



GARRISON INSTITUTE

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Garrison Institute's CARE Program for Teachers Receives Federal Funding

[Garrison, NY -- April 10, 2009] The Garrison Institute (www.garrisoninstitute.org) announced today that it is a recipient of a major grant from the United States Department of Education's Institute for Educational Sciences (IES), funding a project to complete the development and evaluation of its Cultivating Awareness and Resiliency in Education (CARE) professional development program for teachers.

The CARE program helps teachers learn practical skills for enhancing their social and emotional awareness, their sense of well-being, resilience and ability to deal effectively with stress. That in turn helps them support their pupils to flourish socially, emotionally and academically. The CARE curriculum combines exercises for recognizing emotional patterns (one's own and others') with contemplative practices such as mindfulness meditation.

CARE trainings have already been piloted in school districts in Denver, San Francisco and Philadelphia. The new IES grant will fund further development and evaluation of the program over a two-year period in rural and suburban elementary schools in Central Pennsylvania, using a much larger, multidistrict cohort, and collecting data for the first time on how CARE affects students in the classroom.

The IES has awarded total \$932,424 to Pennsylvania State University to complete the evaluation of the CARE program in cooperation with the Garrison Institute, which is receiving a subaward of \$290,511. Dr. Patricia Jennings, who is the director of the Garrison Institute's Initiative on Contemplation and Education, as well as a research associate at Penn State's Prevention Research Center for the Promotion of Human Development, is the principal investigator on the project. She developed the CARE program along with Richard Brown, chair of the Contemplative Education Department at Naropa University, Christa Turksma, prevention consultant at Penn State in consultation with other researchers, educators, psychologists and experts in contemplative practice.

"We ask an awful lot of teachers these days, and we have a lot riding on their ability to deliver," says Dr. Jennings. "Beyond just conveying the course material, teachers are supposed to provide a nurturing learning environment, be responsive to students, parents and colleagues, juggle the demands of standardized testing, coach students through conflicts with peers, be exemplars emotion regulation, handle disruptive behavior and generally be great role models. These are all important, valuable missions; the problem is we rarely give teachers proper training or resources for any of them. CARE was designed to fill that gap. The award of federal funding for CARE is extremely gratifying. It shows growing recognition of the need to provide teachers the necessary tools to handle the enormous social and emotional demands of the job."

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That need is urgent. According to the National Education Association, 50% of teachers succumb to job stress and burn out within the first five years. Illinois and New York States have adopted Social Emotional Learning curriculum standards, but these mandates are poorly funded. Dr. Jennings hopes that the further development and evaluation of CARE will be a significant step towards providing the resources teachers need to sustain themselves and support their students socially and emotionally. “Even the most caring of teachers are known for ignoring themselves,” says Jennings. “By teaching skills that help teachers be more self-aware and resilient, we hope to lower the burnout rate and support teachers to be positive role models.”

The new IES-funded evaluation of CARE begins in May 2009. During the first year, researchers will measure the results of the CARE program through surveys and focus groups of elementary school teachers participating in the program. They will investigate which aspects of CARE are most effective in improving teacher-student interactions and relationships, and further develop aspects that help optimize educational environments.

During the second year, researchers will observe teachers in the classroom, before and after they have completed CARE. They will measure disruptive behavior, student compliance, cooperation, communication, problem solving, interest level, focus and responsiveness. At the end of the two-year project a final intervention manual and materials will be written in preparation for a larger, randomized controlled trial.

Any elementary school teachers interested in participating the CARE evaluation in Pennsylvania can contact Dr. Jennings at tish@garrisoninstitute.org or 814-863-8207. Teachers and researchers can also access the CARE program through an annual CARE summer retreat for teachers at the Garrison Institute, held this year August 8-13. Details are posted on Garrison Institute’s [website](#).

Dr. Jennings and Dr. Mark Greenberg of Penn State University have published a detailed survey of the research literature on the social and emotional dimensions of teaching and learning, and a proposed model for the “prosocial classroom,” in the current issue of the peer-reviewed [Review of Educational Research](#).

NOTE TO EDITORS AND PRODUCERS: Dr. Jennings is available for interviews. To request an interview or a copy of the *Review of Education Research* article, or for other information, please contact Stephen Kent, 914-589-5988 skent@kentcom.com

*Founded in 2003, the **Garrison Institute** (www.garrisoninstitute.org) is a not-for-profit, non-sectarian organization exploring the intersection of contemplation and engaged action in the world. Its mission is to apply the transformative power of contemplation to today’s pressing social and environmental problems, helping build a more compassionate, resilient future. Founded in 2004, Garrison Institute’s **Initiative on Contemplation and Education (ICE)** has played a central role in developing the field of evidence-based contemplative techniques for K-12 educators and classrooms. ICE works to introduce relevant contemplative techniques to educators, helping create healthy school environments conducive to children becoming responsible, productive, caring adults, while at the same time helping improve student academic performance.*