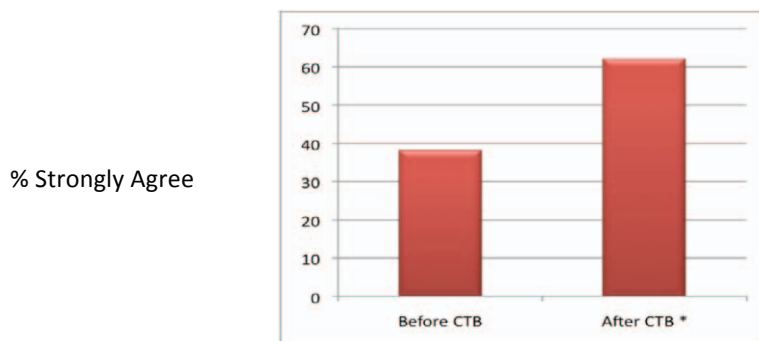
To date, a total of 1143 ninth grade students at six high schools in two participating school districts received active parental consent to participate in the study. The two school districts vary in size, thus 485 students in School District One and 658 students in School District Two participated. Students completed the first (pre-test) survey reporting on their knowledge about abstinence, attitudes and beliefs about maintaining abstinence until marriage, and intentions to remain abstinent. In addition, students reported on their past sexual behavior, as well as other risks relevant to maintaining healthy decisions to abstain from sex. All responses are completely confidential.

After completion of the pre-test survey, the study randomly assigned two schools to the control condition (i.e. where 9<sup>th</sup> graders would receive abstinence lessons from their regular high school text), and four schools to the intervention condition, in which 9<sup>th</sup> graders would receive the *Choosing the Best* program. Analysis of the pre-test data demonstrate that the intervention and control groups were similar to each other on a variety of demographic characteristics, and that the study samples resembled the student populations of their respective schools on selected characteristics. The pre-test data also demonstrate that 9<sup>th</sup> grade students in the two school districts exhibit risk behaviors that mirror trends in school districts across the nation.

#### **Preliminary Results**

The pre and post-test data collected from the six participating schools show that students who received *Choosing the Best* demonstrated significant improvement on 1) intentions to be abstinent 2) attitudes about abstinence and 3) refusal skills.

*As of now, I choose to wait until I am married to have sex.”*



\*Significant improvement ( $p < .001$ ) in the CTB schools. No similar significant improvement in the control schools.

While these results are cross-sectional in nature and cannot be used to definitively determine the long-term impact of the study, they do provide support that the *Choosing the Best* program has promise and potential.

**Bio for Lisa, D. Lieberman, Ph.D.**

**Dr. Lisa Lieberman**, lead researcher for the 2009 *Choosing the Best* study, received her PhD. in Health Behavior and Health Education from the University of Michigan, School of Public Health in 1986. Having served as lead or co-researcher on numerous peer-reviewed, published studies evaluating different approaches to teen pregnancy and HIV prevention, Dr. Lieberman is widely respected in her field. She has served as an evaluation consultant to the US Office of Population Affairs, Office of Adolescent Pregnancy Programs, and served as the Chair of the New York State Office of Children and Family Services, Research and Evaluation Workgroup.

Dr. Lieberman is currently Assistant Professor of Public Health at Montclair State University and is President of Healthy Concepts Research, Inc. a consulting company providing program development, evaluation, research, and grant writing services.