

## **WIN Program Evaluation**

Includes:  
**Final Report**

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## Executive Summary

This evaluation has revealed that WIN has had a great deal of success and that it definitely warrants expansion to include as many elementary schools as possible. As the program expands, it may face more challenges than it did as a pilot project. We hope this evaluation can be used as a resource for dealing with these challenges. Also, we hope this initial study becomes the foundation for Kinark's own studies for building and maintaining the flourishing WIN program.

Kinark is a children's mental health organization that provides a wide variety of free services to clients in 5 regions across the province of Ontario. The WIN program is an interactive school-based prevention program for grade seven students that aims to develop the students' social and emotional skills. WIN participants gain the motivation and skills needed to become healthy citizens in today's society.

The evaluation was a partnership between Kinark, the Trent Centre for Community Based Education (TCCBE), and Daniel Powell's fourth year class; *Assessment of Development Projects*. Heather Walsh and Katie Barron were the two student evaluators who took on the project.

The objectives of the evaluation were:

- To determine WIN's level of acceptance by the students and teachers involved;
- To determine WIN's level of effectiveness from the perspectives of the key stakeholders; and
- To identify areas where improvements could be made in order to increase the levels of acceptance and effectiveness.

### Methodology

In order to create a 360 degree picture of WIN, we sought information from all the key stakeholders involved with the program – students, teachers, and Kinark staff. Information was collected through observations of WIN classes, eight interviews with teachers, staff and a principal, three focus groups with students, 267 student written surveys, and 9 teacher written surveys.

Some challenges with these methods were that random sample selection of focus group participants was not always possible, and the written method of data collection presumed that the students had a basic level of literacy and a prior knowledge of how to complete a multiple choice style questionnaire. Also, the teachers who were willing to devote their time to the evaluation of WIN were generally very supportive of the program; consequently, our teacher findings may be unintentionally biased in favour of the WIN program.

The biggest challenge of this evaluation was that it is extremely difficult to assess the impact of a program like WIN in isolation from the innumerable forces affecting the lives of adolescents at this stage of their development.

## **Findings**

We found that there is a strong correlation between the acceptance and the effectiveness of WIN. Furthermore, the teacher often has a strong influence over the class's level of acceptance and thus has a serious impact on WIN's effectiveness.

We found that the WIN staff are quite in-tune with each other and with the students' opinions but somewhat unfamiliar with teachers' opinions. This is likely because teachers, as adults, are less likely to express their true opinions while the WIN instructors are present. Kinark staff have a keen awareness of the students' perceptions of the program and have insightful observations about how the program could be improved and expanded to meet the needs of the children it serves.

The students' feedback about WIN was generally very positive. They liked the program and found it useful but pointed out there could be some improvements. They felt that if WIN made these improvements the program's acceptance and effectiveness levels would probably increase. First and foremost, they want more activities and less paper work. Secondly, they would like the techniques, particularly the WIN formula, to be more realistic for them to use. Some suggestions for additional program topics were also made. In general, students were very satisfied with the WIN program.

In the focus group sessions, students mentioned that "quick fixes", "clear, concise, complete" and "think before you do" were techniques they have used outside of the WIN classes. In the written surveys, students indicated that the most significant improvement since the WIN program had to do with the frequency of students bullying others.

The WIN formula is a set of phrases that students are taught to use to communicate their feelings ("When you... I feel.... I need..."). Students felt that it is not realistic for solving problems with peers. However, they did see the value in the message that the WIN formula conveys.

All of the teachers surveyed believed that the goals of the program are important for their students' social development. Many of the teachers appreciated the opportunity that the program provided for their students to explore and express issues that they otherwise would not discuss as a group. However, not all teachers agreed that the program as it exists is achieving its stated goals. The teachers expressed varying responses about the degree of WIN's effectiveness in their classes. From our limited interactions with several of the classes we noticed a great disparity in maturity levels

and classroom cultures. Therefore it follows that presenting a uniform program to groups of students that are characteristically distinct will unavoidably produce inconsistent outcomes. Another factor affecting teachers' acceptance is that they have difficulty finding time within the standardized Ontario curriculum requirements to spare ten hours even for a program they consider valuable.

Four specific case studies are included in the report to illustrate the relationship between the most important variables to the success of WIN in a class with the outcome of the program. The first case study is of a relatively immature class in the Catholic system with an enthusiastic, but unhelpful teacher. The delivery of the program in this class was very difficult at first, but gradually became very positive. The second case study is of an incredibly mature class in the Catholic system with an unbelievably enthusiastic and helpful teacher. The success of the WIN program in the class was tremendous. The third case study is of a relatively mature class in the public system with an enthusiastic and helpful teacher. The levels of acceptance and effectiveness in this class were moderately high. The final case study is of a 'high needs' school in the public system with teachers who were resentful towards the program. The delivery of WIN was extremely difficult and as a result, the program was withdrawn from this school after five weeks.

## **Recommendations**

We have outlined many recommendations for the program based on our findings. We would like to emphasize our belief in the value of this program. The following recommendations are simply to give Kinark many options to work with and focus their efforts on in the future development of the program.

Some of these recommendations would take a considerable amount of time to implement. A full-time staff member entirely dedicated to the WIN program is necessary if the program is going to expand. This should be a priority for the WIN program if funding is received.

Time constraints within the Ontario curriculum is one of the main impediments to teachers reinforcing the WIN material between classes. A simple solution is to provide visual aids such as posters to put up on classroom walls, which will continue to reinforce lessons beyond the WIN program. A second suggestion is to provide a follow-up booklet for teachers so they have some guidance for encouraging the classroom culture created by WIN. Connecting WIN to the curriculum could definitely ease the process of finding time to incorporate it into the class and improve the levels of acceptance of the program with teachers. Additionally, a WIN program that is tied to the standardized Ontario curriculum would be easily transferable, and thus easily marketable, to anywhere in the province if the program expanded.

Another impediment to the teachers' acceptance of the program is that WIN doesn't specifically address the particular problems in their classroom. Although providing a standardized program is most efficient for Kinark, it is not most effective. A slight adaptation of the program to suit the classes needs could really help increase the teacher's acceptance of WIN. The added relevance to students' lives could also help increase their acceptance of WIN. Ideas for how to do this are included in the full report of this evaluation.

The Ontario curriculum guidelines identify the necessity of involving parents in everything taught in the classroom. One suggestion is to offer a 'parent night' at the school that would teach the parents about WIN so that they could reinforce the same techniques and themes in the home and simultaneously learn techniques for dealing with adolescent children.

Efforts should be made to make the WIN formula more realistic for students to use with their peers. With an understanding of the formula as a framework students can be encouraged to use their own language to suit their situation.

The feedback gathered in the written surveys and in the interviews indicated that teachers are often unprepared for the program to come in to their class and unclear about what their role is expected to be. More teacher involvement needs to be facilitated and clearer expectations of their role should be communicated. Teachers must be made aware of what type of role contributes most effectively to the program. A more involved preparation period would not only clarify the teacher role but also create partnerships between teachers and staff. Teachers certainly have important insights that could benefit the instructors before they enter a classroom regarding specific behaviours and methods of classroom management.

Some of the students suggested that involving a young person in the delivery could lend more legitimacy to the material simply because the presenter is the right age in the eyes of the students. A partnership with a student at Trent University or Sir Sandford Fleming College could be a way of achieving this idea.

## **Conclusion**

As the program expands to reach more classes and schools certain challenges may become more common. We hope our recommendations will help WIN staff be able to deal with these issues as they arise if the program expands. We sincerely hope the WIN program continues to positively enhance the lives of adolescents for a long time to come.



## Section I: Introduction

### 1. Introductory Comments

The prospect of being evaluated can be daunting. Evaluation is commonly perceived in a negative light because for many people it is about judgment of “good” or “bad” performance. But evaluation is about value creation. It is a means of enhancing the value of program no matter its stage of development or degree of success.

The WIN program, offered by Kinark Child and Family Services, is at a pivotal point in its development. The transition of this program from pilot project to region-wide implementation must be undertaken with WIN’s strengths and potential weaknesses in mind. This evaluation has revealed that WIN’s many strengths and successes warrant the program’s expansion. Also, as with all programs, even the most successful, there is room for improvement and change as it expands and reaches more people.

The process of evaluation can often be as illuminating as the final report. Hopefully, by questioning of staff members about the strengths and weaknesses of WIN triggered some thoughts and discussions about the program within the Kinark community. Although we are external evaluators, the information for this evaluation came from within the program. This report, in some ways, is merely an arrangement of stakeholders’ own thoughts and opinions. Evaluation is not a one-time activity or a process of making judgments or statements about success or failure. Rather, it is an ongoing process that should be integrated into a plan of work. We hope this initial study becomes the foundation for Kinark’s own studies for building and maintaining the flourishing WIN program.

### 2. Description of Kinark


Kinark Child and Family Services is one of the largest and most respected children’s mental health organizations in Ontario. Their mission is: To strengthen the social, emotional and behavioral well being of children and their families, thereby contributing to safe and healthy communities. Kinark is a non-profit charitable organization that provides a wide variety of free services to clients in 5 regions across the province of Ontario: York Region, Simcoe County, Peterborough County, Northumberland County and Durham Region.

### 3. Description of WIN

The WIN program is a school-based, prevention program, which was designed principally for grade seven students. Two front-line, child and youth workers facilitate the WIN program in the classroom, one hour per week over a ten-week period. The material is presented through large and small group discussions and activities. The program is offered to all students in the grade seven classes rather than targeting children with specific personalities or behaviours. The objective is to make the skills and language taught through WIN universal in the school environment. With the teacher's support, full class groupings can be an effective way of promoting a positive culture for individuals, the class, and the school as a whole.

The WIN staff request the co-operation and support of the classroom teacher and encourage students to discuss the program with their parents so that the social skills learned through the program will be reinforced by as many adults in their lives as possible.

The program aims to build on the students' strengths and is based on the philosophy that all adolescents are capable of growth and positive behaviour. By increasing the students' sense of self worth, WIN participants will gain the motivation and skills needed to become responsible citizens in today's society.

The topics covered in the program include: the healthy expression of emotions; positive problem solving; differentiating between right from wrong; anger management; effective communication; conflict resolution; and future aspirations. The lessons are interactive and presented through activities that build on the skills learned in the previous weeks. Through group interaction and positive reinforcement participants learn to internalize these skills and apply them to everyday life. 

***Kinark staff member:***

***[The goals of WIN are] social and emotional skill development. We are encouraging the students to find their own voice and get their needs met in a manner that is respectful of other people and to develop some self-esteem and a little bit of assertiveness. But the long term outcome is healthy citizens in our society.***

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## Section II: The Evaluation

### 1. Introduction

The evaluation of the WIN program was initiated by Kinark staff. The Trent Center for Community Based Education (TCCBE) was approached and asked to provide students to conduct the evaluation. Heather Walsh and Katie Barron are students in Daniel Powell's fourth year course: IDST 422 - *The Assessment of Development Projects*. The connection was made between these students and the Kinark organization and the evaluation proceeded from there.

### 2. Goals

Our preliminary research included a review of evaluations of similar character development programs. Those evaluations were commonly conducted by groups of PhD students over an extended period of time. As undergraduate students and first time evaluators, we needed to work within our own limitations as well as within a constricted time frame. Our aim was to find a compromise that would benefit Kinark as much as possible but still be realistic for us to complete.

The goal of this evaluation is to build a foundation for future assessments of the WIN program. These could be conducted internally by WIN staff or externally by Trent students through the Trent Center for Community Based Education (TCCBE).

### 3. Objectives

#### *Development of Objectives*

We began to formulate an outline for evaluation based on our key research question: "Is WIN reaching its stated goals?" Measuring the cause and effect relationship between WIN and its impact on grade seven students' levels of self-esteem, and interpersonal relationships is not feasible in the context of snapshot research<sup>1</sup>. An investigation of such magnitude would require continuous research over a much longer period of time, analyzed against baseline data concerning individual and collective behaviours. In the limited time we had to conduct this investigation we could not evaluate the WIN program's impact in isolation from the innumerable forces influencing the lives of the participants, as they approach adolescence.

Achievable objectives were needed to further focus the evaluation. We determined that we could assess students' (as the main beneficiaries) and their teachers' perceptions of how the program has impacted them. They were asked to evaluate the need for the program, their level of acceptance of it, and how effective they sense it to be.

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<sup>1</sup> Pg. 30, Pratt and Loizos, *Choosing Research Methods*, Oxfam, UK, 1992.

Secondly, we intended to determine the decisive elements for the program's success or failure and to make recommendations for ensuring the program reaches and meets the needs of its beneficiaries.

### *Objectives*

- To determine WIN's level of acceptance by the students and teachers involved.
- To determine WIN's level of effectiveness from the perspectives of the key stakeholders
- To identify areas where improvement could be made in order to increase the levels of acceptance and effectiveness.

## **Section III: Methodology**

### **1. Introduction**

The methodology was designed in order to facilitate a 360 degree view of the WIN program. The aim was to collect feedback from all the key stakeholders involved with the program – Kinark staff, classroom teachers, and students. Working within our limited time frame, data was collected from these sources in order to create an aggregate picture of the program. In addition to the overall picture, four case studies are analyzed to provide specific examples of the WIN experience in the varying types of school environments.

### **2. Background Research**

#### *Character Development*

Although each of us has experience working with children in non-formal educational settings, neither of us has a strong background in the theoretical foundations of character development. We began our research with a literature review to gain a greater understanding of the pedagogy behind the program's design. For a list of references, see appendix A. We wanted to compare WIN's objectives with other character development programs. By defining realistic expectations of the results of similar programs we could also define the scope of our evaluation.

We studied evaluations of comparable school-based, prevention programs. These assessments helped ascertain what methods had been used in evaluating similar programs and what we could reasonably hope to evaluate about WIN. The literature review revealed some interesting challenges for our evaluation within the limited three-month time frame. Teams of researchers have conducted many of the studies of

comparable programs. The outcomes and impacts they have evaluated required baseline data on their subjects' levels of self-esteem and behavioural patterns. These were subsequently measured on a continual basis over a period of five to twelve years depending on the particular study.

#### *Research Methodologies*

The literature on focus group methods has been developed primarily for the purpose of market research. However, these methods are being used more frequently in social research because they facilitate the gathering of in-depth information from the perspectives of many participants about their needs, interests and concerns.

As our purpose in evaluation was to assess the acceptance and effectiveness of the program from the perspectives of its various stakeholders, a focus group seemed to be the most appropriate method for soliciting opinions from the beneficiaries. The focus group method enabled us to speak with many students in a short period of time and identify trends and patterns in their perceptions.

Richard Krueger, an expert in focus group research, outlined the many considerations that must be accounted for when conducting focus groups with young people. Adults cannot assume that young people share their interests. The facilitator must be able to draw people out, in this case by putting young people in a situation where they would naturally talk and share ideas with each other. Special consideration was paid to the size of the group, the physical location (whether in an adult controlled institution) and the activities involved.

The moderator plays a unique role in focus groups with children. We tried to put ourselves on the same level of the participants so that we would not be perceived as authority figures. This helped us be able to draw out quiet passive groups and exert mild, unobtrusive direction with excited groups or disruptive members.

### **3. Observations**

It was important for us to witness the program first-hand in order to better understand the curriculum, the teaching method, and the students' reactions. Two different schools were observed.

#### *School A*

Five of the ten sessions were observed at this school. This is an urban school in the Catholic system. The class observed had 37 students in grade 7.

#### *School B (also case study #4)*

Three of the four sessions were observed at this school before the program was cancelled. This school is an urban school in the Public system with a French Immersion program. The class that was being observed had 38 students in grades 7 and 8.

#### **4. Interviews**

Eight interviews were conducted in order to get in-depth responses to our questions about the WIN program. For copies of the interview questionnaires, see Appendix B.

##### *Staff*

The purpose of the staff interviews was to gain an overview of the WIN program from the staff members' perspectives. Three WIN program instructors were interviewed at the Kinark office. One was interviewed in her home. The sessions were conducted during the week of March 17-24. Staff members were asked a series of 13 open-ended questions concerning the program's strengths and weaknesses, their expectations, and their perceptions of the levels of acceptance and effectiveness by students and teachers. Several unanticipated questions arose during the interviews that were added to the question list as we progressed.

##### *Teachers*

The purpose of the teacher interviews was to determine how well the WIN program is accepted by teachers as well as how effective they perceive WIN lessons and techniques to be for their students. Three teachers were interviewed; each one in their respective school. The sessions were conducted during the week of March 17-24. Teachers were asked a series of 15 open-ended questions.

##### *Principal*

The purpose of the principal's interview was to determine the level of acceptance of the WIN program in the school where it did not continue to completion. This was done in order to gain a better understanding of the culture of that school. The principal was interviewed in her office on March 25th. The principal was asked a series of 9 open-ended questions.

#### **5. Focus Group**

After determining that our objectives in this evaluation were primarily qualitative, we decided on a methodology that would strive to listen to children on their own terms, being aware that they can only speak in public through means designed by adults. As the direct beneficiaries of the program, children's meaningful participation in the evaluation process is critical to the legitimacy of the results. A copy of the focus group questionnaire is included in Appendix C.

##### *Participants*

The focus group was conducted with groups of six or seven students from three different classes that had participated in the WIN program. We had initially planned on conducting focus groups with four different schools; however, there were several logistical barriers to organizing the fourth interview that prevented its completion in the data collection time period.

We intended to select the students randomly by drawing numbers from a group of volunteers. However, one classroom teacher pre-selected the students who would participate and in another class there were only six students available to participate over the lunch hour. Finally, only one of three groups was in fact randomly selected.

We established that six would be a manageable number of students in each group. We hoped it would be small enough so that everyone would get a chance to speak yet large enough to gather a variety of opinions. Generally, focus groups are segregated by gender and made up of a homogenous group of individuals who are strangers to each other. In the case of children and youth, they are more comfortable expressing opinions when they are with a familiar group of people and with a mix of genders.

#### *Group Characteristics*

There was an equal gender split in each group with the exception of one of the schools from the separate system because the classroom teacher had selected seven students from his class to participate before we arrived. He selected four boys and three girls.

#### *Challenges*

The focus groups proved to be more difficult to schedule than we had originally anticipated. Some teachers were not willing to participate and expressed that their students needed time to be outside after lunch. Many students in some schools go home over the lunch hour, leaving very few people to participate. Restricted access to students posed a challenge in one school as well. Before the principal would allow the students to participate they wanted a signed letter of permission from the parents.

Although we attempted to employ some of the techniques suggested by the literature we have read on facilitating focus groups, we still found it difficult to ensure that everyone had a chance to speak. Our groups represented a wide-variety of personalities and levels of comfort sharing their opinions in a group of their peers.

## **6. Written Surveys**

Copies of the written surveys are included in Appendix D.

#### *Students*

Two-hundred and sixty-seven surveys were administered to grade seven students who had participated in the WIN program this term (January – March, 2003) and last term (September – December, 2002). All 11 classes in the 7 schools who participated in the program this year were surveyed during the week of March 17. Teachers administered the surveys during class time therefore the rate of response was very high. Students who did not complete the survey were most likely absent from school that day. Students were asked a series of 19 closed questions.

### *Teachers*

Nine out of the eleven teachers involved with the program this year returned their written surveys. Teachers were asked a series of 17 semi-open questions. Surveys were administered during the week of March 17.

## **7. Reliability of Findings**

Several issues should be taken into consideration when interpreting the information presented in this report.

### *Students*

In our survey design we attempted to make the questionnaire as relevant to a grade seven student's vocabulary as possible. This written method of data collection presumed that the students had a basic level of literacy and prior knowledge of how to complete a multiple choice style questionnaire. We also relied on the teacher to assist the students with any difficulties in completing the survey. Children with learning difficulties may not have been able to answer accurately.

Random sample selection of focus group participants was not always possible. Some teachers had chosen the participants prior to our arrival and the time frame for conducting interviews interfered with the students who regularly went home for lunch.

The children who participated in our focus group interviews represented a wide-variety of levels of maturity and self-awareness. The impact of their peers' attitudes toward the program is an important determinant of the students' expression of their own acceptance of WIN. We did not observe many strongly opposing points of view on the overall impressions of the program within each group.

There were, naturally, varying levels of participation within the focus groups. It is possible that we were not able to draw out the true opinions of the quieter students.

The manner in which the students expressed their level of acceptance varied between groups. The dynamic within certain groups was ostensibly negative; their comments demonstrated that the program is continuing to influence the way they think and interact with others. Although this feedback was intended as a criticism, this is a positive indication of the effectiveness of WIN.

It is impossible to assess the impact of a program like WIN in isolation from the innumerable forces affecting the lives of adolescents at this stage of socialization.

### *Teachers*

The teachers who were willing to devote more of their time to the evaluation of WIN were generally very supportive of the program. The selection of both schools and teachers were unavoidably dependent on the willingness of the informants to



participate. Consequently, our teacher findings may be unintentionally biased in favour of the WIN program.

### Staff

We interviewed the WIN staff at Kinark. There are only four WIN staff therefore the confidentiality of the information they shared with us is more difficult to protect. Perhaps they were not as willing or able to speak freely given that the recipients of our final report are their supervisors.

## 8. Lessons Learned

There were three main lessons learned in the process of conducting this evaluation. First, we should have conducted the staff interviews before designing the teacher and student interview questionnaires and written surveys. This would have provided a better starting point for designing staff and student questionnaires. Second, we learnt several lessons about professionalism. We did not plan for the amount of time arranging interviews and focus groups in the elementary school setting would take. Had we been aware of the procedure of faxing, gaining principal's approval, and the follow-up phone-tag, perhaps we would have started the process sooner. Finally, we learned that we should have been more sensitive with the language of our student survey in order to include the kids who are not from the traditional nuclear family.

# Section IV: Findings

## 1. Introduction

This report is based on information gathered from Kinark staff, grade seven students, classroom teachers, and a principal. We found that WIN is highly regarded by the key stakeholders in the program. Furthermore, there are certain aspects of the program where improvements could be made to increase its acceptance and effectiveness.

The objective for this evaluation was to determine the degree of acceptance and effectiveness of WIN. Over the course of the evaluation we discovered that there is a strong correlation between these two factors. Furthermore, the teacher often has a strong influence over the class's level of acceptance of WIN and thus has a serious impact on WIN's effectiveness. Another major finding is that the reaction to the WIN program is very different in the Catholic school system than the Public school system.

These three main findings will be illustrated in this section. The information has been organized in order to present an aggregate view of the perceptions of the various stakeholders as well as more specific examples of the dynamics between the

teachers' roles and their students' attitudes. The aggregate findings are presented in various stakeholder sections and the specific examples are presented in the case studies.

## 2. Staff

The purpose of this section was to compare the WIN staff's perceptive of the program's acceptance and effectiveness, to comments from students and teachers. We found that the staff is quite in-tune with each other and with the students' opinions, but somewhat unfamiliar with teachers' opinions. This is most likely because teachers, as adults, are less likely to express their true opinions while the WIN instructors are present. The main text of this section is written by the evaluators while the comments in the blue text boxes come directly from WIN staff.

The individual, in-depth staff interviews were very informative and demonstrated each person's commitment and enthusiasm for the program. The staff members clearly operate as a well-organized and harmonious team. The staff interview responses complemented each other and expressed a consistency in awareness of the program's strengths and weaknesses. They have a keen awareness of the student's perceptions of the program and made insightful observations about how the program could be improved and expanded to meet the needs of the children it serves.

### *Program*

The program's strengths are numerous and obvious to everyone involved. We found that the staff's identification of WIN's strengths were on par with teachers' and students' opinions.

The teaching style is fun, activity-based, interactive and very different from the typical teaching style in the regular class programming. Some of the strongest lessons are: Feelings; Communication; Values; and Conflict Resolution.

There was a general agreement that an important strength of WIN's delivery is that it is co-facilitated. One facilitator is presenting while the other is monitoring, encouraging the class and circulating to all of the group activities.

***There's an underlying philosophy in the program that's really strong. Our strength is in being able to connect practical experience and practical application to the theory that we're giving.***

Another strength identified by one staff member is that WIN is led by front-line child and youth workers who are used to working with high-risk youth and are, as a result, very connected to the difficult issues that adolescents face. Working with the average adolescent through WIN is a refreshing change for the staff.

One area of improvement identified by staff was the delivery method for certain WIN topics. They were in agreement that there are a few lessons that need further development to incorporate more activities or to improve the material so that it is more relevant to adolescents. Many of the lessons are heavily dependent on paperwork and the presenters are aware that those lessons are not as well received and pose challenges to kids with learning difficulties. As we will illustrate in the student finding section, this is in-tune with how the students feel.

***There is still a lot of room to maneuver with the curriculum; lots of strengths to build on but it still needs work.***

Specific lessons were identified by certain staff as needing further development however there were differing opinions about which these were. Some identified lessons were bullying, and peer-relationships. Although having a coordinator has helped with program continuity, at present there is not enough time available for staff to devote to teamwork. Each presenter brings different strengths, skills and experience to the position that could be shared with other WIN staff.

#### *Relationship with Teachers*

All of the program instructors agreed that the teacher plays a pivotal role in determining WIN's success or failure in their classroom. Teachers can send clear messages about the value of the program that the students inevitably respond to.

***I would go out to the schools in advance and meet the principals; meet the teachers and talk about the program... When I did that we had a really good relationship with the staff and the times where I didn't do that there appeared to be some difficulties in the roles and responsibilities of the classroom.***

One staff member found that when she effectively built relationships with the teachers and principals and made the expectations clear (both expectations of the teachers and what the teachers could expect) that the program was generally more successful.

It is not simply the attitude of the teacher that affects the class; it is the role they play during WIN's delivery as well. One staff member gave examples of teachers who were enthusiastic about the program before it began but they were either absent, or at times more disruptive than the students during the actual delivery. Frequently in these cases, the feedback from the students at the end of the program was negative.

***When it is imposed it is opposed... If the management, the principal or the board has directed that this happen in a classroom for a particular reason and the teacher isn't a part of that decision making process it is opposed.***

One staff member pointed out that one of the strongest influences on the teacher's attitude is whether or not they were part of the decision to introduce WIN in their class. Often it is the principal's or sometimes the board member's decision to initiate WIN.

### *School Environment*

One staff member felt that building a relationship with the teacher was not as important as the overall classroom climate and style of classroom management in determining the effectiveness of the delivery of the program.

Staff members emphasized that WIN functions best in an environment where open communication is encouraged, and where the roles and responsibilities of the students and teachers are clearly defined. There must be a foundation of co-operation and respect for others in the class, as well as a certain level of student maturity.

***In a culture where the students have been told about us, are excited about us and it is set up so that this is a reward and a wonderful program, its quite successful.***

The program is designed for the grade seven student's level of social development; it does not work well in grade six/seven split classes or behaviourally challenged classes.

In some less focused classes an hour is not enough to get through the activities and lessons, but increasing the time-frame of each class would likely not be feasible for teachers.

### *Adaptation*

The sections above illustrate WIN's ideal working conditions with regards to the teacher and the classroom environment. This raises the question of what happens if those conditions are not met. We noticed quite a discrepancy among staff members regarding whether WIN should have a standardized curriculum or one that is adaptable for various classes' needs. Some staff members say they do not adjust the program and others say they do.

Some staff felt an important strength of WIN's delivery is that it provides positive peer role models. Also, by giving the same information to everyone in the class it does not reinforce negative behaviours by targeting the 'bad' kids. No particular group is being targeted as different. Although the program is geared toward the average adolescent, it is still very beneficial to youth with less well developed social skills. The program creates a culture within the classroom in which all of the students are exposed to the same skills and language.

***We're trying to provide a curriculum that is standard. The individuals that are in the classroom are able to respond to the particular needs of that group and we do tailor it to what they're able to do. If we go into a class where bullying is a large issue than a lot of our focus and examples are around that issue.***

Some staff will adapt the program slightly, to accommodate for learning disabilities or ESL (English as a Second Language) students in the classes. Staff and teachers identify those needs as the program progresses.

In terms of adapting the program to suit the particular needs of a school, most staff agreed that this is not done. This issue will arise in several of the following sections of this report.

### 3. Students

The student feedback gathered in the focus groups and through written surveys was generally very positive. The students were very candid in expressing their opinions about the program and were specific about the improvements that could be made. An interesting finding was that there are consistent differences in the WIN program's acceptance and effectiveness levels in the different school systems. Generally, WIN has more success in Catholic schools than in the Public schools. Possible reasons for this will be examined in the case study sections. This section will describe the students' perspectives of the WIN program. The main text is written by the evaluators, while the comments in the blue text boxes come directly from the students.

#### *Acceptance*

Determining the level of acceptance of the WIN program from the students' perspectives is based on their enjoyment of the classes and their judgment of the value of the program. The difficulty of surveying this age group is that they are far from homogeneous in terms of their level of maturity.

Every student had a unique experience with the program depending on their stage of development, and their past and present life experiences. We found that different students took away different messages from the program. For example, one group of kids was particularly affected by the anti-bullying session, while

#### **General comments:**

*On a scale of one to ten I think it'd be about an eight. It was a pretty good program. They taught you about like communication and bullying. It was a good program.*

*I'd give it an eight or nine because it has helped me deal with my problems.*

*They should make it more appropriate to the age level. It's at about grade two now.*

*I think it was really good because it gave you a lot of information about like bullying and conflict resolution.*

*They should make it more interesting and realistic and upgrade it to our level.*

*Good program. It helped you deal with certain problems.*

*It kinda helped. It made people think more.*

*[They] told us why bullies are bullying and why they choose the victim; because they are weaker than them... and how to help the victim get through it.*

*[It's about] what you feel not how you're supposed to be.*


another group of kids barely mentioned that session. There are a few possible explanations for this. First, it is possible that the different classes who received WIN had very different needs for the program and therefore took away different emphases from it. Second, the discrepancy could be because different WIN instructors teach different schools. These two factors will be explored in more detail in the recommendations section. It appears that although students do take away individual messages from the program, they are taking away something. Although this is a positive indication of the program's success, the lack of uniformity makes it difficult to summarize the aggregate picture of the program's success.

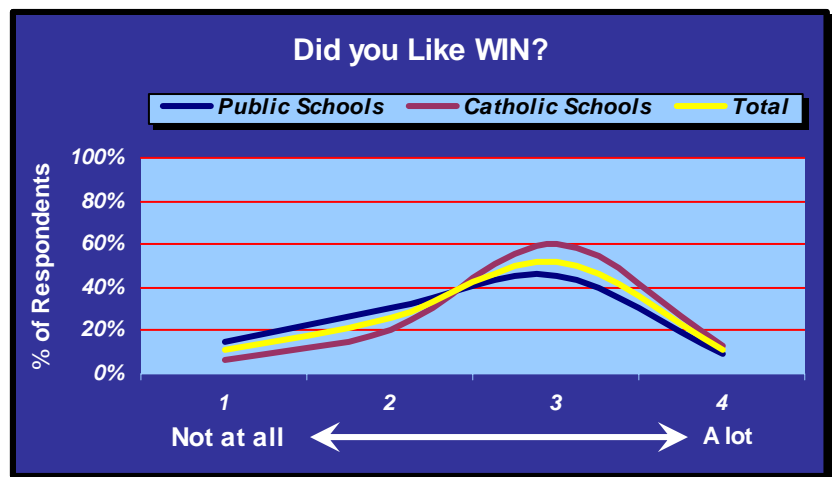
Table 1

| Did you like WIN? |            |        |     |       |
|-------------------|------------|--------|-----|-------|
|                   | 1          | 2      | 3   | 4     |
|                   | Not at all | ←————→ |     | A lot |
| Public            | 15%        | 31%    | 45% | 9%    |
| Catholic          | 7%         | 20%    | 60% | 13%   |
| Total             | 11%        | 26%    | 52% | 11%   |

Feedback from the first question of the written surveys (*Did you like WIN?*) matched the above responses. This data is presented in both table and graph formats. For a complete summary of the student survey results, see appendix E

Figure 1

In the focus group sessions, students were asked to compare the WIN program to an animal or an object. Their metaphors colorfully display their particular likes and dislikes about the program. 





***Dog - Because when we're doing the activities it's like we a puppy and we're playing.***

***Nightmare – It never goes away. It's always in your head. But you never come to think of using it. It's always in your head but you think about it once you're done arguing. You think "well, I could have used that"...***

***Leech- It gets stuck to you and doesn't go away. It might come out of your head a little bit sooner or later.***

***Book - Because sometimes when you read a book it gets boring and then exciting and stuff.***

***Cheetah - Because it went by so fast.***

***Turtle - Some of the activities were like a turtle because like every week they'd remind us. They'd take like 20 minutes just to remind us what we did. So that was kind of boring.***

***A Cup of Pepsi - Because like when you just pour it its all fizzy and exciting and stuff that's like the starting but like once you get to the middle [of the whole program] it gets flat and not very exciting.***

The method of instruction of the WIN program was a popular topic in the focus group sessions. Students were extremely enthusiastic about the activities (particularly the Lego) and the role-playing exercises. They agreed that it was the hands-on, experiential teaching technique that made the WIN program more enjoyable and more memorable than their other classes. The students were very adamant that more hands-on activities should be included.

***The Lego was awesome***

***There should be more role plays and more fun skits and stuff.***

***They taught us a lot of stuff but mostly we did paperwork. We learned something from it but didn't get any ideas that we didn't know already.***

***Made us feel old with all the paperwork – I still want to be a kid.***

***Less paperwork- we're not going to use it anyway.***

Students were equally frustrated with the paperwork as they were excited about the activities. Nearly every student interviewed showed dissatisfaction with the amount of surveys administered in the program. There was a general consensus that the activities were much more effective than the paperwork.

The students in one focus group session debated who the WIN program would and would not be beneficial to. They felt that it would more likely help a student who was moving to a new school than a student who had always been picked on and who was entrenched in their role. One student mentioned that he thought a kid without a lot of family support wouldn't get as much out of the program as others. This point was also addressed by one of the teachers interviewed and will be discussed in detail in a later section.

*This one girl I know, I think she gets picked on by the kids in her class because she just moved to a new school. She's called me and told me that she gets picked on... It might help her to be able to stand up and tell them she doesn't like it and not to pick on her any more.*

*I know this kid and he was going to a new school and the WIN program might help the kids who are picking on him. Because if they knew how the guy felt they might stop picking on him.*

*Maybe kids who aren't too close to anybody or to their families [wouldn't benefit]. They don't have anybody to talk to about what the WIN teaches. They just forget about it and keep doing what they do.*

*People who already know all the stuff and aren't bullies or anything [wouldn't benefit]. (Are there many people in your class like that?). Not really.*

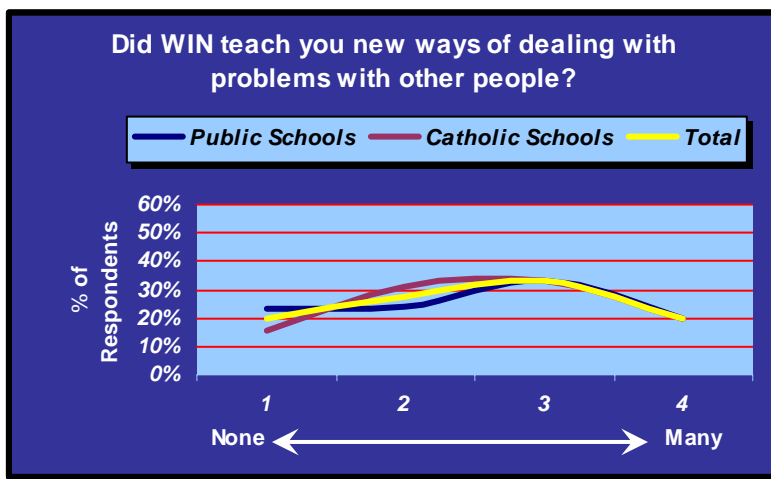
Effectiveness

Table 2

The results from question three of the written survey are mixed. It appears as though students' opinions are split on whether or not they learned new ways of dealing with problems with other people. There are some fundamental difficulties in asking this question because it expects the respondents to be aware of the impact WIN had on them and to be willing to admit it. Again, the Catholic schools show more positive results than the Public schools.

| Did WIN teach you new ways of dealing with problems with other people? |      |     |     |      |
|--|------|-----|-----|------|
|  | 1    | 2   | 3   | 4    |
|  | None |     |     | Many |
| Public   | 23%  | 24% | 33% | 20%  |
| Catholic   | 16%  | 31% | 33% | 20%  |
| Total  | 20%  | 28% | 33% | 20%  |

Figure 2



In the focus groups, students mentioned that “quick fixes”, “clear, concise, complete” and “think before you do” were techniques they have used outside of the WIN classes. They also demonstrated a greater understanding of the nature of bullying and expressed that they are now more sympathetic to people who bully and to people who are bullied.



*I always need to use that [clear, concise, complete]. But the WIN formula no one will use that.*

*Like if you're going to go say something than you think about it first because it might be mean or something. Since WIN - It helps make me think a lot more. I did before but not as much.*

*They said that bullies usually have problems going on around them and they're usually sad and they take it out on other people. Oh and they taught us about displacement.*

*We use WIN sometimes but the formula is not realistic.*

*I think the win formula is kind of innocent you know, kind of like a tattletale. I think if you used that toward someone who was bullying he would think hey this guy is just soft. I don't think it would work. I think a bully would make more fun of them.*

*I tried that once but like I almost got beat up. 'cause they didn't have the patience to listen and then they just, like, started chasing me and I just ran away. I've seen my cousin do it but he kinda spiced it up a bit. He was in grade seven last year and he did it [WIN] and he tried to use it [the WIN formula] and the guy like stopped bullying him. The first line was the same, but after, the second line was like "it gets me mad." I can't remember exactly what he said but he made it sound pretty, like, spicy... it's probably an improvement because if there was - no offence to anybody - a geek trying to do that to a bully and trying to use that solution, I don't think the bully would listen because it's kinda, like, a dull line.*

One of the most frequently discussed topics in the focus group sessions was the WIN formula. The WIN formula is a set of phrases students are taught to use to communicate their feelings (“When you... I feel... I need...”). Students felt that it is not realistic for solving problems with peers. However, they did see the value in the message that the WIN formula conveys. The fault of the formula, they felt, was the “geeky” language. They felt that if they tried to use it, they would be more likely to get “beat up” or bullied. Students were very persistent that the language should be changed. Some suggestions for how to change the language are included in the recommendations section of this report.

Table 3

The fifth question on the written survey (*Have you used what WIN taught you outside of the WIN classes? “When you... I feel... I need...”*) also reflects students’ apprehensions with using the WIN formula. The question was originally designed to assess how often

| Have you used what WIN taught you outside of the WIN classes? (“When you...I feel...I need...”) |       |     |     |        |
|---|-------|-----|-----|--------|
|   | 1     | 2   | 3   | 4      |
|   | Never | ← → |     | Always |
| Public  | 59%   | 21% | 18% | 2%     |
| Catholic  | 65%   | 24% | 9%  | 3%     |
| Total   | 61%   | 22% | 14% | 2%     |

students use the many WIN program techniques. Unfortunately, the question as we phrased it may have caused students to interpret it as how often they use the WIN formula. Either way, the results show that the majority of students are not consciously using the techniques. We feel this is largely attributed to the inappropriate language of the formula for this age group.

The students were asked if they could think of a specific example of the WIN program helping them or one of their classmates. There were mixed answers to this question.

***Someone I know was being bullied and stood up to the bully and now the bully is down here because they got confronted by the victim and now the victim is all the way at the top, higher than the bully because everyone knows if that person gets bullied again, that person will stand up to them.***

***The person did take the WIN program but the person still gets picked on.***

Table 4

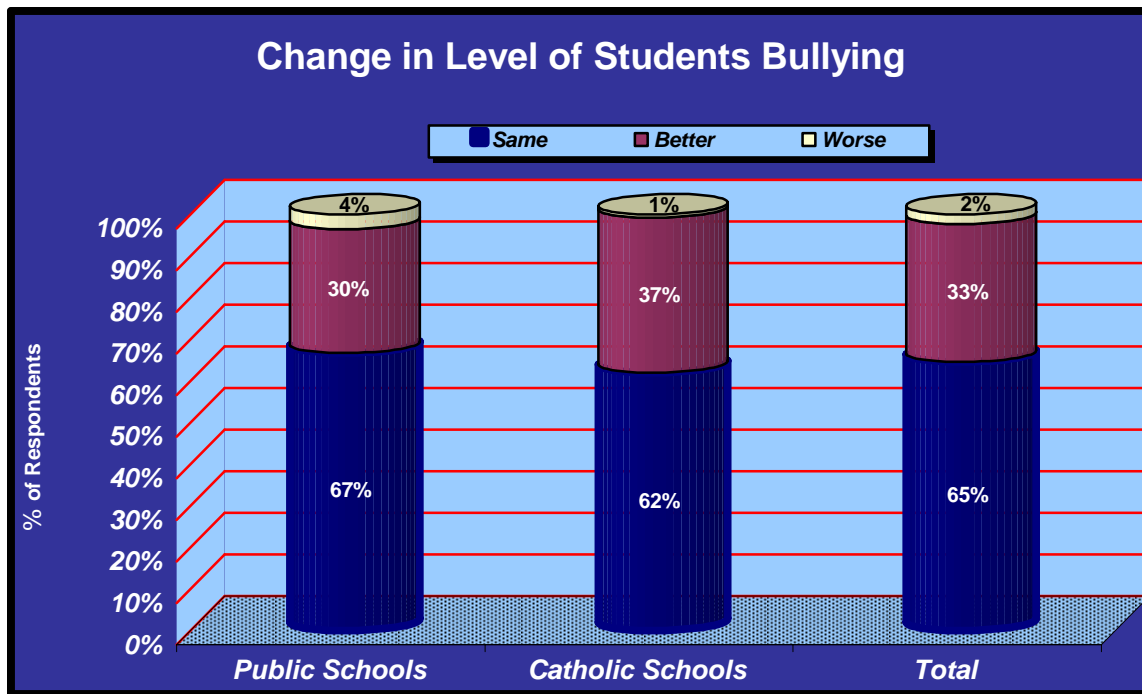
| Change Since WIN                       |       |      |        |
|--|-------|------|--------|
|  | Worse | Same | Better |
| Fighting in the school-yard            | 3%    | 81%  | 17%    |
| Classmates' respect for each other     | 3%    | 75%  | 22%    |
| Students bullying others               | 2%    | 65%  | 33%    |
| Students being bullied                 | 2%    | 73%  | 26%    |
| Ability to solve problems with parents | 3%    | 79%  | 18%    |
| Ability to solve problems with teacher | 3%    | 85%  | 12%    |
| Ability to solve problems with friends | 2%    | 79%  | 19%    |

The second section of the written survey asked students to compare different aspects of their lives from before the WIN program with those same aspects after WIN. The large majority of students felt there was no change, but a significant number of respondents recognized improvements. A small percentage of students documented a decline in certain areas. An important question to consider is how much of the change in a student's life can be attributed to the program. As one

teacher pointed out, adolescents are at a stage where *everything* is changing and it is therefore very difficult to pinpoint what has influenced them and to what degree. Another important consideration about this data is that it is very difficult for the respondent to be reflective about how they acted 10 weeks ago, or in some cases seven months ago.

The most significant improvement since the WIN program had to do with the frequency of students bullying others.

Figure 3



#### *Students' Recommendations*

The students' feedback about WIN was generally very positive. They liked the program and found it useful but pointed out there could be some improvements. They felt that if WIN made these improvements the program's acceptance and effectiveness levels would probably increase. First and foremost, they want more activities and less paper work. Secondly, they would like the techniques, particularly the WIN formula, to be more realistic for them to use. Some suggestions for additional program topics were also made. In general, the WIN program is very well thought of by students.

*More about feelings.... Because dealing with your feeling is just as important as dealing with bullying because if you don't deal with your feelings you might turn into a bully. So you have to, like, deal with your feelings in a certain way so that you don't become someone who bullies people around.*

*There should be more about peer pressure. There's so much more peer pressure than our parents had to deal with [drugs and alcohol] everyone has to try something eventually...*

*They could change the WIN formula to make it a bit more spicy.*

## 4. Teachers

We conducted three in-depth interviews with teachers and one with a principal. We collected written surveys from nine teachers to assess their level of acceptance of the WIN program and how effective they perceive the lessons and techniques to be. The main text of this section is written by the evaluators while the comments in the blue text boxes come directly from the teachers.

The feedback from the teachers was generally very positive and the suggestions on the whole were constructive. The teachers and staff shared many opinions regarding areas of the program that could be improved. The surveys and in-depth interviews produced some very insightful ideas to increase teachers' acceptance of the program and facilitate its incorporation into the classroom. They will be discussed in detail in the recommendations section of this report.

### *Acceptance*

All of the teachers surveyed believe the goals of the program are important for their students' social development. However, not all teachers agreed that the program as it exists is achieving its stated goals. Some teachers appear to have had a much better experience with the program than others. WIN staff indicated that WIN corresponds very well with certain styles of teaching and discipline and not well with others. This is certainly evident in some cases.

Many of the teachers appreciated the opportunity the program provided for their students to explore and express issues that they otherwise would not discuss as a group. All of the teachers from the separate school board referred to the congruence of WIN with the themes they cover in their religion class (exploring values and friendship etc.) and how well the two curricula reinforce one another. Some teachers indicated that it raises age-appropriate issues, and teaches (through hands-on activities) many different techniques for solving problems.

***Any additional time spent on interpersonal skills and self-esteem is a great thing.***

***Bullying and self-acceptance are a part of every teen's life.***

***There is nothing cutting edge [in the WIN program] there are so many great learning models based on multiple intelligences.***

***I ended up feeling so frustrated with the lost opportunity that I just switched off [during the classes], however I reinforced it afterwards.***

Only one survey conveyed a negative overall impression of the program. The student surveys from this class showed comparable results to the opinions of the teacher. This is possibly an example of the teacher's negative reaction to the program influencing the students' levels of acceptance and consequently the program's effectiveness.

### *Effectiveness*

Again, the teachers expressed varying responses about the degree of WIN's effectiveness in their classes. Teachers widely agreed that it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of WIN on their students because one cannot tell how much of the teaching is internalized.

WIN staff indicated that the program is much more successful in classes where the teacher reinforces the lessons taught during the week. Evidently, this reinforcement is facilitated by the existing religious curriculum, which deals with many similar themes to WIN. This appears to be more difficult in the Public system, but still possible. Two teachers (one from the Catholic system and one from the Public system) said they have carried over the conflict resolution theme when discussing current events, specifically the war in Iraq, with their students. Another focused on carrying over the themes of respecting others' opinions.

### *Curriculum and Delivery*

Some of the strengths of WIN's delivery that the teachers recognized were that the instructors were interested in kids and their feelings, projected enthusiasm, had a good manner with the children, were firm but fair, established rules and expectations and stuck with them, and that the classroom management was excellent. The activities were highlighted as a strongpoint of the delivery of the material, however it was suggested that incorporating more would improve the program.

One of the weaknesses identified was that the instructors need to use more strategies to engage all the students because not all the kids are participating or listening. Also, teachers felt that they were not picking up on the kids who are having difficulties fitting in.

Two teachers commented that they would like to see WIN taught more frequently each week. For the most part, however, teachers are having difficulty finding time within the standardized Ontario curriculum requirements to spare ten hours even for a program they consider valuable. This issue will be addressed as one of the major recommendations to emerge from this evaluation.

***While I know that ten weeks are needed to cover the program it's hard to free up ten hours in an already crowded [curriculum].***

The curriculum itself received mixed reviews largely depending on the particular needs level of each class. Several teachers indicated that some of the material and the surveys were beyond the capacities of the students with learning disabilities to grasp. On the other hand, many teachers appreciated the issues that WIN raises and the way in which they are presented.

***It was over the heads of some students, especially the ones who could really use it. Simplify the activities for those who have difficulty reading. Many of the weaker students are ones that need this program, but had difficulty understanding things.***

Given that there is one staff member who facilitates WIN in every class to ensure consistency, the discrepancy in teacher experiences with WIN is possibly indicative of an issue other than a difference in delivery or instruction. The teachers identified very different issues facing their classes and expressed a range of opinions about how well the program met its stated goals within the context of those issues. From our limited interactions with several of the classes we noticed a great disparity in maturity levels and classroom cultures. Therefore it follows that presenting a uniform program to groups of students that are characteristically distinct will unavoidably produce inconsistent outcomes. In the Recommendations section of this report we will propose suggestions for how to address this concern.

## 5. Case Study #1

The opinions and information presented in this case study are based on a focus group session, an in-depth interview with the classroom teacher and an in-depth interview with a Kinark staff-member. The main text of this section is written by the evaluators while the comments in the blue text boxes come directly from the various WIN stakeholders.

This study is of a small, Catholic school on the outskirts of Peterborough. It is located in a lower-middle to working-class neighbourhood. The school serves a relatively homogenous community in terms of ethnicity and socio-economic class. There is only one grade seven class in this school.

The participating class is quite small with approximately twenty-four grade seven students. We observed that this class did not seem as mature as the other classes we interacted with. This class had the WIN program from January to March of this year.

A Kinark staff member remembered that this was an especially loud and challenging class in the beginning. They had difficulty making it through the transitions from one activity or lesson to the next, and challenged the material frequently in the first few weeks. However, by the end the program was quite successful. After a few weeks, the students were more focused despite the teacher's unsupportive role throughout the delivery of the program.

***Kinark staff member:  
If the norm is for disorganization  
and a loud, less cohesive group  
then they struggle with the  
transitions... They also struggle  
with the curriculum.***

According to Kinark staff, the teacher was openly very supportive of the program but absent most of the time. The teacher said that when he found out what the program was all about he agreed wholeheartedly that his class could benefit from it. He indicated that his preparation by the staff before-hand was only a very brief sketch of what kind of material they would be covering. He felt that this preparation was



**Students:**

*Yeah, how you handle anger. The way you deal with problems, stress and things like that, some people in our class are really aggressive.*

*Everybody learned a lot about themselves just from doing the surveys because they didn't know*

adequate, although his enthusiasm for the program is in contrast with his lack of presence in the classroom. This indicates that the expectations of the teacher's role may have been ambiguous in this case.

The teacher enjoyed the program and felt that his students enjoyed it as well. He was concerned about the way his students would react to the program because of their age and maturity level. He felt that the activities really helped in holding their attention.

**Teacher:**

*The kids are more receptive to something like that and I noticed that they looked forward to it every Monday.*

WIN reinforces the 'Fully Alive' section of the Catholic curriculum so the carry over during the week happened naturally for this teacher. He felt that the students' reaction to the topics covering friendship and values were not satisfactory although the delivery was quite good. He spent time after the classes reinforcing these lessons.

He considers the most serious issues in his class to be peer pressure and lack of parental attention for certain students. He sees the later as a problem resulting from the many single-parent families having little time left at the end of the workday to spend with their kids. He felt that the program successfully addressed some of the important issues his class is facing.

**Teacher:**

*They've softened a bit, I don't think they've mellowed out but they have softened. I think they've become more appreciative of differences among them. They're more open-minded.*

In reaction to questions about the effectiveness of the WIN program in his class he replied that it is difficult to judge the effect of WIN although there has been a subtle change in attitudes in the classroom. He pointed out that the instructors shared some broader experiences with the students that added relevance to the lessons that textbook learning cannot offer.

The students demonstrated their overall acceptance and enjoyment of the program through the focus group session. Their responses to questions about the material echoed many of the other students of the program, regarding the WIN formula; that it does not seem like a natural or effective way to solve conflicts with their peers.

The students expressed an improvement in their levels of self-awareness especially through the anger management exercises.

Overall, WIN seemed to have a high degree of both acceptance and effectiveness in this school. It appears that there was a great need for the program in this particular classroom and it met its objectives despite some difficulty with the delivery. From the perspective of the WIN staff their entire lesson plan was difficult to get through. Even though the teacher was enthusiastic about WIN, perhaps he would have been more helpful during the delivery of the program if his role had been more clearly defined. It seems that this group has still benefited from it immensely.

## 6. Case Study #2

This case study is based on the student surveys, a focus group session, a one-on-one interview with the teacher, and a Kinark staff member. The main text of this section is written by the evaluators while the comments in the blue text boxes come directly from the various WIN stakeholders.

The school is a small sized, urban-based, Catholic school. It is located in a middle-class neighbourhood and it serves a fairly homogeneous community in terms of ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds. The school has a very well organized, disciplined environment, and a strong culture of respect. There is one grade seven class in this school.

The class that participated in the WIN program has approximately 26 students. It is not a split grade class. No students in the class have obvious special needs. The WIN program was delivered to this class from September to December of 2002.

The WIN program was a tremendous success in this school. The students, teacher, and Kinark staff all reported a positive experience.

***Kinark staff member:***

***They were very receptive. The school, the teacher and the class were very focused. They were great; very mature. [WIN] ran very well. We were able to get through the material and get through the transitions quickly. Students got through the tasks easily. There was obviously good carry over through the week by the teacher.***

Three factors set this school's experience with WIN above most others. First, the students had a strong foundation of emotional and inter-personal skills. The teacher, students, and Kinark staff all attribute this to the existing religious curriculum in the Catholic schools system. Secondly, the class is not a high needs class. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, this class has an exceptional teacher who actively participated during the delivery of the program and who makes considerable efforts to integrate WIN lessons into his teachings.



**Teacher:**

*My class really liked the hands-on role playing stuff. And they really got a chance to sometimes be silly but also to act out a lot of stuff. I think they were very open to it that way. They were also very good at providing answers. They're a good class that way... They reacted well to it.*

As one WIN staff member stated: "If WIN is imposed, it is opposed." In this case, the

**Teacher:**

*Ultimately it came down to me: whether or not we could use the class time, if we could give up that hour a week. I didn't have any problem with that. I just made some changes in our programming and our schedule... It was my final say...I always jump at the opportunity for the kids to have anything like that.*

program was not imposed on the teacher. It was completely his decision for his class to participate. As a result, there was not the same degree of resentment from the teacher as will be illustrated in case study #4. Although he did not know what to expect from the program until several weeks in, he was enthusiastic about it because he trusted Kinark's excellent reputation.

The teacher felt that there were not any clear expectations set for his role while WIN was being delivered. He did what felt natural to him which was, fortunately, the ideal role for the teacher to play. He actively listened to the sessions and participated when he was needed. He was interested in the program and how to gain the most from it. During the program and since it has ended, he continually reminds the students of

**Teacher:**

*I think it's important for the teacher to be there to take this all in. Because they could build upon the stuff they did in class whether a situation comes up in the school yard, they can stop it and say "okay remember what we did this week in class, how can that apply to what we just did here?" If they're off in the staffroom they wouldn't be able to seize on that teachable moment... There are a lot of teachers out there who see this as an opportunity to get their stuff and do an hour of extra work. And everybody could sure use an hour of extra work. But again, I was interested and that's why I decided to stay and be an active listener and a participant when they needed or if they needed an example. But for the most part I just liked to sit back and listen and watch and observe*

what they learned in WIN. He has the ability to do this because of the role he chose to play while the program was being delivered.

This teacher's attentiveness and contribution unconsciously communicated a message to the students that the WIN material is important. It was clearly evident in the focus group session as well as in the written surveys that this class's experiences with WIN were more positive than the average. The classroom teacher played a big role in this success.

## 7. Case Study #3

This case study is based on a focus groups session, the student surveys, an in-depth interview with the teacher and an in-depth interview with a staff member.

The school is small, urban-based and in the Public system. It serves a fairly homogenous community in terms of ethnicity and socio-economic backgrounds. There is one grade seven class and one six-seven split class.

The class that participated in the case study has approximately 26 grade seven students. It is not a split class. The class is not an identifiably high-needs class although there are a few difficult personalities that presented challenges to the program's delivery. WIN was delivered to the class from January to March of this year.

***Kinark staff member:***

***The maturity level of the class and the teacher's focus are the determining factors [in WIN's success]. If there is follow through than the program is more successful. Many teachers struggle because it isn't in line with their way of teaching.***

The class climate was challenging for the WIN process but by the time it was completed the teacher, students and Kinark staff reported positive overall experiences. The classroom teacher was very receptive to the program and had a strong background in social work. She reinforced the lessons between weeks and actively listened and participated in WIN sessions.

The teacher sent a clear and consistent message of the value of WIN but some of the students were initially reluctant to give it a chance. Three students refused to sign the participant agreement the first week. Two of the students eventually joined and were participating actively by week four; however one student was still very resistant. The staff took the time to contact this student's parents to discuss the program with them. By the end of the program's delivery the student was present at times and according to the teacher, appeared to be having a positive experience.

The students in this class do not have the same foundation of emotional and interpersonal skills that are reinforced in the Catholic schools' curriculum, although the teacher identifies them as "a very caring and mature group". She pointed out that many of her students did not know what a value was prior to WIN.

***Teacher:***

***WIN drew attention to that idea - what is a value and how does it impact on your choices.***

Overall, the teacher was very positive about WIN. She indicated that bullying, teasing and a lack of respect for others, are the biggest issues the class faces and remarked

that there has been a change in the classroom dynamic surrounding these issues since WIN.

**Teacher:**

*You hear people saying 'that's not helpful', 'that's disrespectful', or 'please be quiet someone wants to talk'. You hear them standing up for what they believe is right.*

*They did a very good job of delivering the*

The teacher felt that there could have been more dialogue between teachers and instructors concerning class discipline and dealing with specific children's behaviours. She felt that the instructors assumed that they could handle the discipline on their own but that certain kids need the teacher to step in. She added that their strengths as instructors of WIN stems from their training as child and youth workers. They are approachable, patient, organized and able to connect with students.

**Teachers:**

*They used a lot of relevant examples for this age group which is important. There shouldn't be a generation gap because the kids really resist that. They need to know that you understand where they're coming from. [The instructors] were fun and*

From our limited interaction during the focus group session we noticed that the students from this class were remarkably mature. They were very open and respectful and on a few occasions self-disciplined when one group member was not paying attention or distracting others. Their feedback about the program was at times intended as criticism but in fact demonstrated the positive impact of the program on them individually and as a group.

The anger-management lesson clearly had a substantial impact on many of these students. They spoke at length about what they had learned about their own styles of dealing with anger and their surprise at the results of the self-analysis.

The teacher has noticed that the students have continued to make reference to the concepts that WIN taught, including the formula. Although she observed that they frequently use the formula in a joking manner she feels that it has provoked a thought process that has made them aware of their inner feelings, which they were not aware of before.

The students recommended that the WIN program begin in earlier grades and continue every year although they stressed that it must be adapted to each age level. They felt that it was below their grade level. However, it is important to keep in mind that his was an exceptionally mature class.

**Students:**

*Have it in every grade. These are things we need to learn but make it more appropriate to the age levels.*

*Make it more interesting and realistic and upgrade it to our age level. And use more props.*

The teacher's interest in the classes and reinforcement of the lessons during the week demonstrated her support of the program to her students.

**Teacher:**

*It is a really good start, a great foundation and I hope it can continue because we don't have the time to spend on these issues in an isolated way.*

## 8. Case Study #4

This case study is based on classroom observations, a one-on-one interview with the principal, and an interview with a staff member. The blue boxes in this section contain comments from the principal.

The school is a large, urban-based, public school. It is located in a lower-income neighbourhood and it serves a diverse community in terms of ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds. In the words of the principal, the school is “very needy”. It is often in a state of chaos and, as the WIN staff found, there is no foundation for a school culture of respect.

Three classes in this school participated in the WIN program. They all have approximately 38 students. Several students in these classes have identified learning difficulties. The WIN program was delivered in January of this year.

The teachers in this school felt that the program had been imposed on them. The principal had received an email from a person at the Board of Education saying: “WIN is coming to your school. Pick the dates”. Because, she had previously had a great experience with WIN in a different school, she accepted the offer and left the details for the teachers to arrange. Unfortunately, the teachers were not used to having this type of program in the school and were not prepared to handle the difficult issues it raised. Although the administration was in support of the program, the teachers were resistant and outwardly resentful from the start. The teachers’ negative attitude towards the program may have sent a message to the students that the WIN program was not important. No efforts were made to encourage students to be open to WIN.

Classroom behaviour was an issue at the school and as a result the instructors were only able to accomplish approximately 15% of their material per lesson. Students often came late to class and talked amongst themselves, ironically, even during the lesson on active listening. The classroom teacher treated the period as a spare and did not participate or help with student discipline. Also, persistent noise outside the classroom affected the lesson inside.

*I made the assumption that my teachers would be able to handle it. I knew the students would have some difficulty. And my assumptions about the teachers weren't correct... My kids are unskilled; my teachers are unskilled so we need to work on that first. And I don't really think they gave the program a fair chance.*

*The staff were just not prepared how to work with it. So I asked the question: Have you had a program like this before in the school? And the answer was no. They're not used to having outsiders come in and talk about some really sensitive subjects.*

**Principal:**

*I think here the piece that fell was the school staffing piece... Kinark showed me why I need some culture change in this school. So there are some positives. We weren't ready for Kinark but it helped us get ready for the racism program. It also helped clarify the kinds of needs my staff and students have. This was not a failure of program or any one group.*

The Kinark staff felt that the school did not have a culture that was conducive to supporting the WIN program and withdrew from the school.

***Even if they help one child with the way they deal with conflict, or one more child comes forward, or another child steps in, or something, somewhere along the lines this learning is going to kick in and help.***

During the observed classes, it appeared that the program was affecting some students. They seemed to enjoy the activities and some students were able to understand the concepts and apply them. Perhaps an alternative to dropping the program could have been to reduce the amount of content to be covered and concentrate on what could be achieved.

The cancellation of this class raises questions of who this program is intended for. Evidently this school does not promote the values and skills WIN strives to teach (for example, communication, respect, active listening, etc.). If the school does not deal with these issues, perhaps there is a greater need for Kinark to be there. By contrast, in a classroom where students are actively participating and already know all the right answers, it appears as though the kids are gaining these values and skills from other sources. WIN staff should perhaps consider who needs the program the most and what the best way to reach them is.

***We NEED WIN. We need programs like WIN. There is no doubt about it in this school... It's a really good program. And my kids at this school really really really need it.***

## Section V: Recommendations

### 1. Introduction

We have outlined many recommendations for the program based on our findings. We would first like to emphasize our belief in the value of this program. The following recommendations are simply to give Kinark many ideas to work with or areas to focus their efforts in the future development of the program.

All three groups of stakeholders involved in this program made recommendations during our in-depth interviews to either improve the existing program or develop it further. Their suggestions combined with our own are presented in this section. The recommendations covered below include mostly minor changes to or extension of the structure of the program to facilitate a deeper acceptance of WIN by the students, classroom teachers and school administrations so that the program can be more effective for the people it serves.

Ideally, the program will be expanded to include all grade seven students in the region and eventually include programs in the earlier grades as well.

## 2. Program

### *Continuation of Program*

Time constraints within the Ontario curriculum is one of the main impediments to teachers reinforcing the WIN material between classes. A simple solution is to provide visual aids such as posters (ex. illustrating and listing the listening skills) to put up on classroom walls, which will continue to reinforce lessons beyond the WIN program.

A second suggestion is to provide a follow-up booklet for teachers so that they can continue encouraging the classroom culture created by WIN. It could include more time-intensive, academic activities relating WIN themes to the standard curriculum, for example:

- Writing activities
- Skits, plays and drama activities
- Character studies in curriculum novels that address WIN themes

Several students, teachers and WIN staff made reference to the long-term expansion of the program in order to introduce character development to children beginning in the earliest years of school. The program would have to be adapted to address age-specific issues of child-development and learning capacities.

### *Integrate into Curriculum*

#### **Teacher:**

***If a teacher is willing and the resources were available it's very easy to incorporate into your regular class. If you have to make up all of the materials yourself, you aren't going to do it but it can be very directly related to Language. It would be beneficial for teachers because we could carry it on in class without having to reinvent the wheel by***

The themes that the WIN program builds upon relate very well to the language and literature components of the standardized Ontario curriculum in both the Public and Catholic systems as well the Fully Alive curriculum in the Catholic system. Due to the pressure of meeting all of the required elements of the Ontario curriculum, many teachers have faced difficulty finding ten hours within the term to allocate to WIN. Connecting WIN to the curriculum could definitely ease the process of finding time to incorporate it into the class and improve the levels of acceptance of the program with teachers. Additionally, a WIN program that is tied to the standardized Ontario



curriculum would be easily transferable, and thus easily marketable, to anywhere in the province if the program expanded.

At the bottom of a student's report card is a space that the teacher must evaluate the student's ability to cooperate and work in groups. This is one area that the WIN program could assist the teacher in providing an opportunity to assess their students. One teacher suggested that this assessment could be lightly based on self-evaluation or peer evaluation.

The skills WIN aims to develop and improve in its students, parallel some of the objectives of the Healthy Living and Language curricula. A student's achievement in Language is evaluated by their level of skill in communication, reasoning, and organization.

The Ontario curriculum outlines specific expectations in oral and visual communication from grade seven students. For more details about the curriculum's expectations, see Appendix F. The expectations most relevant to WIN are:<sup>2</sup>

**Overall expectations:**

- Ask questions and discuss different aspects of ideas in order to clarify their thinking;
- Listen to and communicate related ideas, and narrate real and fictional events in a sequence;
- Express and respond to a range of ideas and opinions concisely, clearly and appropriately;
- Contribute and work constructively in groups;
- Regularly incorporate new vocabulary into discussions and presentations;

**Specific expectations:**

- **In groups** – Express ideas and opinions confidently but without trying to dominate discussion;
- Analyze factors that contribute to the success or lack of success, of a discussion;
- Listen and respond constructively to alternative ideas or viewpoints;
- Identify some of the ways in which non-verbal communication techniques can affect audiences;
- Use analogies and comparisons to develop and clarify ideas;

<sup>2</sup> Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, Ontario Curriculum, Languages, Grades 1-8, 1997. (p.9, 46)

Activities can also be developed to meet some of the requirements for the written component of the Language program. The curriculum also provides standards for assessing achievement levels of student's knowledge and skills; an example of which can also be found in Appendix F.

Some objectives of the Healthy Living curriculum parallel WIN's objectives as well. The Ministry of Education expectations for grade seven students in the Healthy Living program are:

- Use effective communication skills (e.g. Refusal skills, active listening) to deal with various relationships and situations;
- Demonstrate strategies (e.g. Saying no, walking away) that can be used to counter pressures to smoke, drink and take drugs, and identify healthy alternatives to drug use.

A willing teacher could be involved in further program development initiatives; especially an initiative that would tie the program to the Ontario curriculum (One teacher implied that she would be willing to participate in such a project). The expertise in teaching philosophy, techniques and standards would provide a perfect compliment to the expertise in character development and social work held by the Child and Youth Workers.

#### *Joint-Design with Teacher*

Another finding of this research was that WIN appears differently in different classes. The WIN program staff mentioned that they felt it was important to offer a uniform program. While some uniformity is good, there may be significant benefits to offering a program that is slightly varied depending on the needs and abilities of the class.

In terms of classroom needs, the students seemed more likely to absorb the material that was most relevant to them at that point in time. For example, some kids gained a lot from the bullying sessions while other gained more from the communication sessions. It may be beneficial to put an emphasis or a concentration on a particular topic depending on the class's needs. This should be done in consultation with the teacher. This slight adaptation of the program could really help increase the teacher's acceptance of WIN. And the added relevance to students' lives could help increase their acceptance of WIN.

In terms of ability, as seen in the specific case studies, certain classes are better equipped to handle a program like WIN. A defining characteristic of the age group the program is dealing with is that there is a wide range of levels of maturity. While one school found the program too juvenile and basic, another found it too sophisticated. In order to meet these varying needs, there must be room within the program for adjustment.



One possible way of pursuing this is to develop a wide base of activities to draw from that address the same topics but with varying levels of complexity and depth. The teacher and the instructors could decide together which activities to follow in a particular class. Designing several activities with the same goals and objectives preserves the uniformity of the program but also offers some flexibility for meeting a particular class's needs.

### *Parental Involvement*

The Ontario Curriculum guidelines identify the necessity of involving parents in everything taught in the classroom. An informative letter is sent home to parents, that explains the program but more should be done to establish supportive partnerships with parents to reinforce WIN's methods at home.

#### **Teacher:**

***Our philosophy with respect to education is based on a triad, between the student, the teacher and the parent(s). You cannot deliver any type of program, in my opinion with one of the corners missing. The parents have to be aware of this program so they can help at home.***

***Otherwise the [children] will do whatever they know pleases the teacher or whoever is delivering the program and then turn the page. When they get it from all ends they recognize the value.***

***Many of these kids can't approach their parents because no lines of communication have ever been established.***

One suggestion is to provide a booklet that kids could take home to work through with their parents. A second suggestion is to offer a less structured 'parent night' at the school that would teach the parents about WIN so that they could reinforce the same techniques and themes in the home. The event could also provide parents with techniques to help them better understand and improve communication with their teenage children – an age group they may be dealing with for the first time.

#### **Teacher:**

***A lot of parents of this group don't have a teenager yet and they have a lot of apprehension about it. A lot of them do want strategies. They come to teachers often and say 'I just don't know what to do' and we aren't trained in that sense.***

### **3. Delivery**

#### *WIN Formula*

**When I have to use the WIN formula, I feel vulnerable. I need an alternative formula to use with my peers!**

Efforts should be made to make the WIN formula more realistic for students to use with their peers. As illustrated in Findings section, students feel the language of the formula is “geeky”. A more realistic variation of the formula could be: “Hey man, that’s not cool. When you mess around with me like that, it gets me down. It’d be awesome if you could back off a bit.” However, what is most important is that the students learn to use the first line to express the problem, the second to express their feeling, and the third to express the solution. With this understanding, the students will be able to adapt the formula’s language to suit their needs.

After the students are comfortable with the concept of the original formula, instructors should consider building on the existing lesson by offering suggestions for how to adapt the formula to different audiences. Students should recognize that the original formula may be very effective for solving conflicts with adults, while variations of it could work better for solving conflicts with their peers.

*Clear Teacher Role*

One of the main findings of our research was that the classroom teacher has a tremendous impact on the acceptance and effectiveness of the program. The feedback gathered in the written surveys and in the interviews indicated that teachers are often unprepared for the program to come in to their class and unclear about what their role is expected to be. More teacher involvement needs to be facilitated and clearer expectations of their role should be communicated.

A formal meeting between the WIN instructors and classroom teachers must be held a few days before the start of the program. At that meeting the teacher should be made aware of how much they influence the success of the program. Perhaps if they are made aware of their impact they will make a greater effort to aid the program. Secondly, teachers must be made aware of what type of role contributes most effectively to the program. Specifically, agreements should be reached regarding roles for behaviour management, student supervision, and teacher participation. We feel that if the role of the teacher is more thoroughly discussed and perhaps written down in a pamphlet, the teacher will be more likely to fulfill this role.

A more involved preparation period would not only clarify the teacher role but also create partnerships between teachers and staff. Teachers certainly have important insights that could benefit the instructors before they enter a classroom, regarding specific behaviours and methods of class management. The staff would of course have to approach situation with specific questions that would convey that the program cannot be recreated for each class but that examples and exercises can be chosen to ensure the appropriateness of the program for the maturity level of the class. A one-

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size fits all program is definitely more efficient but cannot assume that type of program will necessarily meet the needs of all of the program's beneficiaries.

*Involvement of a Young Person*

A particularly insightful student in one of the focus groups suggested the involvement of a young person in the instruction of the WIN program.

If WIN staff members are interested in pursuing this initiative, there are several possible ways of implementing the involvement of a young person. First, a student from a local high school could be selected from a pool of applicants to come as a guest speaker and answer specific questions from students. The high school student could count the WIN experience towards their community service requirement in the Ontario high school curriculum.

Another possibility would be for a Kinark staff member to co-facilitate the program with a qualified student from Fleming College or Trent University (possibly in the Education program). The student could count the WIN experience towards either their Education work placement or as a Trent Centre for Community Based Education project. This could help ensure the quality of student's performance as they would be eager to help Kinark as well as do well in their course.

One benefit of pursuing the idea of having a young person involved is that the grade seven students may look up to the young person as a role model and therefore be more likely to accept that the material they're learning as valuable and, most importantly, "cool". Students in the focus group were very positive about their WIN instructors and during our observations it became strikingly obvious that the instructors have done an outstanding job with the delivery of the program. But adolescents are incredibly pre-occupied by image; of themselves and of others; that a young person may offer more legitimacy simply by being the right age in the eyes of the grade seven students.

A possible benefit to forming a partnership with Trent or Fleming and using one of their students as a co-facilitator is that students are eager volunteers. If the quality of the program can be maintained, this could be a financially worthwhile initiative.

**Student:**

***No offense to the ladies, because they were really good. But they could get younger people; like people who are like closer to the bullying... younger people because they know how the bullying goes and so they can talk to you a bit more about it and explain it a bit better to you.... like people maybe in high school or around that age. Because that's when usually they say the bullying happens. So if you're out of high school and in university or college... Like that age because they know what happens.***

The potential challenges of pursuing this initiative are maintaining the quality of instruction of the program and coordinating the logistics. In terms of maintaining

quality of instruction, a lot of effort would have to be made to find a candidate with both the ability to instruct and the right image. Secondly, the selected person would have to be trained. Finally, that person would have to figure out logistics such as scheduling and transportation.

With some creative thinking these obstacles could be overcome and the benefits of this initiative could be achieved.

#### **4. Administration**

##### *Full time WIN Staff*

A full-time WIN coordinator is greatly needed. It is unrealistic for a coordinator to be able to fully meet the needs of the program if they have another full-time job within the organization. A full-time staff member would provide needed continuity in delivery and curriculum between all WIN classes and would be able to facilitate further team building and curriculum development. Of course, further funding is needed for a full-time position. We hope a full-time WIN position will be a priority if enough funds are raised.

##### *Internal Evaluation System*

Internal evaluation provides the opportunity to incorporate lessons learned in the program's process into further development and decision making. A continuous evaluation system is an extremely valuable tool for any ongoing program to improve performance while the program is still taking place. As F. Rubin, an expert in evaluation writes: "Monitoring indicates whether activities are being carried out as planned and what changes are happening as a result."<sup>3</sup> A continual monitoring process may also eliminate the need for large evaluations at later stages in the program.

WIN begins the program in each class with a self-awareness questionnaire, which asks students to rate their communication and emotional-management skills. This could be used as base-line data if there was a follow up assessment after the program was completed in certain classes. Student and teacher input should be officially solicited and suggestions should be continually sought.

Some of these processes are currently underway. Without a full-time staff person however, there is no method of analyzing the data that is collected from students and teachers. The staff read the evaluation forms that the students from their own classes have completed but what is lacking is an overall understanding of the program's acceptance and effectiveness. The results of the data collection should be reported and circulated among all WIN staff. Modification of the existing pre and post survey would make the job of compiling the information much less intimidating.

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<sup>3</sup> Rubin, F. A Basic Guide to Evaluation for Development Workers. Oxfam Publications, London, UK. (p.33)

## 5. Priorities

We realize the WIN program has limited resources in terms of funding and staffing. This section will summarize what we consider to be the top priorities for improvements within the existing WIN program structure. Suggestions for the top priorities if the program is expanded or if a full time position is created for WIN will also be presented.

### *Priorities within Existing Program Structure*

- To clarify and to communicate the expectations of the teacher
- To make visual aids and a brochure of suggestions of how the teacher can remind students of WIN when Kinark instructors are not in the classroom
- To adapt the WIN formula to make it more realistic for the students to use with their peers

### *Priorities for an Expanded WIN Program*

- To integrate WIN into the existing school curriculum
- To increase parental involvement in the program
- To work to adapt the program to meet the needs of the class

## **Section VI: Concluding Remarks**

Once again, we'd like to thank Kinark for considering Trent students for this evaluation. We hope this report is as insightful for Kinark as the process of evaluation has been for us.

It quickly became apparent that WIN is a great program and certainly deserves a place in elementary schools. As a pilot project, WIN has had a great deal of success in the schools that have sought out this type of service. As the program expands to reach more classes and schools certain challenges may become more common. We hope our recommendations will help WIN staff be able to deal with these issues as they arise if the program expands.

Despite the few issues presented in this report, it is apparent that WIN has had tremendous success and has enormous potential. We wish Kinark the very best in continuing and building on this admirable program. We sincerely hope it continues to positively enhance the lives of adolescents for a long time to come.