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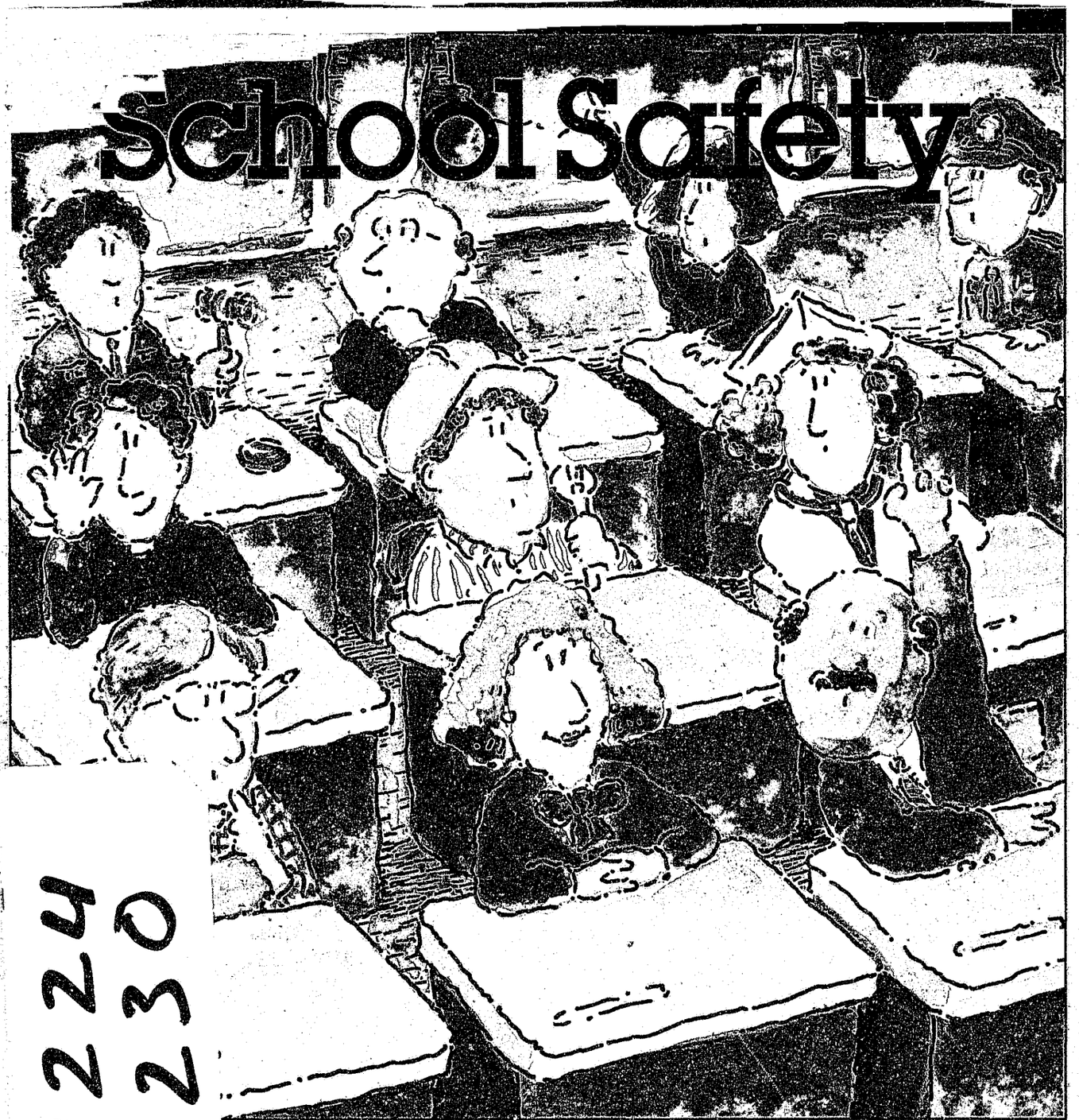
School Safety



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NATIONAL SCHOOL SAFETY CENTER

Pepperdine University's National School Safety Center is a partnership of the U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Education. NSSC's goal is to promote school safety, improve discipline, increase attendance, and suppress drug traffic and abuse in all our nation's schools.

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About the cover:
Schools are benefiting from a resurgence of community involvement — from private citizens, commercial businesses and public agencies — stimulated both by positive school-public relations and, unfortunately, by a series of crime-related crises. Illustration by Deborah Zemke, Copyright © 1988, NSSC.

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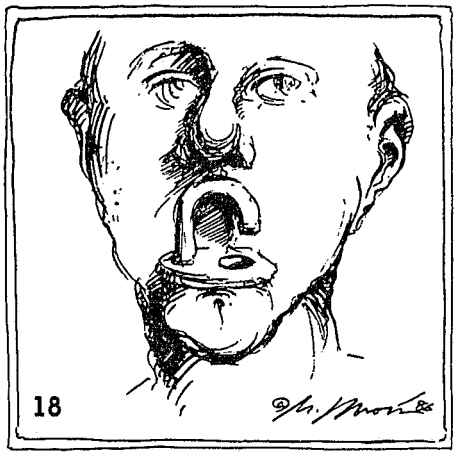

BY TERRY MODGLIN

A new curriculum helps students appreciate their vested interest in preventing the crime and violence that is affecting them, their classmates and their education.

School crime: Up close and personal

Is it worthwhile to share with students the responsibility for building a safer school? Experience says yes. Teaching students to be involved engenders their support and is critical to establishing and sustaining a safe school. Student enthusiasm and ability provide a lasting, positive climate against crime. Physical security and disciplinary measures also prove much more effective when students are partners in the crime-prevention process.

Students have — or should have — a vested interest in school safety. School is where students spend most of their waking hours, and they suffer the consequences of an unsafe school. In fact, fully a third of all violent crimes and four-fifths of thefts against younger teens (ages 12-15) take place at school; one out of seven violent crimes and two-fifths of thefts against older teens (ages 16-19) occur on school campuses.

The question is, how can students be convinced to support safer and better schools, both as a general concept and as a personal goal?

Program rationale

Students are more than willing to take an active role in preventing crime. During the past three years, experience with 80,000 students in 300 secondary schools in 20 major cities offers strong evidence that teens who know the costs of crime and how to prevent it form an excellent core of support for a secure learning environment. What is the secret? Students must understand the benefits of crime prevention, believe that effective action is possible, and see a responsible role for themselves.

Teens, Crime and the Community (TC&C), developed jointly by the National Crime Prevention Council and the National Institute for Citizen Education in the Law, promotes just such an environment. It combines education and student action to cut crime and develop students' sense of mutual responsibility.

TC&C, which has been funded nationally by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and locally by OJJDP and seven private foundations, approaches crime prevention and personal safety issues from the teen's viewpoint, not that of a "worried adult." Teens examine how crime hurts them and their families, friends and neighbors. Instead of minimizing their concern and capacity, TC&C challenges teens to learn and serve, to help find solutions, and to develop a stake in the community where they soon will be adults. One teen from a core city school put it plainly:

If somebody is breaking into a car that's not yours, you can't be selfish. You've got to think that that car could be yours. It's the same thing with graffiti on the wall. It hurts us all. We're in it together. We have to change our thinking. We have to take responsibility.

Why and how does Teens, Crime and the Community generate this kind of support for crime-free schools? First, a curriculum unit and its companion textbook provide a basis for classroom learning; and second, student-led action projects address real needs of the school and neighborhood. This combination makes teens feel a personal investment in crime prevention.

Classroom learning

The TC&C curriculum examines how and why crime occurs, how community is defined, and how individual and group action can protect the community against crime.

Focusing on young people as possible crime victims speaks to all students without judging anyone. Teaching basic crime reduction and avoidance skills motivates students because the lesson is seen in the context of the school and community. Perhaps even more important, from the perspectives of learning and citizenship, is that the curriculum helps the student understand the link between the well-being of the individual and that of the community.

Terry Modglin is director of youth programs for the National Crime Prevention Council.

Ten ways students can make their school safer

1. School crime watches apply Neighborhood Watch concepts to the school.
2. Cross-age teaching provides a chance for middle and high school students to present prevention information to younger students.
3. Mediation programs, in which trained students act as a neutral third party, help resolve conflicts without violence.
4. Plays and prevention performances present information to the student body in appealing ways.
5. Student forums and discussions promote the use of research and resource persons to develop student insight into problems and possible solutions.
6. Surveys on crime and other issues collect facts, engage student interest and spread word of impending projects.
7. Crime prevention clubs teach students to watch out for and help overcome crime.
8. School crime prevention fairs or special observance days give students an opportunity to participate in workshops on prevention and safety.
9. Community service activities build students' self-esteem and school pride.
10. Student courts consider and dispose of student infractions.

Prepared by the National Crime Prevention Council.

The textbook, also called *Teens, Crime and the Community,* contains six chapters that aim to develop an understanding of how crime impacts the community at large and teens in particular. These chapters also outline the basic elements of the criminal justice system. Five crime-specific chapters discuss the impact and prevention of child abuse, acquaintance rape, shoplifting, substance abuse and drunk driving. The curriculum can be adapted to complement or supplement the objectives of the particular course in which it is used. Teachers have used part or all of the text in as few as four classroom sessions or as many as 45 sessions. The unit has been infused into law-related education, social studies, civics, health and other classes.

The lessons are highly interactive and experientially based to capture students' attention. The text addresses students with different learning styles by listing chapter objectives; drawing on the students' own experiences to develop key points; presenting result-oriented exercises for classroom, small group or individual response; and asking pragmatic, application-oriented review questions. Community involvement themes are stressed, with particular applications highlighted by "In Your Community" exercises.

One of the most important results is that students see the crime problem more realistically, not as a remote abstraction. Some common myths — that crimes are committed by strangers, that those who get drunk or use drugs commit crimes but are not victims, and that sexual assault usually is committed by strangers — are exploded.

Teachers, students and community resource persons attest to the curriculum's impact. One administrator reported, "Students not taking the course are borrowing the book to read it." A teacher hailed the way this kind of curriculum captures student interest: "Students were almost flying out of their seats to get words in during classroom presentations."

Teen action projects

The second pillar of the teen-centered program consists of student projects, carried out in the school or nearby neighborhood, that put classroom knowledge to work solving real problems. The premise is that students can and will make a substantial contribution to changing the school and its environs, both in their own interest and that of others. Even though they may have the guidance and support of adult "champions," student responsibility remains the core of the program.

Projects are done in a variety of frameworks: as an exercise emanating from the classroom curriculum, as a club activity, or as a school project open to the whole student body.

In less than three academic years, students through Teens, Crime and the Community have carried out hundreds of excellent projects. These include:

- Teams of students in a Newport, Rhode Island, high school — including one dressed as McGruff, the Crime Dog — spoke to 1,300 elementary school students about how to prevent abduction and sexual abuse.
- Students in five schools in Knoxville, Tennessee, competed for awards based on their knowledge of the rights and status of victims under Tennessee law, as well as on the percentage of students at each school who were involved in crime prevention activities during "Watch Out/Help Out Weeks" (the latter part of April).
- In Dallas, Texas, a student organization called Teens Against Community Crime collaborated with the police audiovisual department to produce a 15-minute video on teen crime prevention.
- A student group in Baltimore, Maryland, organized and implemented an all-day Crime Awareness Forum. More than 500 students participated in 90-minute workshops, conducted throughout the day, on the impact of crime on teens.
- A student-run crime watch at a Washington, D.C., junior high was

credited with preventing major fights. The need for such prevention was demonstrated recently when, at a District of Columbia school *without* a watch program, a cafeteria argument resulted in the shooting of four students.

- A Bakersfield, California, crime prevention club meets with the local delinquency prevention officer periodically to develop projects that will reduce crime and delinquency.
- Student council leaders in Philadelphia's middle schools, who are involved in TC&C as part of their council program, have carried out a variety of projects ranging from a grafitti paint-out to helping start a victim support group.

Building links and benefits

The Teens, Crime and the Community initiative clearly has had national impact. The participation of 80,000 teens, more than 500 teachers, and as many or more community resource persons speaks eloquently to the compelling nature of the issue and of the information provided. But the initiative is more important as a prototype of the way prevention education and action must be linked to help build vital student support for crime-free schools.

Teens, Crime and the Community presents two benefits to students and to our educational future: students can prevent their own victimization and do so in a way that enhances their education and understanding of the community.

Enlisting students in the crime-prevention effort is not a panacea, but the result is safer and better schools, as well as students who have developed better interpersonal skills and an increased sense of community and responsibility. □

Further information on the Teens, Crime and the Community program can be obtained from the National Crime Prevention Council, 733 15th Street, N.W., Suite 540, Washington, D.C. 20005, Attention: Youth Division, 202/393-7141.

New programs pay more than lip service to education partnerships

Schools and their communities always have worked together, both to acquaint students with the world of work and community responsibilities and to strengthen the educational system. Partnerships between schools and outside sponsors, for instance, provided students with additional educational opportunities, and schools and their community partners share their resources in a way that is mutually beneficial.

In February 1989, a report called "Education Partnerships in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools" was released by the National Center for Education Statistics. The report was based on a survey, requested by the Office of Private Sector Initiatives in the U.S. Department of Education, that focused on partnerships in 1987-88. Among the findings:

Between 1983-84 and 1987-88, the number of education partnerships between public elementary and secondary schools rose from 42,200 to 140,800. Of those partnerships, 57 percent provided goods and services, 22 percent provided money, and 21 percent provided both. The rate of partnership participation among schools increased from 17 to 40 percent.

More than nine million students — 24 percent of all public school students — were directly involved in education partnerships.

Most partnerships were initiated by principals. Businesses provided 52 percent of the partnerships. The next largest group was civic or service organizations (16 percent), followed by individuals (8 percent); colleges or universities and government agencies (7 percent each); business organizations, such as the Chamber of Commerce (5 percent); foundations (3 percent); religious organizations (1 percent); and others (1 percent).

More secondary schools (46 percent) reported having partnerships than elementary schools (36 percent). The larger the enrollment, the larger the percentage of schools with partnerships. Schools with fewer than 300 students had a 28 percent participation rate, while schools with more than 1,000 students had a 57 percent participation rate.

Schools in the Southeast reported the largest percentage (35 percent) of students directly involved in educations partnerships, compared with 17 to 24 percent in other regions. More urban school students (28 percent) were involved than rural school students (19 percent). In addition, 29 percent of students attending high-poverty schools participated in a partnership program, as opposed to 18 percent of students in low-poverty schools.

The two most common types of support were guest speakers, special demonstrations or use of the sponsor's facilities, and special awards, scholarships or other incentives for students.

Principals said they would like increased support in those areas, and they also indicated a preference for donations of computers, other equipment or books.

For a complete copy of the survey results, write the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.