

Summary of Dissertation Research



Abstract: This research document, compiled by The Flippen Group, summarizes the various dissertation studies performed to date on **Capturing Kids' Hearts, Teen Leadership, and Keystone**. Please call us for more information at 1.800.316.4311.

INTRODUCTION

Are The Flippen Group's curriculums and trainings scientifically research-based? The answer is a resounding "Yes!" Thoroughly researched through rigorous scientific studies, our trainings and curriculums have had several Ph.D. dissertations focus solely on their impact. Ph.D. level researchers have also performed extensive longitudinal analyses, clearly demonstrating success through proven statistical techniques. Further, countless schools can testify to the results and have documented a positive impact through case studies.

Not only is our impact carefully researched, but the foundations upon which we developed and perfected our trainings and curriculums are also confirmed in the professional literature.

■ For example, the September 10, 1997, issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* describes a study which drew from the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health, surveying 90,118 adolescents. The authors found that connectedness to a parent and connectedness to a school-based person, such as a teacher, were the only factors that lowered risk in all negative behavior categories. These two factors achieved p-value levels less than 0.001 for all 12 continuous and quasi-continuous outcome variables, meaning that the probability of finding these positive results by chance is less than 1 in 1,000.

■ Similarly, the October 16, 2002 edition of *Education Week* cited professional research documenting a specific "missing ingredient,"

without which schools stand little chance of significant improvement. The missing ingredient the researchers identified was this: a strong bond of trust among the various members of the school community. The authors went a step further, providing a wealth of data to support the concept that there is a strong correlation between a school's trust level and its students' academic achievement.

These research studies further validate the approach we have championed over the last several decades. Schools from Washington to Texas to Iowa have undertaken research studies on our trainings and curriculums and all point to a singular conclusion: lives are being changed, and the change is measurable and statistically significant. Below you will find details on specific studies investigating the impact of our trainings and curriculums.

CAPTURING KIDS' HEARTS, TEEN LEADERSHIP, AND KEYSTONE STUDIES

Dr. Theodora Cox performed an extensive study of the impact of **Capturing Kids' Hearts** through her 2003 dissertation from West Virginia University. She focused on several schools in West Virginia and found that there was a substantial impact on the school environment that was "both immediate and that the full impact would not be known for years." Her objective was "to determine: (1) the dynamics of the experience that inspired participants to want to change practices to better facilitate student

learning; (2) how selected educators exemplified that inspiration in their daily professional experience; and (3) how the training has impacted classrooms, schools, and the school system.”

Among the findings were:

- “...fewer discipline problems”
- “Strategies learned in **Capturing Kids’ Hearts** provide a systematic way of dealing with students as individuals and set the tone for schools and classrooms based on mutual respect.”
- “Students have learned to reach consensus and interact with peers to correct misbehaviors.”
- “The **Capturing Kids’ Hearts** training has impacted classrooms, schools, and the school system.”
- “The county high school received a commendation for its nurturing environment from *High Schools That Work* evaluators.”

- “I am confident in myself.” (*Increase, p<0.001*)
- “I view myself as a leader.” (*Increase, p<0.001*)
- “I make smart decisions and consider the consequences.” (*Increase, p<0.001*)
- “I have goals for myself for college and/or a career.” (*Increase, p<0.001*)
- “I feel like I am connected to and close to my parents/guardians.” (*Increase, p<0.001*)
- “I feel like there are other students who care about me.” (*Increase, p<0.001*)
- “I feel like no one really knows me.” (*Decrease, p<0.001*)
- “I am not afraid to speak in front of people.” (*Increase, p<0.001*)
- “I like myself.” (*Increase, p<0.001*)
- “I get in trouble a lot at school.” (*Decrease, p<0.001*)
- “I get in trouble a lot outside of school.” (*Decrease, p<0.001*)
- “I am comfortable and confident around adults.” (*Increase, p<0.001*)

In a **Teen Leadership** study performed by Ph.D. researchers, the study design was a longitudinal before/after format, with respondents completing a likert-type questionnaire at the beginning of the intervention (January 2002) and at the end of the intervention (May 2002). Responses came from a cross-section of over 500 students from 7 different schools with diverse geographic and economic environments.

The data was gathered by each school and analyzed by Ph.D. researchers using a one-tailed pooled two-sample t-test for independent populations. Statistically significant results were found for numerous behavioral and attitudinal factors, including the factors listed as follows.

All of the following p-values are less than 0.001, meaning that the probability of finding these positive results by chance is less than 1 in 1,000. These p-values are substantially less than the standard p-values accepted in the professional literature of 0.05 or 0.10, which means that the results meet an even more rigorous threshold of proof.

For his dissertation at Texas A&M University, Dr. Jim Rosebrock used a quantitative and qualitative approach to study how **Capturing Kids’ Hearts** training and **Teen Leadership** contribute to schools and their individual members. The main research questions in this study were: (1) How do students and teachers perceive the environment of the school during the different stages of implementation? (2) How do teachers perceive and respond to the process? (3) How do students perceive and respond to the process?

This research project was formulated to provide concrete evidence as to the effectiveness of this process. The research used the naturalistic inquiry process described by Erlandson (et al., 1993) in *Doing Naturalistic Inquiry*. Purposive sampling was used to maximize information from students and faculty members. The research stated, “In keeping with the naturalistic paradigm, the basic methods of instrumentation were campus

observation of events, critical incidents, records, documents, and interviews using purposive over a prolonged engagement with persistent observations and triangulation to promote trustworthiness.”

Rosebrock used a multi-faceted approach to quantify the impact, investigating the direct impact on students, the direct impact on teachers, along with the overall impact on the school environment. Improvements were found in numerous areas, including:

- School-wide discipline
- Sense of community
- Democratic student government
- Mutual respect
- Fairness and cooperation
- Student self-esteem
- Relationships between staff and staff/student

Dr. Kathleen Cirillo and Dr. Brian Colwell conducted an impressive longitudinal study on the impact of **Teen Leadership**, using a control group as a comparison. Their study was done through Texas A&M University and through the Leadership Education Foundation, exploring the effects of Teen Leadership on self-esteem, loneliness, parent-adolescent communication and perception of leadership development of high school students.

Students participating in Teen Leadership served as the experimental group, while students in a youth organization from the same city who did not receive the intervention served as the control group. The experimental and control groups were asked to fill out a questionnaire prior to and upon completion of the intervention. The questionnaire included demographic information and questions from The Leadership and Personal Development Inventory (Carter & Spotanski, 1989), the Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, Peplau & Cutrona, 1980), the Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale (Barnes & Olson, 1982) and the Texas Social Behavior Inventory (Helmreich, Stapp & Ervin, 1978).

Separate two-way analyses of variance (ANOVAS) were used to test for significant differences in all dependent variables. Significant interactions were investigated with simple main-effects analyses. The alpha level was set at $p < 0.05$.

Simple main-effects analyses for the control group (who did not participate in Teen Leadership) across time indicated that self-esteem, attitude toward group work, personal development, loneliness, mother/father-adolescent communication did not change from pre-testing to post-testing. Conversely, simple main-effects analyses for the experimental (Teen Leadership) group across time significantly increased on all variables except loneliness, which significantly decreased from pre-testing to post-testing.

Thus for the students participating in Teen Leadership, all measured variables were positively impacted. Specifically, statistically significant positive effects were found in students for the following variables:

- Personal development/maturity improved
- Attitude toward group work improved
- Mother-adolescent communication increased
- Father-adolescent communication increased
- Loneliness decreased
- Self-esteem/confidence increased

This data confirms that Teen Leadership holds promise as an intervention for enhancing self-esteem, parent-adolescent communication, leadership skill development and for reducing loneliness in high school adolescents.

Dr. George Willey studied the effect of **Teen Leadership** on middle school students for his Ph.D. in Education from Texas A&M University. In his longitudinal study, various data-gathering methodologies were implemented, including student data from the Texas Social Behavior Inventory. This assessment was developed by administering questions related to self-esteem and

social competence to over 7,000 students and using factor analysis to determine validity. A readability index of the questionnaire instrument was determined by the Flesh-Kincaid Grade Level Score. Results of the study were analyzed using statistical hypothesis testing procedures, finding results such as:

- "...the Teen Leadership curriculum increased the level of self-esteem of females and males who participated in the study."
- "Evidence from this study suggests that the Teen Leadership curriculum increases the level of social competence of females and males."
- Decrease in discipline referrals for a large number of students

In a comprehensive quantitative and qualitative meta-analysis of over 100 teachers and over 2,000 students from 7 different schools, **Keystone** was shown to have a large impact. Over 96% of respondents said "Yes" to separate questions asking teachers if **Keystone** helped their students:

- Show more respect
- Resolve conflict better
- Show more self-control
- Get along with classmates
- Show more kindness

When asked if **Keystone** helped decrease discipline problems or helped teachers better connect with students, the "Yes" percentages were 94% and 98%, respectively. The student surveys also resoundingly supported the impact of **Keystone**.

Cleburne High School in Texas published research from a comparative longitudinal study on the effect of **Teen Leadership**, contrasting students who took part in Teen Leadership to the overall school average. The extensive research

was published in the professional literature. (Sherwood, R. [2003], "It All Began With a Handshake," *Journal of the Effective Schools Project*, Vol. IX, 6-11). Even though they intentionally placed students with failing or borderline standardized test scores and grades in Teen Leadership, those students significantly outperformed the school average after taking the course.

Quotes from the published article include, "Because of the positive atmosphere, teachers and students alike look forward to coming to school," "The teachers are beginning to see morale and self-confidence soar, supporting the adage that success breeds success," and "...because of the solid relationship foundation and teaching/mentoring skills learned in the Teen Leadership/Capturing Kids' Hearts curriculum, those normal setbacks have been minimal and turned into learning experiences." A selection of the statistical findings were:

- Teen Leadership students had an 11% lower overall failure rate
- Teen Leadership students had a 19.3% higher English passing rate
- Teen Leadership students had an 11.9% higher mathematics passing rate
- Teen Leadership students had a 7.5% higher social studies passing rate
- Teen Leadership students had a 98% attendance rate (2.4% higher)

Wayne Community High School in Iowa performed an in-depth longitudinal study that captured significant results. They sent all staff to **Capturing Kids' Hearts** and saw a dramatic impact after only one year, then saw even more improvements after the second year. Their superintendent stated that, "Our staff has come back saying that the training has been life changing. These statements haven't come from people that make these types of comments lightly. They have come from professional educators that have spent years in the field and have experienced something so profound that it has affected every

facet of their lives, both personally and professionally.” Examples of results found were:

- Class of 2003 test scores up – increase of 11 percentile points
- Class of 2004 test scores up – increase of 8 percentile points
- Class of 2005 test scores up – increase of 8 percentile points
- Discipline referrals down – 40% decrease
- Fewer students on behavior plans – 40% decrease
- Removals from a classroom down – 54% decrease
- Total suspensions down – 47% decrease
- Number of students suspended down – 52% decrease
- In the district all-staff survey of teachers, administrators, aides, secretaries, counselors, and nurses, 97% said “Yes” to: “I can tell a difference in the atmosphere of my building since we began using the Capturing Kids’ Hearts elements.”
- 95% said “Yes” to: “I believe the entire school has benefited from becoming involved in Capturing Kids’ Hearts.”
- 93% said “Yes” to: “Will Capturing Kids’ Hearts principles be continued in your classroom even if you are not reminded of them frequently in staff development?”

Bondy Intermediate School in Texas went from ‘Acceptable’ to ‘Exemplary’ overall, and the students enrolled in **Teen Leadership** saw dramatic improvements in their Texas Learning Index scores. They sent us a summary stating, “We compared the first six weeks grades of our Teen Leadership students this year with last year, before they were in our class. Many were failing multiple courses, assigned to the detention center, had police records, etc. Now they are experiencing what it feels like to be successful. They are achieving academically and staying out of trouble.” Among the results were:

- Overall – Went from *Acceptable* to *Exemplary* school ranking

- 74% (111 out of 150 students) of the Teen Leadership students increased their Texas Learning Index scores
- 24% (27 out of 111 students) of these increased their TLI by 10 or more points
- 14% (15 out of 111 students) of these increased their TLI by 15 or more points
- 87% (27 out of 31 students) of Hispanic Males increased their TLI’s

South Middle School in Kentucky took part in an extensive longitudinal study to explore the impact of **Capturing Kids’ Hearts**. The research committee compared the first nine weeks of fall 2002 to fall 2003. In the memo sent to all employees, the Vice-Principal stated, “Attached, please find a copy of the discipline records comparing the first 9 weeks of school this year to last year. We continue to see significant improvement in student behavior, especially when we consider this year’s group to last year’s.”

- Decrease in total infractions – from 1,719 to 1,110
- Decrease in total infractions for males – from 1,178 to 694
- Decrease in total infractions for females – from 541 to 416
- Decrease in classroom disruptiveness – from 702 to 348
- Decrease in tardies – from 526 to 357
- Decrease in dress code violations – from 76 to 12

Pasadena High School in Texas took part in a detailed longitudinal study to measure the impact of **Capturing Kids’ Hearts** and **Teen Leadership**. Wayne Adams, principal, said that, “Our school has changed dramatically over the last 6 years of Capturing Kids’ Hearts training and Teen Leadership.” The large impact at Pasadena High School is reflected through the following measures:

- Increase in Overall Test Scores – from 45% passing to 77% passing
- Increase in Math Scores – from 55% to 88%
- Increase in Reading Scores – from 67% to 85%
- Increase in Writing Scores – from 72% to 88%
- Increase in Attendance Rate – from 91.5% to 94.0%

- Overall test scores increased – from 79.1% to 88.2%
- Math test scores increased – from 85.0% to 96.1%
- Reading test scores increased – from 87.8% to 93.8%
- Discipline referrals decreased – from 5000 to 1389
- Number of detentions decreased – from 1608 to 720
- Number of suspensions decreased – from 74 to 48

Lomax Junior High School in Texas initiated a 3-year longitudinal analysis, finding that referrals, detentions, and suspensions decreased dramatically after sending teachers to **Capturing Kids' Hearts** and while using **Teen Leadership**. In addition, standardized test scores increased.

Some of the student comments on the questionnaire were powerful, such as “I can now get up in front of a class without being scared,” “I have learned a lot about how to be a leader,” “I have learned it doesn't matter what you look like; it just matters how you are inside,” “Now I have started to control my temper,” and “I am a much better student.”

In a letter to us, the principal stated, “It is with gratitude that I send you a copy of our recent ‘State of the Campus’ discipline statistics. As you can see, the number of office referrals has decreased significantly over the last three years. We began our Teen Leadership program during the 1998-99 school year and have continued to send participants to **Capturing Kids' Hearts**...Without a doubt, our continued training and involvement in your program has produced positive results on our campus...Thank you for empowering us to do a better job with our students. We may have to add a third teacher because the number of students requesting the course continues to grow. And given the fact that recruiting teachers has been harder and harder, offering your trainings has even been an effective hiring technique.” Among the findings were:

South Houston High School in Texas sent the entire staff through **Capturing Kids' Hearts**, implemented **Teen Leadership**, and undertook an extensive 5-year longitudinal study. The principal said, “I've been in this business for 45 years and this training and curriculum are the most important programs that I have implemented. I couldn't begin to count how many students' and teachers' lives have been completely changed. Until I went to the training I didn't think you could change the culture of a school. **Capturing Kids' Hearts** and **Teen Leadership** have made the difference in how teachers feel about themselves, how they interact and are unified with each other, and how the kids feel. Our standardized test scores are up dramatically, our dropout rate is down, and our failure rate is down, but more than any of that it's the feeling that we now have in the building.” One student was quoted making an incredibly profound statement, saying, “It is more than just the teacher teaching. We have a part in how the class learns.” Among the longitudinal results found were:

- Attendance rate increase – 91.3% to 95.3%
- Overall test score increase – 50.5% to 78.5%
- Reading score increase – 74.0% to 87.4%
- Mathematics score increase – 61.0% to 86.2%
- Writing score increase – 78.6% to 90.9%

Surprise Lake Middle School in Washington performed an analysis after one semester of **Teen Leadership**. 252 students and 136 parents responded to a survey on their perception of the results of the course. Among the findings:

- 98% of the parents and 96% of the students would recommend Teen Leadership to others
- 99% of the parents and 95% of the students considered it a positive experience
- 99% of the parents and 97% of the students felt the skills learned in Teen Leadership were valuable
- 99% of the parents and 98% of the students wanted Teen Leadership offered in the future

- Excessive tardies decreased
- Truancies decreased
- Vandalism incidents decreased

For further detailed information about research involving Capturing Kids' Hearts and Teen Leadership, please see our quasi-experimental, longitudinal time series case studies presentation submitted to the Texas Education Agency in the document [TEA 8 Case Studies](#).

Nacogdoches ISD in Texas implemented a quantitative and qualitative survey methodology, analyzing over 100 respondents from 3 different schools to determine the impact of **Capturing Kids' Hearts**. Among the findings were:

- 100% of all respondents from each school responded affirmatively to "Were the skills you learned in Capturing Kids' Hearts valuable?"
- Over 85% responded that "Capturing Kids' Hearts has provided me with useful, effective discipline techniques."
- Over 95% responded that "I highly recommend this to other schools."

Brenham Junior High School in Texas reported a significant reduction in discipline problems after sending 1 principal, 1 counselor, and 8 teachers to **Capturing Kids' Hearts** training, plus initiating the **Teen Leadership** process. The dramatic results they experienced included:

- Standardized test scores increased in all categories
- Fall referrals dropped from 942 to only 275
- Threats to staff decreased