

## EVALUATION OF THE CHILD CONNECTION CENTER

*A Pascale Sykes Initiative*



The Senator Walter Rand Institute for Public Affairs (WRI) at Rutgers University-Camden is a think-and-do tank focused on addressing critical issues in southern New Jersey through applied research, community engagement, and organizational development. Funded by the Pascale Sykes Foundation, the Child Connection Center (CCC) works with teachers, caregivers and students to help children develop their full potential. WRI has evaluated CCC's processes and outcomes since 2013. CCC focuses on students' social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health through comprehensive, individualized goal setting and supports to teachers, parents and children.

Evaluation of programming in three elementary-age schools in Gloucester County shows significant improvements in families' general health, children's health, and adult relationships. In addition, students engaged with CCC had significant, lasting improvements in language arts and math grades. These results demonstrate the effectiveness of individualized supports for families and suggest the potential benefit of replicating the programming in a variety of schools.

**"Social-emotional learning helps students develop crucial life skills that go beyond academics to improve experiences and outcomes both inside and outside the classroom."**

*Lisa Twomey, project director, Child Connection Center*



# OUTCOMES

SPRING 2020

Since 2013, WRI has collected survey data from children that CCC serves, along with two adult caregivers for each child. Focus areas include general health (including physical and mental health), children's health, family relationships and support, caregiver-child relationships, and family financial challenges. Researchers survey two adult caregivers and children ages 13-17 at the beginning of their involvement with CCC, then at 6-, 12-, 18-, and 24-months to gauge growth in those areas over time. WRI also recruits similar families that are not engaged with CCC to compare outcomes between the groups. Finally, researchers analyze student grade data to determine if involvement with CCC significantly improves academic performance.

## RELATIONSHIP AND SUPPORT

Caregiver 1 reported a significant increase in support from Caregiver 2 over time, while Caregiver 2 reported a significant decrease in support from Caregiver 1 over time. Upon further analysis, Caregiver 1 was typically female while Caregiver 2 was typically male. It may be that these results indicate a more equitable distribution of support within a family unit.

## GRADE IMPROVEMENT

Students involved with CCC significantly improved their math and language arts grades over time. Looking at data in grades 2 through 5 shows that the gains endure and do not fade.

## GENERAL HEALTH

Both Caregiver 1 and Caregiver 2 in CCC reported that their general health significantly improved over time. General health includes physical and mental health, coping and adaptability skills, and health improvement behaviors.

## CHILD HEALTH

Caregiver 1 reported that their children's general health significantly improved over time. Children's health includes physical and mental health, coping and adaptability skills, and development of prosocial behaviors.