

C.O.P.E. Service Dog Program: Student Achievement Results

Prepared by: Research and Evaluation Services

The following results are based on a sample of 67 students who were in the C.O.P.E program between 2003-2004 and 2009-2010 and were enrolled in a SCDSB secondary school for three consecutive years. Of those, 12 students had participated in the program more than once (between 2 and 3 times). Five students were excluded from the analysis because they were not enrolled in a credit bearing program. Over two thirds of students (69%) were in either Grade 10 or 11 when they participated in the program and 31% were in Grade 12. The gender breakdown of the sample is 55% male and 45% female.

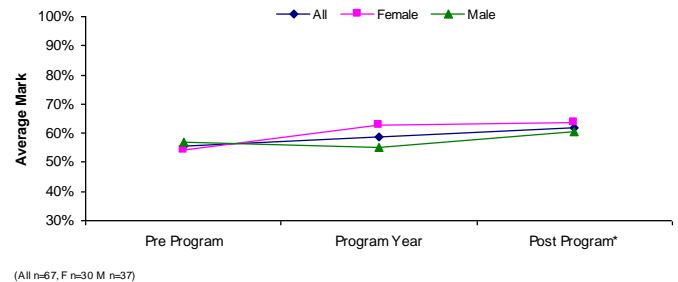
Report Card Marks

The average report card marks increased over the three year period from an average mark of **56%** in the year before the program to 59% in the year students were in the program to **62%** the year after students were in the program.

The average mark for females (n=30) increased over the three year period from **54%** before the program to 63% the year students were in the program to **64%** the year after the program.

The average mark for males (n=37) was slightly lower the year they were in the program (**55%**) compared to the year before they were in the program (57%) but increased to **61%** the year after they were in the program.

COPE Program: Average Report Card Marks Over Three Years



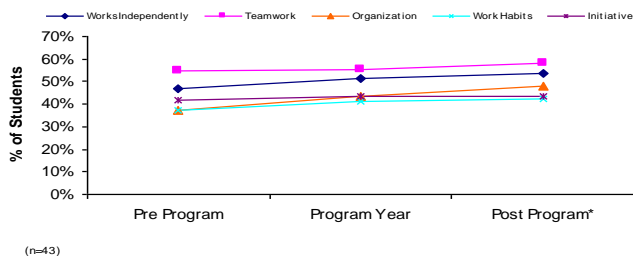
Attendance

The average number of periods missed over the three years remained consistent (between 16 and 17 periods). There was no significant difference in the average attendance of males and females over the three years.

Learning Skills

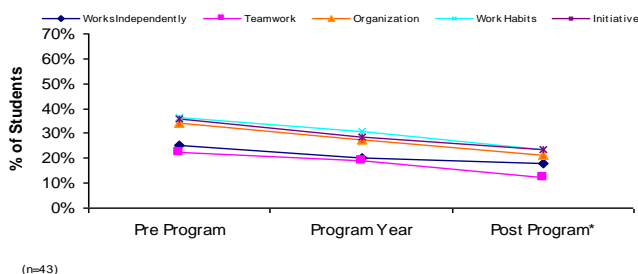
There was an increase in the percentage of students who received a score of "good" or "excellent" for three of the five learning skills over the three year period. The other two learning skills, Teamwork and Initiative, either increased during the program and maintained the year after or were consistent from the year before to the year students were in the program and then increased the year after.

COPE Program: Learning Skills Score of Good or Excellent



The percentage of students who received a score of "Needs Improvement" for the five learning skills decreased between 7% and 13% over the three year period.

COPE Program: Learning Skills Needs Improvement



Males

- The percentage of males who received "Good" or "Excellent" increased over the three year period for two learning skills, "Works Independently" and "Organization". The percentage of males who scored at this level for the other three learning skills either declined over the three year period, or increased during the program but returned to pre program levels the following year.
- Over the three year period there was a steady decline in the percentage of male students who received a score of "Needs Improvement" for their learning skills with the exception of Teamwork which increased slightly the year they were in the program then decreased by 11% the year after the program to 15%.

Females

- There was a steady increase in the percentage of females who received either "Good" or "Excellent" on their report cards for three of the five learning skills over the three year period. The other two learning skills, Works Independently and Organization, increased the year students were in the program then decreased between 2% and 4% the year after the program to 59% and 57%.
- The percentage of females who received a score of "Needs Improvement" on all five learning skills declined the year they were enrolled in the program compared to the year before they were in the program. The gains in Work Habits and Initiative were maintained the year after students were in the program. There was a slight increase in the percentage of students who received this score on their report cards the year after the program (between 1% and 5%) for Works Independently, Teamwork and Organization.

* For the time period "Post Program", there are 7 students who were still enrolled in the program.

Suspensions

- There were 30 students who served 54 suspensions over the three year period with slightly less than half (46%) being served the year students were in the program, 32% the year before and 22% the year after. Of the 54 suspensions, 54% were served by males and 46% were served by females.
- The number of suspensions students served ranged from one to eight with almost two thirds of students (63%) suspended once, 20% suspended twice and 17% suspended three or more times. The total number of suspensions increased from before the program to during the program but declined after the program. These results varied by gender (see Table).

COPE Program: Suspension Summary Table

Time Period	# of Suspensions		# of Students Suspended		Average length of Suspension	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Pre Program	3	14	3	7	4 days	4 days
Program Year	16	9	13	4	3 days	3 days
Post Program	10	2	8	2	3 days	2 days

(n=30)

- There was a steady decline in the number of suspensions served by females over the three year period from 14 suspensions before the program to 2 after the program. Males accounted for the increase during the program.
- For females, there was a decline in the average length of suspensions after students participated in the program, from 4 days in the year before the program to 3 days the year students were in the program to 2 days the year after the program.
- For males, the length of suspensions dropped from 4 days pre program to 3 days during and post program.
- **Almost two thirds of students (63%) who served a suspension the year before the program or during the program did not serve a suspension the year after they participated in the program (55% of males and 80% of females).**

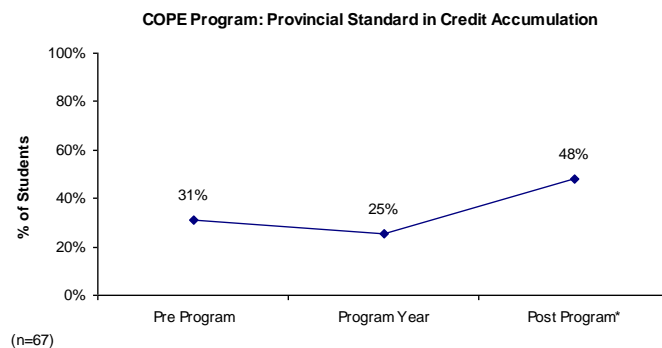
Credit Accumulation

The findings for credit accumulation are complex and may reflect differences among schools in students served by the program and the grade in which students participated in the program.

Students, on average, earned 6 credits both the year before the program and the year they were in the program. There was a slight decrease in the average number of credits earned the year after students were in the program to 5 credits. However, more students earned the credits they attempted the year after they were in the COPE program (73%) compared to year before they were in the program (45%) and the year they were in the program (46%). The table below shows that students attempted fewer credits the year after the program.

The number of credits students earned ranged from 1 to 8.5 the year before students were in the program, 1 to 9 the year students were in the program and 1 to 12 the year after students were in the program with slightly less than half (48-49%) earning 7 or more credits before and during the program and over a third (36%) after the program.

More students met the provincial credit accumulation standard (8 credits in Grade 9, 16 or more in Grade 10, 23 or more in Grade 11 and 30 or more in Grade 12) by the end of the three year period compared to the before the program with 31% of students achieving the provincial standard before the program, 25% during the program and 48% the year after they were in the program.



COPE Program: Credit Summary Table

Grade in which students were first in COPE (n=67)	Pre Program			Program Year			Post Program*		
	Grade	Average Credits		Grade	Average Credits		Grade	Average Credits	
		Attempted	Earned		Attempted	Earned		Attempted	Earned
Grade 10 (n=28)	9	8	7	10	8	7	11	6	6
Grade 11 (n=18)	10	8	6	11	7	6	12	5	5
Grade 12 (n=16)	11	7	5	12	7	6	12+	6	5
Grade 12+ (n=5)	12	7	5	12+	7	5	12+	5	4
Average Credits Earned	Pre Program = 6			Program Year = 6			Post Program = 5		

A higher percentage of males were at the provincial credit accumulation standard the year before the program than females (19% vs. 12%). The year students were in the program, a slightly higher percentage of females achieved the provincial standard compared to males (13% vs. 12%). The year after the program the same percentage of males and females achieved the provincial standard in credits (23%).

* For the time period "Post Program", there are 7 students who were still enrolled in the program.

MEMORANDUM

TO: Administrative Council

FROM: Superintendent of Education

SUBJECT: COPE Service Dog Program Update

Background

Through Superintendent Bailey, a request for support from Research and Evaluation Services was tabled and approved at Administrative Council on March 1, 2011 to analyze achievement data for students served by the COPE Service Dog Program. The attached report provides the findings.

COPE Program in SCDSB Schools

The COPE Service Dog Program has been offered at various times in up to five schools and has been funded through local school-based funding. In 2010-2011, the program is running at Nantyr Shores, Bear Creek and Banting (new to the program this year), and is no longer offered at Stayner and Barrie North. Based on information provided by Jane Boake, teacher at Nantyr Shores, a total of 193 students participated in the program from 2003-04 to 2009-2010. Twenty three of these students have participated in the program multiple times. While anecdotal feedback about the program has been positive, student achievement outcomes have not been systematically examined.

Focus of Analysis

Only the 67 students who had one year of secondary school prior to and one year after participating in the program were included in this analysis. Examining outcomes for a cohort of students before, during and after participation in a program is a useful approach when no comparison group is available. The outcomes examined included marks, learning skills, attendance, suspensions and credits earned.

Highlights of Findings

- There was a modest increase in students' average marks.
- There was a decrease in the percentage of students receiving a learning skill assessment of 'needs improvement'. There was a slight increase in the percentage of students receiving a learning skills assessment of 'good' or 'excellent' although the results varied somewhat by gender.
- There was a steady decrease in the number of suspensions served by girls and a decrease in the average length of suspensions. For boys, the pattern was less clear.
- The findings for credit accumulation were complex and may reflect differences among schools in the students served by the program and the grade(s) in which students took part.
- There was no significant change in students' average number of periods missed.

Limitations of the Analysis

Because the analysis focused on 67 of the 193 students served, the results should be regarded as exploratory and interpreted with caution. The program has served a range of students depending on the school, from students with special education needs in life skills classes to students who failed the OSSLT on their first attempt. The present analysis focused on achievement outcomes only for students who were earning credits and for whom three years of data were available. Potential benefits of this program could include self esteem and self confidence; however, such outcomes could not be examined because they were beyond the scope of the data available. Despite these limitations, the positive findings above suggest that the COPE Service Dog Program can benefit student learning and achievement.

Respectfully submitted by Kathy Bailey

May 3, 2011

COPE as a School Partner

Schools:

- Schools provide students to assist training the dogs;
- Schools provide sections/courses and teacher to support the training and connect the training to a particular course;
- Schools provide funds to support equipment needed while at school and for training;
- Schools provide partnerships with elementary schools for additional experiences for the dogs;
- Schools fund-raise for COPE and provide funds for equipment necessary to have at the school.

COPE:

- COPE provides a trainer to work with dogs and teach students;
- COPE brings the dogs to and from the school;
- COPE provides the calendars for fund-raising;
- COPE purchases the equipment necessary for training at the school.

Benefits:

Students (secondary):

- Improved self-esteem;
- Improved attendance in classes with students deemed at-risk of non-attendance;
- Increased chance of credit accumulation for students deemed at-risk of not completing credits;
- Opportunity for leadership;
- Students accumulate community service hours helping with dogs pre/post class.

Students (elementary):

- Chance to practice reading and numeracy in a non-threatening situation;
- Improved self-concept as reading and numeracy abilities improve;
- Enjoyment of being at school – specifically on the days when dogs are visiting.

Schools:

- Dogs in the halls create a sense of calm;
- Dogs become members of the school and invite interest from all staff including secretaries, EAs, custodians, and teaching staff;

Strengthening the Partnership – moving forward:

Questions:

- How to sustain programs financially to create partnerships in all family of schools?
- What is the best demographic at the school to support COPE's agenda and support student achievement?
- What data should be used to measure success? (Numbers and anecdotal)
- Does COPE have the resources (trainers and dogs) to be in multiple locations?