

Schools and Schooling

Note: Most of the unedited material in this section is downloaded from literature reviews completed by the US Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

The document is divided up into 4 sections, (1) school/classroom environment, (2) positive behavior supports, (3) truancy prevention, and (4) academic skills enhancement.

School/Classroom Environment

From: http://www.dsgonline.com/mpg2.5/school_classroom.htm

INTRODUCTION

Schools offer prevention specialists regular access to students throughout their developmental years and may offer the only consistent access to the most crime-prone youths during their early school years (Gottfredson, 1998). A school that implements and maintains an effective program may improve overall school climate and in so doing have a positive effect on youth behavior both during and after school hours. The lack of positive feelings for and identification with one's school have been shown to be directly related to juvenile delinquency. For example, in a study of the predictors of in-school substance use among high school students, Voelkl and Frone (2000) found that students' lack of identification with school was significantly related to both in-school alcohol and marijuana use.

According to Gottfredson (1998), programs aimed at clarifying and communicating norms about behaviors are effective ways to reduce crime, delinquency, and substance abuse. Prevention programs directed at positively altering the school and classroom environment seek to reduce or eliminate problem behaviors by changing the overall context in which they occur. These strategies may include interventions to 1) change the decision-making processes or authority structures (building school capacity), 2) redefine norms for behavior and signal appropriate behavior through the use of rules (setting norms for behavior), 3) provide greater flexibility in instruction (classroom organization), 4) implement the use of rewards and punishments and the reduction of down time (classroom management), and 5) reorganize classes or grades to create smaller units, continuing interaction, and different mixes of students. Programs that have the capacity to build students' attachment to their school are often highlighted as models for prevention.

THEORETICAL CONTEXT

Prevention programs aimed at improving the school or classroom environment are closely linked to social organization theory, because they have a holistic approach, working from the premise that all aspects of school life can affect violence and substance abuse (Sherman et al., 1998). Gottfredson (1998) identifies such programs, which are "aimed at clarifying and communicating norms and behaviors," as effective prevention approaches. Several of these practices that were shown effective (in at least one study, or include components that have been found successful) were directly related to school or classroom environment strategies:

- "Schools within schools" programs, such as Student Training Through Urban Strategies (STATUS). These programs, which group students into smaller units for more supportive interaction or flexibility in instruction, have reduced drug abuse and delinquency.
- Training or coaching in "thinking" skills for high-risk youths, using behavior modification techniques or rewards and punishments. This programs can reduce delinquency and can reduce substance abuse.
- Building school capacity to initiate and sustain innovation through the use of school teams or other organizational development strategies succeeded in reducing delinquency and substance abuse in one study.
- Improved classroom management and instructional techniques reduced alcohol use in one study. [Gottfredson, 1998]

SCHOOL ORGANIZATION INTERVENTIONS

School organization interventions use a comprehensive and systematic approach to prevention through changing or improving the way that schools operate (Catalano, Loeber, and McKinney, 1999). School organization approaches can involve a wide variety of interventions, including, reorganizing teachers, and engaging parents in the planning and implementation of school policies and programs (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1998).

Schools in urban, poor, disorganized communities are believed to experience more disorder than other schools. Although it is impractical to suggest that schools can reverse the level of problems within their community, they can influence their own in-school rates of disturbances or disruptions (Gottfredson and Gottfredson, 1985). For instance, Gottfredson and Gottfredson (1985) say that when controlling for the relevant characteristics of the larger community, characteristics of schools and the way they are run explain significant amounts of variation in school rates of disorderly behavior. Research also suggests that changing the school environment to a more positive climate (where nurturing, inclusiveness, and a feeling of community occur) is associated with a reduction in the levels of violent behavior in the school.

In addition, an OJJDP Study Group found that several such programs appear to reduce risk factors (including academic failure, dropping out of school, and rebelliousness) and increase protective factors (such as commitment to school and good attendance) (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1999). There is emerging evidence that some research-based models of school reform, which provide clear guidance on specific changes that schools and classrooms must make, can result in significant improvement in achievement outcomes for schools with large numbers of students placed at risk of educational failure (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). Other risk factors may also include academic failure, dropping out of school, and rebelliousness. School organization intervention programs seek to counteract these risk factors by enhancing protective factors such as a commitment to school and good attendance.

CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION, MANAGEMENT, AND INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

The most common school-based prevention strategy is instruction (Gottfredson, 1998). Many consider instructional approaches that combine social and thinking skills to be effective in enhancing students abilities, attitudes, and behaviors inconsistent with substance abuse and other kinds of delinquent behavior (Northeast Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies, 1999). Further, interventions involving classroom organization, management, and instructional strategies attempt to promote the protective factors that promote opportunities for active participation in learning, skills to establish positive social relationships, and bonding to school and prosocial peers. In contrast, the risk factors generally addressed by these programs are obstacles such as academic failure, low commitment to school, and early and persistent antisocial behavior.

It is believed that prevention programs should teach a variety of general life skills for helping adolescents deal with the challenges of adolescent life (Midwest Regional Center for Drug-Free Schools and Communities, 1994). Accordingly, certain skills have emerged as critical to preventing and reducing substance abuse and violent behavior, including communication, assertiveness, media resistance, resistance training, social problem-solving, character/belief development, empathy and perspective taking, stress management and coping, and anger management or impulse control (Northeast Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies, 1999). School and classroom environment programs seek to address these needs as they enhance educational skills from within the classroom environment.

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Aggression Replacement Training® (ART®)

Intervention:

Aggression Replacement Training® (ART®) is a multimodal psychoeducational intervention designed to alter the behavior of chronically aggressive adolescents and young children. The goal of ART®

is to improve social skill competence, anger control, and moral reasoning. The program incorporates three specific interventions: skill-streaming, anger-control training, and training in moral reasoning. *Skill-streaming* uses modeling, role-playing, performance feedback, and transfer training to teach prosocial skills. In *anger-control training*, participating youths must bring to each session one or more descriptions of recent anger-arousing experiences (hassles), and over the duration of the program they are trained in how to respond to their hassles. *Training in moral reasoning* is designed to enhance youths' sense of fairness and justice regarding the needs and rights of others and to train youths to imagine the perspectives of others when they confront various moral problem situations.

The program consists of a 10-week, 30-hour intervention administered to groups of 8 to 12 juvenile offenders thrice weekly. The 10-week sequence is the "core" curriculum, though the ART® curriculum has been offered in a variety of lengths. During these 10 weeks, participating youths typically attend three 1-hour sessions per week, one session each of skill-streaming, anger-control training, and training in moral reasoning. The program relies on repetitive learning techniques to teach participants to control impulsiveness and anger and use more appropriate behaviors. In addition, guided group discussion is used to correct antisocial thinking. The ART® training manual presents program procedures and the curriculum in detail and is available in both English and Spanish editions. ART® has been implemented in school, delinquency, and mental health settings.

Evaluation Methodology:

The ART® program has been evaluated in numerous studies. In general, the studies were comprehensive and used acceptable evaluation designs, psychometrics, and data analysis techniques. But many of the studies did not provide a demonstrated effect on violent behavior or on other conduct problems 1 year or longer beyond baseline.

One evaluation used a quasi-experimental design with nonequivalent comparison groups. The sample was collected from a New York State Division for Youth facility and included 60 youths, most of whom had been incarcerated for crimes such as burglary, robbery, and various drug offenses. Twenty-four of these youths received the 10-week ART® program. Another 24 youths were assigned to a no-ART®, brief-instructions control group. This condition controlled for the possibility that any apparent ART®-derived gains in skill performance were not due to ART® per se. Finally, 12 youths were placed in the no-treatment control group.

A second study was designed to both replicate the procedures and findings of the aforementioned study as well as extend them to youths incarcerated for substantially more serious felonies. The study sample included 51 youths who were incarcerated for murder, manslaughter, rape, sodomy, attempted murder, assault, and robbery. In all of its procedural and experimental details, the second study replicated the effort of the first. The second study employed the same preparatory activities, materials, ART® curriculum, testing, staff training, resident training, supervision, and data analysis procedures.

A third evaluation was designed to examine the efficacy of ART® as a community-based, postrelease intervention. This study also employed a quasi-experimental design with a three-way comparison of ART®. Condition 1 provided the ART® program to youths and to youths' parents or other family members. Condition 2 provided the ART® program to youths only. Condition 3 provided neither parents nor youths with ART®. For the most part, youths were assigned to project conditions on a random basis, with departures from randomization becoming necessary on occasion as a function of the five-city, multisite, time-extended nature of the project.

A fourth study conducted by Washington State Institute for Public Policy used a pseudo-random assignment waitlist procedure to assign 1,229 adjudicated youths to either a control (n=525) or treatment group (n=704). Youths who met the selection criteria and had sufficient time on supervision to complete the program were assigned by court staff to the appropriate program. When the program reached capacity (all therapists had full caseloads or sessions were full), the remaining eligible youths were assigned by court staff to the control group and never participated in the program; instead, they received the usual juvenile court services. The sample was roughly 80 percent 15-year-old males. The analyses use multivariate statistical techniques to control for systemic differences between the program and control groups on key characteristics (gender, age, and domain risk and protective factor scores). Recidivism was measured by using conviction rates for subsequent juvenile or adult offenses. The follow-up "at risk" period for each youth is 18 months.

Evaluation Outcome:

The findings from the first two studies reveal ART® to be an effective intervention for incarcerated juvenile delinquents. It enhanced prosocial skill competency and overt prosocial behavior, reduced the level of rated

impulsiveness, and—in one of the two samples studied—decreased (where possible) the frequency and intensity of acting-out behaviors and enhanced the participants' levels of moral reasoning.

The first study revealed that, compared with both control groups, youths who participated in the ART® program significantly acquired and transferred 4 of the 10 skill-streaming skills: expressing a complaint, preparing for a stressful conversation, responding to anger, and dealing with group pressure. Similarly significant ART®-versus-control-group comparisons emerged for the number and intensity of in-facility acting out and for staff-rated impulsiveness. During the 1-year follow-up, 54 youths were released from the facility. Of those released, 17 had received ART® and 37 had not. In four of the six areas rated—namely, *home and family*, *peer*, *legal*, and *overall*, but not *school* and *work-ART®*—youths were rated significantly superior at in-community functioning than were youths who had not received ART®. Similar findings were reported in the second study.

In the third evaluation (the postrelease community-based study), results indicated that, though they did not differ significantly from one another, the two ART® groups each increased significantly in their overall interpersonal skill competence compared with the control youths. Perhaps more important, however, rearrest rates were tracked during the 3 months in which youths in the two intervention groups received the ART® program and during the 3 subsequent no-ART® months. Meaningful differences in favor of the two intervention groups were found. Youths in both of the ART® groups were rearrested less often than youths not receiving ART®. And the ART® youths-plus-family-members group did better than the ART® youths-only group.

The Washington State study found that when ART is delivered competently, the program reduces felony recidivism and is cost effective. For the five courts rated as not competent, the adjusted 18-month felony recidivism rate is 27 percent compared with 25 percent for the control group. This difference is not statistically significant. However, for the 21 courts rated as either competent or highly competent, the 18-month felony recidivism rate is 19 percent. This is a 24 percent reduction in felony recidivism compared with the control group, which is statistically significant. Moreover, the cost-benefit analysis demonstrates that when ART is delivered by competent courts, it generates \$11.66 in benefits (avoided crime costs) for each \$1.00 spent on the program. When not competently delivered, ART costs the taxpayer \$3.10. Averaging these results for all youths receiving ART, regardless of court competence, results in a net savings of \$6.71 per \$1.00 of costs.

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Violence Prevention Curriculum for Adolescents

Intervention:

The Violence Prevention Curriculum for Adolescents (VPC) provides adolescents with information on risk factors for interpersonal violence and skills for choosing alternatives to fighting. The 10- to 18-session curriculum uses lectures, discussions, and interactive role-plays. Sessions generally last 40 minutes. The goals of the curriculum are to 1) illustrate that violence is preventable, 2) teach students that anger is a normal part of life and that anger can be expressed and channeled in healthy, constructive ways, 3) help students understand that controlling anger and violence is part of maturing, 4) identify positive ways for students to express their anger, and 5) help them think about and use alternatives to violence in conflict situations. VPC is part of the Teenage Health Teaching Modules program, a comprehensive school health education curriculum for adolescents.

Evaluation Methodology:

This program was evaluated by two separate studies. The first used a quasi-experimental design with comparison groups. The study examined the effectiveness of the VPC curriculum on 978 sixth grade students from six different schools. The curriculum was put into practice using a staggered implementation design; students received the curriculum during different semesters to allow comparisons between treatment and no-treatment groups. Participants were asked to complete the subscales: the Violent Behavior Scale, the Problem Behavior Scale, and the Drug Use Scale from the Behavioral Frequency Scale. Baseline data was collected to ensure there were no significant differences between the treatment groups at pretest and to test for attrition.

The second study examined the impact of two intervention conditions on

1,523 sophomore high school students' suspension rates. The first condition was the VPC curriculum. The second condition was a schoolwide violence prevention initiative, which included various violence prevention activities, such as school presentations on violence prevention and seminars on death and dying. A prospective design using archival data was used to track three panels of students over their sophomore and junior years. School records provided access to relevant independent variables such as age, gender, ethnicity, standardized test scores, and absenteeism. These two conditions were compared with a nonexposed comparison group. Each condition was nonrandomly assigned to a high school. The schoolwide violence prevention initiative was analyzed for 3 consecutive years (1985–87). The class-specific educational intervention was combined with the schoolwide initiative and analyzed in 1 year only (1986).

Evaluation Outcome:

The first study suggested that the curriculum reduced the immediate risk of becoming a perpetrator or victim of violence for boys, but not for girls. Specifically, the study found significantly lower frequencies of armed threats and physical fighting for boys in the curriculum versus the comparison group. Moreover, boys receiving the curriculum showed significantly lower rates of problem behavior and drug use. No significant effects were noted for girls or for the overall curriculum sample.

The results of the second study indicate that students receiving the in-class curriculum showed a 71 percent reduction in suspension rates, while the nonclassroom participants showed no change in their suspension rates. Students in the schoolwide exposure condition showed a decrease in suspension rates, but these results were statistically insignificant. Overall, results suggest that violence prevention education can reduce negative school behaviors, particularly when supplemented by other supportive curricula and activities.

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STEP (School Transitional Environmental Program)

Intervention:

STEP (School Transitional Environmental Program) is a school organizational change initiative that seeks to decrease student anonymity, increase student accountability, and enhance students' abilities to learn school rules and exceptions. The program targets students in transition from elementary and middle schools who are in large urban junior high and high schools with multiple feeders serving predominantly nonwhite lower income youths. Students remain in intact small groups for their homeroom period and their academic subjects (these classrooms are physically close together). Homeroom teachers act as administrators and guidance counselors, providing class schedule assistance, academic counseling in school, and counseling in school for personal problems. Teachers also explain the project to parents and notify them of student absences. Project students are assigned to homerooms in which all classmates are STEP participants, and they are enrolled in the same core classes to help develop stable peer groups and enhance participants' familiarity with the school.

Evaluation Methodology:

Several studies have examined the STEP program. The first two used a quasi-experimental research design with comparison groups. In these studies, incoming high school students (ninth graders) in a primarily nonwhite, lower income school were assigned either to a small "school within the school," consisting of 65 to 100 students (the STEP program), or to a traditional format. The total sample included 172 students—59 in the intervention group and 113 matched controls. Student performance on several outcomes was evaluated at the end of ninth grade, and then a follow-up study was conducted 5 years later. A major limitation to the original evaluation research on this program was that the first studies lacked pretest measures. However, the researchers reported no differences with respect to attendance and grades at baseline between treated students and controls.

A replication study using a quasi-experimental design was conducted on 154 ninth grade students in a predominantly Hispanic, low-income, urban high school. Half of the sample was assigned to the experimental group, with the other half assigned to the control group. Students were evaluated

on their academic and behavioral adjustment to school. Data was collected from their eighth (preintervention) and ninth (postintervention) grade records.

Another replication involved a longitudinal quasi-experimental study comparing four “low risk” schools that have implemented STEP with four that have not. The sample consisted of 1,204 intervention students and 761 control students. Fifty-eight percent of the sample transitioned into junior high in the sixth grade, while 42 percent did so in the seventh grade. Measures were taken on school transition stress, psychological distress, behavior problems, academic expectations, and classroom behavioral adaptation. The sample was followed during their transition year and the year after.

Evaluation Outcome:

Evaluations performed at the end of ninth grade demonstrate that STEP students, compared with control students, display decreases in absenteeism and increases in grade point average; stability of self-concept (compared with decreases for control students); and more positive feelings of the school environment, perceiving the school as more stable, understandable, well-organized, involving, and supportive. Long-term follow-up indicated that STEP students, compared with controls, had lower dropout rates (21 percent versus 43 percent), and higher grades and fewer absences in 9th and 10th grades.

The evaluation of the STEP program with lower risk students in junior high demonstrated that STEP students, compared with control students, showed significantly lower levels of school transition stress and better adjustment on measures of school, family, general self-esteem, depression, anxiety, and delinquent behavior, and higher levels of academic expectations. Teachers in the STEP schools reported that their students had better classroom adjustment behavior and fewer problem behaviors. Academic records show that STEP students had significantly better grades and attendance patterns.

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Project PATHE (Positive Action Through Holistic Education)

Intervention:

This universal, comprehensive school organizational change program is used in secondary schools to reduce school disorder and improve the school environment, thus enhancing student experiences and attitudes about school. The program seeks to reduce disorder by decreasing academic failure, increasing social bonding, and improving students' self-concepts. The program targets all students in middle schools and high schools, serving large numbers of minority youths in inner cities and impoverished rural areas.

The five major components are

- 1) Staff, student, and community participation in planning
- 2) Schoolwide organizational changes aimed at increasing academic performance
- 3) Schoolwide organizational changes aimed at enhancing school climate
- 4) Programs to prepare students for careers
- 5) Academic and affective services for high-risk youths

The program design is unique in its comprehensive coverage and in its

simultaneous concentration on organizations and individual-level change. The school's climate is enhanced through added extracurricular activities, peer counseling, and school pride campaigns. Job-seeking skills programs and career exploration programs emphasize career attainment. At-risk students receive additional monitoring, tutoring, and counseling.

Evaluation Methodology:

The project design included four experimental middle schools, one control middle school, three experimental high schools, and one control high school. Students were predominantly African-American and resided in both urban and rural areas. The school was the unit of analysis. Students were surveyed in 1981, 1982, and 1983. In 1981 a random sample of 300 students was surveyed in the participating high schools. The entire student and teacher populations were surveyed in the other years (with response rates of 79 percent to 86 percent). In fall 1982 the comparison high school closed. Thus, the evaluation covers a 3-year period for the middle schools in the sample and a 1-year period for the high schools.

Evaluation Outcome:

High school students reported significant decreases in delinquency and drug involvement and fewer school suspensions and less punishment than the control group. Students in the program who received special academic and counseling services reported significantly higher grades and were less likely to repeat a grade than students who did not receive these services. High school seniors who received these services were also more likely to graduate than those who did not receive the services. For middle school students in the intervention, there were declines in suspensions. PATHE high schools, compared with the control groups, showed that self-reported delinquency (including drug involvement, suspensions, and school punishments) declined; school alienation decreased; attachment to school increased; and school climate and discipline management improved in all the treatment schools. At-risk students showed higher rates of graduation and standardized achievement tests and increased school attendance.

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Multimodal Substance Abuse Prevention

Intervention:

The Multimodal Substance Abuse Prevention project was implemented at a residential treatment center for court-adjudicated, 13- to 18-year-old males. The main purpose of the project was to determine the effectiveness of a multimodal intervention program at reducing substance use and other illegal behavior. The program employed a triple module skills training classroom program, consisting of Botvin LifeSkills Training, the Prothrow–Stith Antiviolence Program, and the Rath Values Clarification procedure.

The Botvin intervention strategies included teaching participants 1) how to improve self-expression, 2) how to control and direct their behavior, 3) how to achieve personal and social skills, 4) how to cope with temptations and pressures to continue using drugs, and 5) a cognitive-behavioral method of understanding the effects of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco on health and behavior. Botvin strategies were modified to 20 sessions for this project.

The Prothrow–Stith intervention consisted of controlling tendencies toward violence and directing one's energies along socially and personally acceptable lines. This is accomplished through increased awareness of the causes and effects of violence and the adolescent's own risk of becoming a victim of homicide, learning to identify factors that lead to violence, realizing violence is a choice with short-term and long-term consequences, illustrating that violence is preventable, learning that anger is normal and can be expressed in healthy ways, understanding that controlling violence and anger is a part of maturing, identifying positive

ways to express anger, and thinking about alternatives to violence in conflict situations. This is conducted in all 20 sessions.

The Rath intervention addressed clarifying one's values, exploring others' values, and attempting to develop and identify with a set of socially acceptable and desired values. This is done through various exercises that motivate the youths to question their conflicting and unclearly defined values.

Evaluation Methodology:

The program was evaluated using an experimental design lasting 15 months. Youths from St. Gabriel's Hall in Philadelphia, Pa., were randomly assigned to Group A, the intervention group (n=110), or to Group C, the control group (n=91). The race/ethnicity breakdown was 76.4 percent African-American, 13.6 percent white, 7.3 percent Puerto Rican, and 1.8 percent Asian-American for Group A and 69.3 percent African-American, 16.7 percent white, 8.8 percent Puerto Rican, and 2.7 percent Asian-American for Group C, with a mean age of 15½ for both groups. Most youths had used alcohol and other substances before entering the residential program. The prevalence rates for the entire sample were 79 percent for alcohol, 82 percent for marijuana, 72 percent for cigarette smoking, and 14 percent for PCP. Most of the youths lived in single-family households. All had committed at least one serious illegal offense and were subject to multiple risk factors in the individual, school, peer, and neighborhood domains. Youths were assessed at baseline, 9 months later when released from the residential treatment center, and 6 months after release.

Evaluation Outcome:

The evaluation reveals that Group A showed significantly greater reductions in drug use and drug dealing. Group A also reported nonsignificant trends toward a greater reduction in degree of illegal behavior and alcohol use. Dosage analysis provides evidence that the effects are primarily due to the Botvin LST component and secondarily due to the Prothrow–Stith component of the program but are not related to the Values Clarification portion of the program.

References:

Friedman, Alfred S., Arlene Terras, and Kimberly Glassman. 2002. "Multimodal Substance Use Intervention Program for Male Delinquents."

Project ALERT

Intervention:

Project ALERT teaches children to establish no-drug-use norms, to develop reasons not to use drugs, and to resist prodrug pressures. The program consists of a 14-lesson curriculum, participatory activities, and videos. Guided classroom discussions and small group activities stimulate peer interaction and challenge students, while intensive role-playing encourages students to practice and master resistance skills. Parent-involved homework assignments extend the learning process for participants.

The program is highly effective with middle school youths, ages 11 to 14, from widely diverse backgrounds and communities. Project ALERT has proved successful with high- and low-risk white, African-American, Hispanic, Asian-American, and Native American youths from urban, rural, and suburban communities and a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds. The original program was tested in schools in different geographic areas with varied population densities and among students from a range of racial/ethnic and economic backgrounds.

Evaluation Methodology:

The program used a rigorous experimental pre–post design with random assignment to place 30 schools in either a control or one of two treatment conditions. Seventh and eighth graders in 20 of the schools went through the Project ALERT curriculum. Adults taught the classes in 10 of the schools, while older teens drawn from nearby high schools assisted the adults in 10 others. In the remaining 10 schools, students were not exposed to Project ALERT but continued to receive whichever drug-information programs their schools offered. The schools encompassed urban, suburban, and rural communities. Nine schools had a minority population of 50 percent or more. Eighteen drew from neighborhoods with household incomes below the State median.

To establish a baseline before the program began, the researchers surveyed 6,500 seventh graders about substance use and attitudes toward drugs. Over the next 5 years, the team conducted six follow-up surveys

with nearly 4,000 of these teens as they moved through grade 12. The surveys compared students' drug use and related attitudes before, during, and after their exposure to Project ALERT's curriculum with similar data from students who had no contact with the program. Trained data collectors administered student surveys in all schools before and after program lessons. Self-reported drug use was validated by testing saliva samples collected from students and by consistency analyses over time. Logistic regression was used to analyze substance use outcomes as a function of treatment and baseline covariates. Multiple controls helped rule out alternative explanations of treatment effects. All analyses were adjusted for attrition and clustering of students within schools.

Evaluation Outcome:

Evaluation reports conclude that Project ALERT reduces the initiation of marijuana and tobacco use by 30 percent, reduces heavy smoking among experimenters by 50–60 percent, is effective for both high- and low-risk students (including minorities), and performs equally well in a variety of socioeconomic settings. The program's early gains erode after the lessons stop. Maintaining the effects of prevention lessons requires booster programs after adolescents make the transition to high school.

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Consistency Management & Cooperative Discipline®

Intervention:

Consistency Management & Cooperative Discipline® (CMCD) is a research-based classroom and school reform model that emphasizes shared responsibility for learning and classroom organization between teachers and students. The model seeks to address the needs of students, teachers, and administrative staff in schools from prekindergarten through 12th grade. The target population is innercity youths. The consistency management component concentrates on classroom instructional organization and planning arrangement by the teacher (from seating arrangements, passing out papers, etc.). The teacher acts as an instructional leader. The cooperative discipline component expands the leadership roles to the students by giving each student multiple leadership opportunities. It incorporates five themes: prevention through classroom management, a caring environment, cooperation, classroom organization, and parental and community involvement activities.

Evaluation Methodology:

The CMCD model has been tested many times. One evaluation compared students who were taught by teachers trained in consistency management and cooperative discipline with students who were not. Researchers obtained standardized math test scores for students in grades 4, 5, and 6 from seven elementary schools. The schools were all within two square miles. Three served as treatment schools (n=232), and four were control schools (n=311). Most students in the study were Latinos, and there were minorities of African-American and white students.

Evaluation Outcome:

The results of this evaluation show that students taught by teachers trained in CMCD performed significantly higher than control students on math achievement tests. These findings are consistent with those from both qualitative and quantitative studies performed on CMCD, which include sustained gains in student achievement over 3 years (9–12 months' greater achievement gain than the group of comparison schools), significant reductions in student discipline referrals (72 percent to 78 percent lower than other schools), and 36 minutes' additional teaching time per day owing to fewer discipline problems and enhanced

cooperation (equivalent to 3½ additional weeks of instruction).

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Positive Behavior Supports

From: <http://www.pbis.org/main.htm>

School-wide PBS

<http://www.pbis.org/files/TASH%20Journal%20Article%20for%20Website%209-21-06.pdf>

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Building Inclusive School Cultures Using School-wide PBS: Designing Effective Individual Support Systems for Students with Significant Disabilities

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“School-wide PBS is based on several core themes, an array of specific procedures, and an emphasis on systems change that supports the use of effective educational practices. The core themes of SWPBS focus on (a) investment in the social culture of the whole school as a foundation for both social and academic success, (b) emphasis on prevention of problem behavior, (c) reliance on directly teaching appropriate skills to all students, as well as rearrangement of both antecedents and consequences when necessary, (d) use of a three-tiered continuum of behavior support practices to facilitate prevention of problem behavior, and (e) active collection and

use of data for decisionmaking. The three tiered prevention approach is particularly relevant for students with significant disabilities and has been adapted from the community health literature (see Walker et al., 1996). The basic thesis of this model is that effective prevention efforts necessarily include primary, secondary and tertiary intervention levels. As applied within education, primary prevention involves all students and adults within the school and is implemented across all school and school-related settings. The goal is to create a positive social culture in which pro-social behaviors are explicitly taught and reinforced for all students, and all adults respond to the occurrence of problem behavior in a consistent manner. Secondary prevention is intended to support students who have learning, behavior, or life histories that put them at risk of engaging in more serious problem behavior. Strategies for secondary prevention are intended to address the needs of students before more intensive individualized supports are needed. Tertiary prevention strategies focus on the smaller number of students whose needs are more individualized than is included in primary and secondary prevention practices. Individualized and comprehensive plans are needed to address the unique needs of children who engage in serious and/or chronic problem behavior.

The purpose of this three tiered approach is to support all students, and when necessary tailoring to provide more intensive supports. It is not intended to label students by placing them in categories or a hierarchy. In SWPBS, students with disabilities are involved in learning school-wide expectations along with all of their peers. As is the case with all students, additional learning opportunities and support from school staff are available as needed (Turnbull et al., 2002). When students with disabilities need additional supports beyond school-wide programs aimed at primary prevention of problem behavior, their needs are identified in the same ways as their general education peers (e.g. teacher referral). SWPBS planning teams are essential to success and consist of representatives from all areas of the school (e.g., regular education, special education, administration, special services). The team works with the entire staff to gather data and create an action plan for implementing SWPBS. The action plan is designed based upon a self assessment of the school's strengths and needs for improvement. Examples of data gathered for the self assessment includes information on the school's capacities to collect, summarize and use office referral, suspension and expulsion data, direct observation data of students in a given setting or settings, along with measures of SWPBS implementation fidelity in the school, academic outcomes, and school safety and climate measures.

These data are essential for effective decision-making about how to build on existing school strengths and to how to implement the most effective and efficient school-wide academic and behavioral programs. Implementing SWPBS involves a multi-year commitment.

During the first year, experienced trainers introduce planning team members to all elements of SWPBS. First year teams learn how to evaluate school data and work with faculty to design plans for teaching school-wide expectations, creating reward systems, and improving consistency of staff responses to student problem behavior. Although most teams spend the first year preparing for the implementation of primary/universal school-wide strategies to foster pro-social behavior by all students, team members are also actively involved in developing secondary and tertiary prevention strategies and practices in order to provide students with increasingly higher levels of individualized support on an as needed basis. Teams learn the basics of classroom management and individualized support systems. Team leaders, referred to as coaches, are identified by their districts and are trained in SWPBS to provide a leadership role by facilitating school planning teams, networking with other coaches, and assisting teams in problem solving. A goal of SWPBS is to teach natural leaders within schools and districts to facilitate the implementation of SWPBS, thereby decreasing reliance on outside “experts” and avoiding traditional “one shot” workshop approaches.

Also in the first year, district and/or school planning teams start initial discussions and action plans for ensuring that resources are available for implementing individualized support systems, as they are needed within the school. The amount of time focused on primary, secondary, or tertiary levels of prevention varies during year one depending upon the unique strengths and needs of each school. However, a major goal for districts and schools is to identify school coaches who will learn from experienced trainers how to facilitate comprehensive plans for individual students within the context of SWPBS. These coaches will become responsible for “growing their own” internal trainers in subsequent years. It takes time to learn how to facilitate individual PBS plans effectively. Districts and schools must dedicate time and resources early in the SWPBS implementation process to train school professionals who can and will take responsibility for facilitating comprehensive individual positive behavior support plans for students.”

Truancy Prevention

INTRODUCTION

Truancy has been referred to as a "first step to a lifetime of problems" for youth (Garry, 1996). Truant students have a higher risk than nontruant students of involvement in drug and alcohol use, violence, and gang activity (U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice, 1996). Police departments across the nation report that many students who are not in school during regular hours are committing crimes, including vandalism, shoplifting, and graffiti. According to a 1996 report, 44 percent of violent juvenile crime occurred between 8:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. in San Diego, Calif., (U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice). Thus, student nonattendance is a problem that extends much further than the school. Truancy affects the student, the family, and the overall community (ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management and Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1999).

Examination of the truancy problem requires investigation into the possible reasons that students may choose to engage in truant behavior. Statistics have shown that a student's decision to skip or drop out of school might be the product of many factors, including family problems, drug and alcohol abuse, illiteracy, and teenage pregnancy (Cantelon and LeBoeuf, 1997). According to the U.S. Department of Education, when young people start skipping school, they are telling their parents, their school, and the community at large that they are in trouble and need our help if they are to keep moving forward in life (U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice, 1996).

The self-reported reasons for truancy vary considerably. According to a 1992 report by the National Center for Education Statistics (McMillen et al., 1993), 4 dropouts in 10 said that they left school because they were failing or they did not like school, and males and females reported in roughly equal numbers that they were leaving school because of personality conflicts with teachers. More males than females dropped out of school because of school suspension or expulsion. The dropout rate among 16- to 24-year-olds who had repeated more than one grade was 41 percent, compared with 17 percent of those who had repeated only one grade and 9 percent of those who had not repeated any grades. Dropout rates were highest among those who had repeated grades 7, 8, or 9. Although most dropouts reported school-related reasons for leaving school, most female dropouts reported family-related reasons. Among dropouts, 21 percent of females and 8 percent of males dropped out because they had become parents (McMillen et al., 1993).

Not all indicators of truancy point to students' personal or family problems. In fact, students and school staff often disagree on the reasons for truancy. In one survey, students cited boredom, loss of interest in school, irrelevant courses, suspensions, and bad relationships with teachers as major factors leading to the decision to skip school. In contrast, school staff believed truancy to be related to

students' problems with their families and peers (ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management and Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1999).

Consistent with the observations of some school staff, some criminal justice scholars have speculated that parental neglect may be a common cause of truancy. According to Garry (1996): "Many parents of truant students do not value education. Some children are kept at home to work or babysit preschool siblings. Others are prevented from attending school because of problems at home, at school, or in neighborhoods." Rohrman (1993) conveys that most parents appreciate the need for children to attend school, but some are unaware that children are truant, do not know how to increase their attendance, or may believe that meeting family needs is a satisfactory reason for absence. Rohrman also points out that some immigrant parents may not understand that attendance is compulsory.

An additional consideration is that the trip to and from school takes some students through sections of their neighborhoods where they may feel intimidated. In one study on factors contributing to school truancy, 80 percent of youth surveyed said they feared the trip to and from school, reporting that they were forced to cross the "turf" of hostile gangs and that they often skipped school rather than risk violence (University of Colorado at Boulder, 2000).

THEORETICAL CONTEXT

Truancy has been clearly identified as one of the early warning signs that youth potentially are headed for delinquent activity, social isolation, or educational failure. Several studies have established lack of commitment to school as a risk factor for substance abuse, delinquency, teen pregnancy, and dropping out of school (Bell, Rosen, and Dynlacht, 1994; Dryfoos, 1990; Huizinga, Loeber, and Thornberry, 1995; Rohrman, 1993). In addition, decades of research have also identified a link between truancy and later problems such as violence, marital problems, job problems, adult criminality, and incarceration (Dryfoos, 1990; Catalano et al., 1998; Robins and Ratcliff, 1978; Snyder and Sickmund, 1995). More recent studies, such as OJJDP's Program of Research on the Causes and Correlates of Delinquency (Kelley et al., 1997), indicate that truancy may be a precursor to serious violent and nonviolent offenses and that the connection between truancy and delinquency appears to be particularly acute among males. Moreover, findings from OJJDP's Study Group on Very Young Offenders (Loeber and Farrington, 2000) indicate that chronic truancy in elementary school is linked to serious delinquent behavior at age 12 and under. The financial impact of truancy and the dropouts that result can be measured in at least four ways:

- A less educated workforce
- The business loss attributable to youth who "hang out," shoplift, or do both during the day
- Higher daytime crime rates (in some cases)

- The cost of social services for families of children who are habitually truant

Truancy, however, has an even more direct financial impact on communities: the loss of Federal and State education funding (Baker, Sigmon, and Nugent, 2001).

TYPES OF TRUANCY PREVENTION PROGRAMS

Truancy prevention programs are designed to promote regular school attendance through one or more strategies, including the following:

- Court alternatives
- Mentoring programs
- Law enforcement participation
- Increasing parental involvement
- Other strategies, such as improving parent-teacher communication and drawing upon community resources

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

The U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice suggest that the communities that have had the most success in deterring truancy not only have concentrated on improving procedures but also have implemented a comprehensive strategy that emphasizes incentives and sanctions for truant students and their parents. They name five primary elements of a comprehensive community and educational strategy to combat truancy:

- Involve parents in all truancy prevention activities (e.g., increasing parent-teacher communication and initiating programs such as "homework hotlines" and appointing a parent liaison).
- Ensure that students face firm sanctions for truancy (school districts should communicate a "zero tolerance" policy that carries strict ramifications for violators).
- Create meaningful incentives for parental responsibility to ensure that children go to school (e.g., parents of truant children may be asked to participate in parenting education programs, truancy can be subject to formal sanction, or demonstration of regular school attendance could directly affect parents' eligibility for certain public assistance).
- Establish ongoing truancy prevention programs in school by addressing the needs of individual children and developing initiatives to combat the root causes of truancy (e.g., tutoring, increased security, drug prevention, mentorship, increasing parental involvement, and providing referrals).

- Involve local law enforcement in truancy reduction efforts (e.g., community-run detention centers or "sweeps" of neighborhoods in which truants are often found). [U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice, 1996]

Similarly, the National Association of Secondary School Principals makes several recommendations concerning attendance policies that work (Bartlett et al., 1978):

- Policies should be strong. Schools that invest thought and effort into solving problems make the most headway.
- Participation in the formulation of the attendance policies should be broadly based.
- Attendance expectations, as well as consequences of good and poor attendance, should be specified in writing.
- Policies should be well publicized.
- Policies should be consistently enforced at every level-by teacher, counselor, and principal.
- Student absences should be followed by a telephone call or letter home from a school official.

In addition to the points made above, other professionals have contended that schools should clearly state that attendance is the responsibility of the student and parents, and that they will be held accountable for absences. Policies should be educational rather than punitive, should include due process provisions, and should be flexible enough to deal with extenuating circumstances (ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education and Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1997).

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Truant Recovery Program

Intervention:

The Truant Recovery Program is a collaborative effort between the school district and all community police jurisdictions within its boundaries. The program is preventive rather than punitive. Its primary task is to return truant students to school as soon as possible. The program operates under the authority of the Student Welfare and Attendance (SWAT) Office. The program authorizes the local police jurisdictions to make contact with students on the streets during school hours. Students without a valid excuse slip are taken into temporary custody and transported to the SWAT office for processing. SWAT personnel attempt to contact the youth's

parents for an in-person meeting, in which both can be counseled and the parent can return the child to school. If a parent cannot be reached, SWAT personnel return the youth to school. The school site is also contacted, and both the school and SWAT Office closely monitor the student's attendance in the future.

Three additional components of the program provide both accountability and consequences. First, the Department of Probation assigns an officer to the SWAT program to screen all contacted juveniles for probation violations and bench warrants. Second, the Student Attendance Review Board reviews records for habitual truancy cases and refers cases to the juvenile court for review and adjudication. Finally, the Suspension Alternative Class (SAC) is designed to make sure truant students are not rewarded for truancy by missing more school. Instead, students in SAC remain in school but are unable to engage in regular classes.

Evaluation Methodology:

The Truant Recovery Program was evaluated using a quasi-experimental design. One hundred seventy-eight students were randomly selected from all of the truant youths picked up in Richmond, Calif., during autumn 1997. Of all the truant youths picked up, 69 percent were male, 60 percent were African-American, 25 percent were Hispanic, 8 percent were Asian-American, and 3 percent were white. The median age was 15. For those youths in the sample, local and State criminal justice data was collected for the years prior to their truancy through 18 to 21 months after contact with the program. Academic data was collected for 3 years prior to the truancy until 2 years after the contact.

Evaluation Outcome:

The evaluation of the Truant Recovery Program suffered from problems of missing data. The results show an increase in conformity to school regulations after contact with the program and a decrease in the number of disciplinary actions. However, during this same period there was an increase in formal contacts with the justice system and an increase in the proportion of arrests (4 percent of the truants were arrested before autumn 1997, compared with 8 percent after the fall, though this is not a significant increase). The number of both excused and unexcused absences decreased after contact with the program, which was the goal of the program. Academics improved slightly after contact with the program; however, the large amount of missing data makes it difficult to make a true analysis of this variable.

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White, Michael D., James J. Fyfe, Suzanne P. Campbell, and John S. Goldkamp. 2001. "The School-Police Partnership: Identifying at-Risk Youth Through a Truant Recovery Program." *Evaluation Review* 25(5):507–32.

Operation New Hope

Intervention:

Operation New Hope (formerly Lifeskills '95) is a curriculum-based parole reentry program designed to treat high-risk chronic offenders postrelease by helping them cope with the problems of everyday life. The program reinforces small successes while addressing a chronic offender's fears of the real world. The approach used by Lifeskills '95 is based on six programmatic principles believed to help with reintegration:

1. Improve the basic socialization skills necessary for successful reintegration into the community.
2. Significantly reduce criminal activity in terms of amount and seriousness.
3. Alleviate the need for or dependence on alcohol or illicit drugs.
4. Improve overall lifestyle choices (social, education, job training, and employment).
5. Reduce the individual's need for gang participation and affiliation as a support mechanism.
6. Reduce the high rate of short-term parole revocations.

The treatment consists of 13 consecutive weekly meetings that concentrate on different coping skills: 1) Program Introduction, 2) The "Pit"—Dealing With Your Emotions, 3) Unmanageability, 4) Denial, 5) The Problem of Thinking You Can Do It Alone, 6) "Letting Go," 7) Perceptions, 8) Expectations, 9) Reality, 10) Love, 11) Family Dynamics, 12) Living With Addiction, 13) Continuous Practice. The meetings last 3 hours. The first 1½ are used for lectures, the last 1½ for group discussion. Participants may begin the program during any point in the curriculum.

Evaluation Methodology:

The program was evaluated using a quasi-experimental design with a nonrandomized treatment and a control group. The two groups were made up of parolees released from a secured facility between Feb. 1 and Dec. 31, 1995, who were assigned to the California Youth Authority's Inland Parole Office. If a juvenile reported a residence that was within a 25-mile radius of the Inland Parole Office at the time of release, the youth was placed in the treatment group. If the address was beyond the 25-mile radius, the youth was in the control group. Coincidentally, n=115 for both the treatment and the control group. The overwhelming majority of participants were male—97.4 percent in the treatment group and 95.7 percent in the control group. The average ages were 20.0 and 20.2, respectively. The treatment group was 40.9 percent African-American, 39.1 percent Hispanic, and 14.8 percent white. The control group was 50.4 percent Hispanic, 24.3 percent African-American, and 20.0 percent white. The treatment group was required to attend all 13 Lifeskills '95 classes, while the control group was not.

Data was collected through semistructured interviews and surveys of parolees, treatment facilitators, and parole agents. Random drug tests were also performed. Data was collected three times: 1) the 1st week after release, 2) after the treatment was complete (3 months after release), and 3) at the end of the evaluation period (Feb. 28, 1996). During this analysis, n=106 for the treatment group and nine parolees became involved in an additional program and were removed from the sample.

Evaluation Outcome:

Ninety days after release from secure confinement, control group youths were twice as likely as the experimental group to have been rearrested, to be unemployed and to lack the resources necessary to find and maintain a job, to have a poor attitude toward working, and to have frequently abused drugs or alcohol. Control group youths were three times as likely to associate with former gang members, to have "serious problems" with family relationships, to be unresponsive and negative in their commitments to parole, and to associate almost exclusively with negative, unfavorable peer groups.

A year after the evaluation began, the results were just as favorable for the Lifeskills '95 program. The control group youths were twice as likely as the experimental group to have one or more arrests, to be associated with negative peer groups, and to be unemployed without means of financial

support. They were also twice as likely to have failed in their parole, meaning they had their parole revoked owing to a technical or criminal violation, were in jail awaiting a new criminal charge, were in temporary detention awaiting a revocation hearing, or they were missing. Control group youths were three times as likely as experimental group youths to continue their abuse of drugs.

All of these findings were significant.

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Academic Skills Enhancement

INTRODUCTION

School is one of the primary institutions in which adolescents learn socially appropriate behavior, develop cognitive skills, and establish patterns of early career development. While schools labor to aid every student in developing these skills, problems inevitably arise for some students. One of the most visible problems for students is academic difficulty. Academic problems, by themselves, can thwart educational aspirations, but academic problems can also be a precursor to more serious behavior problems. Academic failure is often viewed as a gateway to delinquency (Maguin and Loeber, 1996). In fact, research demonstrates that academic problems place juveniles at significant risk for later serious and violent offending (Catalano, Loeber, and McKinney, 1999; Maguin et al., 1995). The research is less clear when examining specific subgroups. Some research indicates that the association is stronger for males than females, stronger for Caucasians than African Americans, and independent of socioeconomic status (Maguin and Loeber, 1996). Other studies indicate that the relationship is stronger for females (Hawkins et al., 2000) and African Americans (Voelkl, Welste, and Wieczorek, 1999).

Academic problems, however, must be examined within the broader context of youth development. It is important to consider not only the behavior itself but also whether the behavior has previously occurred, in multiple settings and with what frequency, duration, and intensity (Kelly et al., 1997). For example, a fourth grader who frequently fails examinations in multiple subjects over the course of an academic year and is consistently reprimanded for poor conduct is of more concern than a second grader who gets a bad grade on a test or two. In other words, a certain degree of misbehavior, experimentation, or independence-seeking is common among youth (Kelly et al., 1997). In fact, some researchers suggest that the onset of oppositional behavior in adolescence is due to the normal process of individuation (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). But youths who persistently and progressively engage in problem behaviors with significant impairment in personal development, social functioning, academic achievement, and vocational preparation are of a much greater risk for later serious violent behavior.

Conversely, students who experience high academic achievement (Henggeler, 1989; Elliot and Voss, 1974; Hawkins and Lam, 1987; Gottfredson, 1988) and actively engage in and feel attached to their school (Johnson, Crosnoe, and Elder, 2001) are less likely to engage in problem behaviors and delinquency. Moreover, interventions that immerse students into the rich fabric educational resources have been shown to reduce delinquency (Maguin and Loeber, 1996). These students are bolstered by various protective factors such as high expectations for youth by the community, positive bonds with parents and family, effective parenting, opportunities for participation in the school and community, and involvement with positive peers and peer-group activities.

THEORETICAL CONTEXT

The link between educational experiences and delinquency uses various theoretical frameworks, including both control theory (Hirschi, 1969) and strain theory (Cloward and Olin, 1960; Elliot, Huizinga, and Ageton, 1985). Strain theory suggests that the delinquency associated with academic failure results from an unfilled desire to achieve conventional goals (e.g., academic success). Control theory, by contrast, proposes that delinquency results from the failure of adolescents to internalize conventional norms or a breakdown of the bonds between the individual and society. According to this perspective, the school acts as a socializing agent by introducing and endearing adolescents to conventional norms and values. Unfortunately, poor academic performance may inhibit the attachment to conventional norms and thus break the bond with society, separating individuals from the internal controls that discourage delinquent behavior.

The underlying point of both theoretical frameworks is that for some students academic failure produces frustration and poor study habits. This, in turn, can initiate a chain of events that lead to a withdrawal from and rejection of participation in classroom activities, prompting some youths to become disruptive in class or even drop out of school. If left unchecked, this behavior can eventually lead to delinquency and other serious problem behaviors (Elliot and Voss, 1974).

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

The research findings indicating a positive association between academic failure and future delinquency have led some practitioners to design prevention strategies that promote the acquisition of practical academic skills.

One of the strategies specifically designed to increase academic skills for at-risk populations is alternative schools. Alternative schools are essentially specialized educational environments that place great emphasis on small classrooms, less structured classrooms, high teacher-to-student ratios, individualized instruction, and noncompetitive performance assessments (Raywid, 1983). The purpose of these schools is to provide academic instruction to students expelled or suspended for disruptive behavior or weapons possession, or who are unable to succeed in the mainstream school environment (Ingersoll and LeBoeuf, 1997).

Recent evaluations (Kemple and Snipes, 2000; Cox, 1999; Cox, Davison, and Bynum, 1995) suggest that alternative schools have some positive effects. A meta-analysis of 57 alternative school programs found that alternative schools have a positive effect on school performance, attitudes toward school, and self-esteem but no effect on delinquency (Cox, Davison, and Bynum, 1995). The study also found that alternative schools targeting at-risk youths produced larger effects than other programs and that the more successful programs tend to have a curriculum and structure centered on the needs of the designated population. These effects, however, may be short term. Using an experimental design with a 1-year follow-up of a single alternative school, Cox (1999) found that these

positive effects were not observed 1 year later. Consequently, the type of follow-up support given to students in alternative schools may be important in achieving the long-term goals of the program. Finally, a 5-year evaluation of the career academy concept (the OJJDP alternative school model) covering nine schools and 1,900 students found that, compared with their counterparts who did not attend, at-risk students enrolled in career academies were 1) one third less likely to drop out of school; 2) more likely to attend school, complete academic and vocational courses, and apply to college; and 3) provided with more opportunities to set goals and reach academic and professional objectives (Kemple and Snipes, 2000).

While few other academic skill-building interventions have evaluated the specific impact of academic success on delinquency, several studies have examined the educational impact of the programs. In fact, a rigorous review of hundreds of such programs by the American Youth Policy Forum recently identified 20 academic skills programs that produce significant gains in academic achievement. An overall analysis of these programs found that in comparison with peers or their own past academic performance, the adolescents involved in these 20 programs have higher test scores, graduate from school in higher numbers, and matriculate and remain in college in higher numbers (Jurich and Estes, 2000).

Specifically, one of the programs included in the analysis was the Boys and Girls Club of America. BGCA initiated an afterschool program for public housing youths in 1996. The program includes activities such as essay writing, homework sessions, leisure reading, and educational games. It was evaluated with a nonrandomized comparison and control group design. The comparison and control groups were identical in age, gender, and ethnic/racial background. Some of the youths in the comparison and control group received tutoring but did not attend the structured program. The evaluation found that between the pre-test and 18-month follow-up, program youths had made statistically significant improvements in the average grades for mathematics, English, writing, science, social studies, and an overall grade. The school attendance rates of program youths also increased (Schinke, Cole, and Poulin, 2000)

Another example of an academic skills program is Upward Bound, a federally funded initiative designed to increase opportunities for disadvantaged youths to attend college. The project offers extensive academic instruction as well as counseling, mentoring, and other support services. Students meet throughout the school year and generally participate in an intensive residential summer program that lasts from 5 to 8 weeks. Upward Bound was evaluated by randomly assigning 2,800 youths from a representative sample of 67 Upward Bound programs. Researchers compared program youths against controls by analyzing data from a 6-year longitudinal student survey plus additional information. The evaluation of the first phase found that Upward Bound produced a limited impact (Myers and Schirm, 1997) on the academic skills of program youths. The

evaluation found that students who participate in the program expect to complete more schooling than similar students who do not and the program has a positive impact on the number of academic courses participants take during high school. The students who benefit most are those with lower academic expectations. When impacts are examined by racial/ethnic groups, Hispanic students benefit the most from Upward Bound. Unfortunately, the program shows no impact in the 1st year on participants' high school grades and many students leave after the 1st year (Myers and Schirm, 1997).

Finally, a qualitative analysis of these 20 programs found that each shares common features that American Youth Policy Forum mapped into five strategies of successful programs (Jurich and Estes, 2000). These common features include the following:

High Expectations for Youths, Program, and Staff

This program feature reflects concepts such as academically challenging programmatic content; the expectation that all students have the ability to succeed; clear, well-defined education goals; ongoing staff training; and rigorous program evaluation.

Personalized Attention

This program feature emphasizes a concern for the youth as a student and as a person. The programmatic features include an adoption of small learning environments, the use of individual help and support, and a concern for the youth who may need extra services and support. Other personalized activities include homework and college application assistance, referral to health care and social services, career counseling, and assistance with strengthening the youth's family. Innovation is key in meeting ambitious educational goals.

Innovative Structure/Organization

This program feature concentrates on using traditional styles of program structure and organization to raise academic skills. The specific features included in this category are research-focused programming, flexible hours of operation, extending the school year, using summer months and afterschool hours, changes in teacher and administrator roles, team teaching and teacher involvement in program design, and family, business, and community involvement.

Experiential Learning

Innovative educational environments sometimes require experiential learning to make academic instruction exciting and meaningful. Multicultural awareness, community services, internships, project-based learning, contextual learning, and career focus/planning are components of this program feature.

Long-Term Support

This feature is crucial to the success of academic skills programs, as study habits

and critical thinking are not tasks to be learned overnight. Programs should run for 1 to 5 years and continue from grades 9 through 12 with an emphasis on academic transitions and post-graduation support.

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Boys and Girls Club Project Learn

Intervention:

The Boys and Girls Club of America (BGCA) promotes health, social skills development, education, character building, and leadership in youths, especially those at risk. BGCA succeeds in this goal by offering a wide variety of programs designed to enhance the lives of children and adolescents. The Project Learn program involves enhancing the educational performance of economically disadvantaged adolescents who live in public housing. Program delivery teams consist of local BGCA staff, representatives from the youths' schools, the housing authority, resident councils of the local public housing developments, and parent leaders. Each week the program engages youths in structured activities designed to improve educational enhancement:

- 1 to 2 hours of creative writing
- 4 to 5 hours of leisure reading
- 5 to 6 hours completing school homework
- 4 to 5 hours of discussion with knowledgeable adults
- 2 to 3 hours helping other youths with school homework, projects, and skill acquisition
- 4 to 5 hours of board games and other recreational pursuits that draw on cognitive skills and talents transferable to school lessons

Youths are given incentives such as school supplies, field trips, additional computer time, and special privileges within their local Boys and Girls Club. Parents are encouraged to become involved in the program by helping their child with homework; reading, discussing current events, and playing board games with their child; and taking part in other educational skill acquisition.

Evaluation Methodology:

Project Learn was evaluated using a quasi-experimental, three-arm research design. Program youths who received the educational

enhancement program are compared with youths in BGCA facilities and a control group in other community programs that did not receive the program. Comparison and control sites were chosen for their demographic similarity to program sites relative to size, youth membership, urbanicity, and service population. The sample consisted of 283 youths across 15 sites; 40 percent were female and 63 percent were black, 19 percent Hispanic, 13 percent white, and 5 percent Asian and other ethnicities, with an average age of 12.3. Participants were assessed at baseline and at 6, 18, and 30 months.

Evaluation Outcome:

The evaluation reveals modest support for the value of Project Learn in nonschool settings for high-risk adolescents. BGCA youths who received educational enhancements—relative to youths in BGCA who did not receive the program and compared with youths in other community-based programs—made modest educational improvements. At 30 months, program youths reported significantly greater enjoyment and engagement in reading, verbal skills, writing, and tutoring. They also had better overall averages in reading, spelling, history, science, social studies, and school attendance compared with comparison and control youths. Program and comparison youths had significantly more positive reading skills, writing skills, game skills, overall school performance, and interest in class material than the control group.

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Career Beginnings

Intervention:

Career Beginnings was developed to enhance the life options of disadvantaged, urban high school students. The program is a school–community–university partnership that offers a comprehensive package for juniors and seniors with college potential who, because of their average

grades or economically educationally disadvantaged family backgrounds, would be otherwise unlikely to pursue college or better career options. Though the program targets disadvantaged students, it concentrates on those who demonstrate commitment and motivation. Career Beginnings offers services to help guide students through the college admissions process or through the process of finding full-time employment. Some of the services offered include tutoring, help with college or financial aid applications, job information, and career fairs. Another component of the program involves providing mentors who support students in exploring college and career options through educational workshops, career-specific training, and high-quality summer work experiences.

Evaluation Methodology:

A total of 1,574 students, over seven diverse sites, were randomly assigned to either the program or a control condition (control group individuals did not participate in Career Beginnings but could receive other services from their schools or communities). Students were eligible for the study if they had average grades and attendance but showed motivation such as being involved in school or community activities or having a part-time job. The requirements for each site were that at least 50 percent of the site's enrollees had to come from disadvantaged families (as rated by eligibility for enrollment in the Job Training Partnership Act), at least 80 percent had to come from families where no parent had earned a graduated degree, and 45 percent had to be male. Follow-up interviews occurred 1 and 2 years after the beginning of program.

Evaluation Outcome:

The Career Beginnings study found several positive outcomes. High school attendance was slightly higher for participants than for control group individuals. Participants reported having higher occupational aspirations. The program succeeded in increasing participants' college attendance in the year immediately following graduation. Across seven diverse sites, the proportion of participants who enrolled in a 2- or 4-year college rose 5 percent over nonparticipants. Limitations of the study are that there was a wide range of delivery compliance among the sites—that is, many of the control group students received services and some of the experimental group did not participate in program services. Long-term follow-up for the rates of college graduation and occupational outcomes were not available.

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Child–Parent Center

Intervention:

The Child–Parent Center (CPC) program is a community-based intervention that provides comprehensive educational and family support services to economically and educationally disadvantaged children. The program theory argues that a stable learning environment will promote scholastic development, that parent involvement in a child's education will enhance parent–child interactions and attachment to school, and that early efforts designed to prevent delinquency are more effective than programs targeting teenagers.

The program provides a half-day preschool, a half-day or all-day kindergarten, and an all-day service in the primary grades. Throughout the program three central features are emphasized: 1) the provision of comprehensive services, 2) parental involvement in school to enhance parent–child interactions and attachment to school, and 3) a child-centered, basic reading and math skills concentration characterized by small class sizes and a high number of adult supervisors to promote individualized attention. Parental involvement is an underpinning of the program; each parent is required to spend at least a ½-day per week in the center during preschool and kindergarten. Parent involvement can be in the form of acting as a classroom aide, accompanying field trips, using the parent-resource room, participating in reading groups with other parents, or taking trips to the library with teachers or children. CPCs also sponsor continuing education courses for parents.

Evaluation Methodology:

The evaluation used a partitioned cohort quasi-experimental design with a nonequivalent control group. The analysis included 1,262 program and comparison-group youths for which any data on delinquency was available from ages 13 to 16 (grades 7 to 10) from the Chicago Longitudinal Study. The treatment group included 956 CPC participants who received various

degrees of treatment between ages 3 and 9 and 306 controls who participated in an alternative intervention (an all-day kindergarten program). Analyses indicate that there were no significant differences between the two groups, except for the number of siblings and a missing data variable for family background. These differences were statistically controlled for by an environmental risk variable. Finally, although program participants are more likely to be present in the study sample, attrition analysis indicated no evidence of differential attrition. Delinquency was measured through school records and youth self-reports.

Evaluation Outcome:

The evaluation revealed mixed but promising results. It suggested that the duration of program participation (0 to 6 years) and extensive participation in the program were significantly associated with lower rates of school-reported delinquency infractions at ages 13 and 14. Extended program participation was only marginally associated with a lower rate of delinquency infractions at ages 12 to 16. Preschool participation alone had no systematic relation with delinquency but was marginally associated with delinquency reports at ages 15 and 16. Reduction in school-reported delinquency was a consequence of less frequent school mobility and postprogram parent involvement in school.

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Extended-Service Schools Initiative

Intervention:

The Extended-Service Schools (ESS) Initiative promotes academic and nonacademic development of young people during their out-of-school hours. While the programs differ in organizational structure and management, all ESS programs operate their programs in school buildings, involve partnerships between community-based organizations (and/or universities) and schools, and offer a range of activities to the children and youths who participate—including academic and enrichment activities and sports and recreation. In addition, the financial resources are under the control of the partnering organization rather than the school.

Evaluation Methodology:

The ESS Initiative evaluation used a multimethod approach design. The collected data included baseline and follow-up student surveys, parent surveys, and activity observation from 2,000 youths (grades 1 through 8) from 10 different schools in six different cities. The final follow-up questionnaires included 16 outcome measures of behaviors and social-psychological constructs across three outcome areas: risk and nonrisk behaviors, school attitudes and behaviors, and adult support. The data study was conducted primarily through multivariate analysis.

The evaluation concentrated on four central questions:

1. Which children and youths came to the afterschool programs? (Also, why did they come? And, were the programs attracting the young people who could most benefit from participation?)
2. What were the characteristics of high-quality activities in these programs—activities that promoted the positive development of the youths who attended?
3. What benefits did the youths gain from participation?
4. What was the cost to operate the afterschool programs, and what were the ways to finance them?

Evaluation Outcome:

Students who participated in the ESS Initiative experienced positive change in four key areas:

- *Staying out of trouble.* Responses from both students and parents suggest that the ESS Initiative influenced students' ability to respond in a socially appropriate manner to social challenge and that participating students were less likely to have begun to drink

alcohol.

- *Improving school attitudes and behavior.* Roughly two thirds of the youths believed that ESS helped them do better in school.
- *Strengthening social networks.* Students and parents reported that the program assisted in youths' development of social skills with other children and helped youths feel less shy around adults.
- *Learning new skills, seeing new possibilities, and improving self-confidence.* Nine out of 10 parents felt the program helped their children learn new skills, expand their interests, and feel better about themselves. Students also reported improved self-confidence and that they had learned new skills and interests.

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Let Each One Teach One

Intervention:

Let Each One Teach One is based on literature findings that mentor relations facilitate academic success. The program uses the relationship between an elementary or middle school student and an older, more experienced student role model to provide life-skills enrichment, self-image, support, and a sense of belonging. Mentors help participants set personal and academic goals. The participants' study skills are assessed, and mentors provide methods for helping them learn and remember what was discussed in class, plan and write papers, learn methods for math assignments, prepare for a test, complete homework, and improve study at home. Mentors model how they accomplished the foregoing and explore with the students a plan for doing the same. Visualization procedures are used to help students envision themselves as more successful.

The intervention approach consists of one-on-one mentoring, self-regulation skills building for promoting self-efficacy, and academic tutoring for minimizing individual and school risk factors. The program serves to enhance the protective factors of academic performance, attachment and commitment to school, consistent enforcement of rules regarding behavior, and attachment to prosocial role models.

Evaluation Methodology:

The program was evaluated using a quasi-experimental pretest–posttest design with comparison groups. Sixth, seventh, and eighth graders with high at-risk ratings in school A were randomly assigned to treatment group 1 (n=20) or to the waitlist (control) group (n=19), and in school B they were assigned to treatment group 2 (n=16). The treatment consisted of a weekly session in which the mentor met with the student for 50 minutes. The “will and skill” (group 1) sessions used the mentor relationship for addressing personal, school-, and problem-related areas. This mentor role-model function provided support, challenge, and vision for increasing academic achievement along with the establishment of a “skill” domain to help students acquire strategies for self-awareness, self-evaluation, and self-monitoring. Those in the “will” (group 2) condition did not establish a “skill domain.” The sample consisted of 55 youths: 20 in group 1, 16 in group 2, and 19 in the control group. All participants (n=55) and mentors were African-American males. Data was collected through the Children’s Self-Efficacy Scale, school data, mentor–student interviews/ questionnaires, and the Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents.

Evaluation Outcome:

The evaluation showed significantly higher posttest results for the treatment group 1 on self-efficacy, grade point average, and teacher conduct ratings when compared with the control group. There were no differences between treatment groups 1 and 2. A paired ‘t’ test showed that treatment group 2 obtained a significantly higher gain in self-efficacy, while treatment group 1 obtained a significantly higher gain in grade point average. Posttest results did not reveal any significant differences among treatment group 1, treatment group 2, and the waitlist group on the number of unexcused absences, office referrals, suspensions, self-perception for scholastic competence, social acceptance, behavioral conduct, and global self-worth. Paired ‘t’ tests showed that from pretest to posttest, treatment group 2 showed the most gain for scholastic competence, the waitlist group had a significant positive gain for unexcused absences, and treatment group 1 had the largest reduction in office referrals.

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Skills, Opportunity, and Recognition (SOAR)

Intervention:

The Skills, Opportunity, and Recognition (SOAR) program (formerly known as the Seattle Social Development Project) has its roots in the Social Development Model, which posits that positive social bonds can reduce antisocial behavior and delinquency. It is a multidimensional intervention designed for the general population and high-risk children (those with low socioeconomic status and low school achievement) who are attending grade school or middle school. The program seeks to decrease juveniles' problem behaviors by working with children and their parents and teachers. It intervenes early in children's development to increase prosocial bonds, to strengthen attachment and commitment to schools, and to decrease delinquency.

SOAR concentrates heavily on a combination of teacher training and parent training.

Teachers receive instruction that emphasizes proactive classroom management, interactive teaching, and cooperative learning. When implemented, these techniques minimize classroom disturbances by establishing clear rules and rewards for compliance; increase children's academic performance; and allow students to work in small, heterogeneous groups to increase their social skills and contact with prosocial peers. In addition, first grade teachers teach communication, decision-making, negotiation, and conflict-resolution skills; sixth grade teachers present refusal skills training.

Parents receive optional training programs throughout their children's schooling. When children are in first and second grades, seven sessions of family management training help parents monitor children and provide appropriate and consistent discipline. When children are in second and

third grades, four sessions encourage parents to improve communication between themselves, teachers, and students; create positive home learning environments; help their children develop reading and math skills, and support their children's academic progress. When children are in fifth and sixth grades, five sessions help parents create family positions on drugs and encourage children's resistance skills.

Evaluation Methodology:

A 20-year seminal study continues to be conducted in urban, multiethnic elementary schools in Seattle, Wash. The study uses a quasi-experimental design with comparison groups. First graders in five schools were assigned to intervention or control classrooms. In 1985, when the original first graders entered the fifth grade, the panel was expanded to 808 students from 18 Seattle elementary schools. The full intervention group received the intervention package from first grade through sixth. The late intervention group received the intervention package in grades 5 and 6 only, and the control group received no special intervention. The study has followed this multiethnic urban sample of 808 children since they entered the fifth grade in 1985. The sample includes nearly equal numbers of males (n=412) and females (n=396). Slightly fewer than half (46 percent) identified themselves as European-Americans. African-Americans (24 percent) and Asian-Americans (21 percent) also made up substantial portions of the sample. The remaining youths were Native American (6 percent) or other ethnic groups (3 percent). Forty-six percent of respondents' parents reported a maximum family income under \$20,000 a year in 1985, and more than half of the sample (52 percent) participated in the National School Lunch/School Breakfast Program at some point in the fifth through seventh grades. Sample sizes vary for each assessment year based on the number of respondents who completed the interview in that year. Implementation quality was ensured by teachers in both sets of classrooms being observed for 50 minutes on 2 different days in the fall and spring of each year and given scores rating their fidelity to intervention practices. Data was also collected using questionnaires for youths, parents, and teachers; data on delinquency charges in King County, Wash., Juvenile Court; California Achievement Test results; grade point averages; and school disciplinary action reports through age 17 from the Seattle School District.

Evaluation Outcome:

When the students reached 18 (6 years postintervention) they showed positive effects for the full treatment intervention group, compared with the

control group, on many of the school, delinquency, and sexual behavior outcomes. Students in the full intervention reported significantly stronger attachment to school, greater improvement in self-reported achievement, and significantly less involvement in school misbehavior than controls. While no effects were shown for either the full or late intervention groups for lifetime prevalence of cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana, or other illicit drug use at age 18, significantly more subjects in the control group than in the full intervention group had committed violent acts (59.7 percent versus 48.3 percent), reported heavy alcohol use in the past year (25.6 percent versus 15.4 percent), had engaged in sexual intercourse (83.0 percent versus 72.1 percent), and had multiple sex partners (61.5 percent versus 49.7 percent versus; $p=.04$). Analysis of the interactions between poverty and intervention condition showed that the full intervention was significantly more effective for poorer children in positively affecting attachment to school and in reducing the need to repeat a grade. The intervention had significantly greater effects for working and middle class youths in reducing the lifetime prevalence of pregnancy or of having or fathering a baby. Most observed intervention effects did not differ by gender; however, the full intervention had significantly greater effects on preventing males from repeating a grade and engaging in sexual activity.

Evaluations have demonstrated that the SOAR improves school performance, family relationships, and the students' ability to avoid drug/alcohol involvement at various grades.

At the end of grade 2, SOAR students, compared with control students, showed

- Lower levels of aggression and antisocial, externalizing behaviors for white males
- Lower levels of self-destructive behaviors for white females

At the beginning of grade 5, SOAR students, compared with control students, had

- Less alcohol and delinquency initiation
- Increases in family management practices, communication, and attachment to family

- More attachment and commitment to school

At the end of grade 6, high-risk youth, compared with control youth, were more attached and committed to school, and SOAR boys were less involved with antisocial peers.

At the end of grade 11, SOAR students, compared with control students, showed

- Reduced involvement in violent delinquency and sexual activity
- Reductions in being drunk and in drinking and driving

Researchers found that the benefits of SOAR lasted through age 21. The students, now young adults, were engaged in less risky sexual behavior and had less history of violence and less heavy use of alcohol.

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Supporting Adolescents with Guidance and Employment (SAGE)

Intervention:

Supporting Adolescents with Guidance and Employment (SAGE) is a violence-prevention program developed specifically for African-American adolescents. The program consists of three main components, namely a Rites of Passages (ROP) program, a summer jobs training and placement (JTP) program, and an entrepreneurial experience that uses the Junior Achievement (JA) model.

The purpose of the first component, ROP, is to develop a strong sense of

African-American cultural pride and ethnic identity in the participants and instill a sense of responsibility in their community, their peers, and themselves. In seminars held every other week over 8 months, the program curriculum (developed in 1993 by the Durham, N.C., Business and Professional Chain) also promotes self-esteem, positive attitudes, and the avoidance of a range of risky behaviors. Instructors cover topics such as conflict resolution, African-American history, male sexuality, and manhood training. Mentors from the community provide outreach experiences and tutoring.

The second component, the JTP experience, places youths in summer jobs at desirable worksites such as dentist offices, local museums, and recreational centers. Site supervisors are encouraged to provide structure. Youths are trained in appropriate business behavior and dress. Job counselors work with the youths to resolve issues such as transportation.

The third component, JA, teaches how to develop and implement a small business. With the guidance of volunteer advisers from the local business community, youths form a legal corporation, develop a business plan, elect officers, and sell stock to family and friends. They also market and sell a product (e.g., T-shirts, caps).

The overall approach of SAGE is based on the theory that positive gains in personal and social responsibility, educational aspirations, and academic achievement—in tandem with employment training and opportunities fostered by community mentors—will make a positive impact on reducing violence among the participants.

Evaluation Methodology:

SAGE was assessed using a longitudinal, randomized field trial in which program applicants were assigned to one of three programmatic conditions: 1) guidance plus employment (ROP, JTP, and JA), 2) employment only (JTP and JA), and 3) a comparison group eligible for delayed participation in JA only. Survey data collection points occurred at baseline, at 18 months, and at 30 months after the program began. After completion of baseline questionnaires, the 255 eligible youths (African-American males ages 12–16) were assigned to each group: 86 to the guidance and employment (ROP/JTP/JA) condition, 84 to the employment-only (JTP/JA) condition, and 85 to the comparison condition. The mean age of the participants was 14. Fifty-three percent reported receiving free lunches at school; 18 percent reported that their mothers had not completed high school; and 50 percent were not living with a father. Self-report and archival data was used to assess the effectiveness

of SAGE on behavioral outcomes for a variety of risk behaviors (e.g., violence-related behaviors such as physical fighting, carrying or using a weapon; alcohol-, tobacco-, and other drug-related behaviors such as use, abuse, and commerce; and risky sexual behaviors). In addition to outcome measurements, the self-report survey included questions regarding process measurement. Baseline data indicated that during the previous year, many had engaged in various violence-related behaviors, including fighting (63 percent) and carrying a gun (22 percent) or a knife (30 percent).

Evaluation Outcome:

Despite the absence of statistical significance, the pattern of results from the evaluation provides tentative evidence that participation in SAGE can reduce the likelihood of violence-related and other health-risk behaviors among African-American male adolescents. At the 18-month follow-up, the mean number of problem behaviors reported by the employment-with-guidance group declined, in contrast to the slight increase of the comparison group and to no change in the employment-only group. Examining each behavioral outcome individually, differences in a positive direction for employment-with-guidance were observed for 8 of the 10 outcomes, relative to the control group. For the employment-only group, positive differences were observed for 7 of the 10 outcome measures. Of the 10 behavioral outcomes examined, the program seemed to have the greatest benefits for reducing reports for carrying a gun, selling illegal drugs, and injuring others with a weapon. However, programmatic gains were not sustained over the 30-month follow-up. Assessment of the psychosocial constructs (e.g., increasing self-esteem, educational aspirations, beliefs supporting aggression) found no statistically significant effects. The relatively small group sizes in this study may have diminished the possibilities for finding statistically significant effects. In addition, the analysis was performed on all participants according to the group to which they were randomly assigned, regardless of their actual level of exposure to the programmatic components. This “intent to treat” approach is viewed as the most rigorous approach for assessing programmatic effects in randomized designs, but it is also a conservative one that may underestimate the actual impact if all the young men had participated fully in the intervention activities. Including all participants—regardless of their level of exposure to treatment—may have contributed to the lack of statistically significant findings and may have underestimated the actual impact of the program.

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