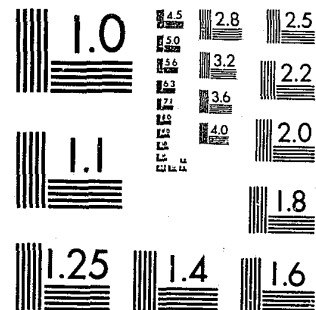


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REDUCING SCHOOL CRIME
A GUIDE TO PROGRAM INTERVENTIONS

U.S. Department of Justice
National Institute of Justice

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Social Action Research Center
April 1983

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ACQUISITIONS

The School Team Approach is an effort to mobilize local resources to deal with local school problems. It was developed by the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Education Program in the Department of Education as a way of helping schools handle problems of alcohol and drug abuse.

Through an inter-agency agreement with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the team approach was applied to problems of school crime and disruption. This report describes the kinds of program interventions tried by 173 school teams and their impact on six dimensions of school crime.

This report is part of a larger study of the impact of the School Team Approach on school crime. The study was funded by the National Institute for Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and carried out by the Social Action Research Center.

What is the best way to reduce school crime? Our research indicates there are several sides to school crime, and no single program intervention is successful in all situations. While not intended as a test of specific approaches to fighting crime, our study does provide some evidence of links between different programs and reductions in school crime.

We studied the efforts of school teams working in 173 high, middle, and elementary schools around the country, obtaining from them descriptions of the crime prevention and reduction programs they designed and carried out.¹ Questionnaires on crime and disruptive behavior were gathered over a three-year period from the students and teachers in these schools to see if any change occurred after the team programs were put into effect.²

Describing School Team Programs

Our procedure for assessing the value of different approaches to school crime reduction was to define, for each team, the general strategy they adopted in working for change as well as the specific kinds of change they hoped to bring about.³

Strategic thrust of team programs

The information on team program strategies was used to classify teams in three broad categories of team "thrust."⁴

¹There were 70 high schools, 71 middle schools, and 32 elementary schools.

²These questionnaires were given in the 1977-78, 1978-79, and 1979-80 school years. Information on team programs was obtained in 1979 and 1980.

³Teams usually tried multiple programs--up to 17--making it necessary to search for common themes across the set of programs each team mounted.

⁴The teams not classified in this way used program thrusts that occurred too infrequently to allow us to draw conclusions about their effect on crime and disruptive behavior.

A discipline thrust (26 of 173 teams). These teams tried to change the school's way of handling discipline, attendance, and school security.

- Examples:
- revising the school's disciplinary handbook
 - creating an in-school suspension program
 - offering rewards for good behavior
 - installing a burglar alarm
 - adding a security guard
 - using students as hall monitors

What these programs have in common is their effort to deal directly with problem behavior. They vary in the kinds of crime problems they address (security programs, for example, are often used to combat vandalism; in-school suspension programs are likely to be used for a wide range of problem behavior). They also vary in the extent to which students, teachers, and parents are involved in the program.

A communications thrust (46 of 173 teams). These teams tried to increase communication within the school or between the school and the community.

- Examples:
- weekly breakfasts for teachers
 - talent shows involving both students and teachers
 - parent meetings around school problems
 - teacher visits to the homes of problem students
 - a student-teacher-parent task force to work on the problem of vandalism
 - a student advisory council to work with administration

What these programs have in common is their effort to improve communication among the groups concerned with the school--students, teachers, parents, and administrators. This may be done by promoting involvement in school activities, improved relationships between groups, or participation in making decisions about the operation of the school.

A human relations thrust (48 of 173 teams). These teams tried to increase self-understanding and ability to relate to other people.

- Examples:
- a workshop for students in values clarification
 - small group meetings with teachers and students to explore one's impression on other members of the group
 - teacher meeting with small group of students for personal growth, goal setting, and problem solving
 - using roleplaying to help teachers understand student needs and feelings
 - "magic circle" meetings in which parents and teachers listed to students sound off about their feelings
 - a workshop for administrators and department heads on conflict resolution

What these programs have in common is their effort to help participants understand their own feelings and the effect of their behavior on others and to foster more effective ways of relating to other people.

School team program objectives

In addition to classification by team strategy or thrust, we grouped teams by the kinds of changes they expected their programs to bring about in the school.

- increased school safety and security
- increased effectiveness of discipline
- increased clarity of school rules
- improved academic performance
- increased knowledge for coping with life problems
- increased student self-esteem
- increased teacher morale
- improved student/teacher relationships
- improved teacher/parent relationships
- increased human relations skills
- increased involvement in school activities
- increased participation in decisions about school operation

The last three may be directed to students, to teachers, or to parents.

Most teams expected their programs to bring about more than one kind of change. They differed in the changes they expected their programs to bring about. They also differed in the group they were trying to change: students, teachers, parents, or the school at large.

When a team reports directing effort toward one or more program objectives, we consider this a statement of their ideas about what problems need to be addressed in order to reduce crime and disruptive behavior. If a team identifies a majority of its programs as aiming to improve teacher morale, for example, we understand this to mean they believe improved morale will lead to a reduction in crime.

The teams addressed different kinds of crime problems--vandalism, theft, personal attack and disruptive behavior, alcohol and drug use. Some teams worked primarily on one or two problems. Others were concerned with all types of problem behavior.

Linking Programs to Outcomes

In what follows, we give our views, developed over several years of analysis, reflection, and synthesis of data, on what programs appear to be most effective in reducing crime and disruption. We wish to stress that a given program does not work equally well against all types of problems and in all types of schools. Accordingly, we present findings and suggestions for six distinct dimensions of school crime:

- vandalism
- theft
- drug and alcohol availability
- attacks on students
- attacks on teachers
- school climate/fear of crime

In addition, our analyses of how each of these changed in response to different kinds of team activity were carried out separately within each of the three main types of schools--high, middle, and elementary--included in the study.

Finally, before presenting the summary of study findings, we ask the reader to keep these things in mind:

- the programs described as effective may be so because of program characteristics about which we have no information (we have ruled out overall team effectiveness as one of those characteristics);
- the programs described as ineffective may be so because they are inappropriate for that kind of school, but also because the particular program is not carried out well or because something else must change in the school before it can be effective;
- the teams did not try all possible programs; others, not reported here, may be equally or more effective.

In other words, we are providing only a rough guide to what is likely to pay off in schools that want to reduce crime and disruption. It is a place to start when thinking about the problems of a particular school, not a prescription for what will work in all schools.

Reducing Crime in High Schools

Vandalism

Vandalism is measured by teacher reports of school safety from vandalism and theft.

A communications thrust is the most effective in reducing vandalism in high schools. A human relations thrust is the least effective.

The teams that are most effective in reducing vandalism in high schools try to do one or more of the following:

- give students information needed to cope with life problems
- improve student/teacher relationships
- involve teachers in school activities
- improve teacher/parent relationships
- involve parents in school activities

The teams that are least effective in reducing vandalism in high schools try to do the following:

- increase student self-esteem

Theft

Theft is measured by student and teacher reports that they have had possessions stolen or damaged. This includes teacher cars.

A communications thrust is the most effective in reducing theft in high schools. Both discipline and human relations thrusts are relatively ineffective.

The teams that are most effective in reducing theft in high schools try to do one or more of the following:

- involve teachers in school activities
- reduce the level of drug use in the school

The teams that are least effective in reducing theft in high schools try to do one or more of the following:

- improve the school's disciplinary system
- increase teacher morale

Drug and alcohol availability

Drug and alcohol availability is measured by student reports of how easy it is to get alcohol, marijuana, and hard drugs at school.

No one program thrust is more effective than another in reducing drug and alcohol availability in high schools.

The teams that are most effective in reducing drug and alcohol availability in high schools try to do the following:

- increase the human relations skills of teachers

No other program objective is related to amount of change in drug and alcohol availability.

Attacks on students

Attacks on students are measured by student and teacher reports of incidents of student victimization and by judgments of student safety from attack.

No one program thrust is more effective than another in reducing attacks on students in high schools.

The teams that are most effective in reducing attacks on students in high schools try to do one or more of the following:

- increase the security of the school
- improve the school's disciplinary system
- increase the clarity and understanding of school rules
- give students information needed to cope with life problems
- create opportunities for students to participate in school decisions
- improve student/teacher relationships
- involve teachers in school activities
- improve teacher/parent relationships

The teams that are least effective in reducing attacks on students in high schools try to do the following:

- increase student self-esteem

Attacks on teachers

Attacks on teachers are measured by student and teacher reports of verbal and physical attacks on teachers and of classroom disruption.

A communications thrust is the most effective in reducing attacks on teachers in high schools. Both discipline and human relations thrusts are relatively ineffective.

The teams that are most effective in reducing attacks on teachers in high schools try to do one or more of the following:

- create opportunities for students to participate in school decisions
- improve student/teacher relationships
- involve teachers in school activities

The following are effective in reducing classroom disruption, a less severe form of attacks on teachers.

- give students information needed to cope with life problems
- improve teacher/parent relationships
- increase the human relations skills of parents

The teams that are least effective in reducing attacks on teachers in high schools try to do one or more of the following:

- increase the security of the school
- improve the school's disciplinary system
- increase student self-esteem

School climate

School climate is measured by student and teacher reports of tension in the school, rule-breaking and illegal behavior, and their own fear while in school.

A communications thrust is the most effective in improving school climate in high schools. A discipline thrust is the least effective.

The teams that are most effective in improving school climate in high schools try to do one or more of the following:

- increase the clarity and understanding of school rules (*this is effective in changing teacher views of school climate, but has little effect on student views*)
- give students information needed to cope with life problems
- involve teachers in school activities
- improve student/teacher relationships (*this is effective in reducing tension in the school*)
- improve teacher/parent relationships (*this is particularly effective in changing student views of school climate*)

The following are effective in reducing teacher fear, but have no effect on students.

- increase the human relations skills of teachers
- create opportunities for teachers to participate in school decisions

The teams that are least effective in improving school climate in high schools try to do the following:

- increase student self-esteem

High schools: a summary of findings

High school teams that try to increase communication within the school or between the school and the community are the most effective in reducing both person and property crime and improving school climate. Teams that focus on discipline and security and those that concentrate on human relations training are not as effective.

The key, it appears, is to work on getting people in the school community to talk to and work with one another. This is different than helping students (or teachers or parents) learn about themselves and how they relate to others on an individual level. This does not mean that these are unimportant goals. We suspect they are better reached by activities that bring people together to work on common tasks.

The involvement of both parents and teachers is of benefit. It provides visible evidence to students that someone cares and to teachers that there are others who share their concerns. In each case it reduces isolation. Working on teacher/parent relationships has a greater impact on students than on teachers, especially on their reports of the overall climate of the school. Working on student/teacher relationships has a greater impact on teachers, probably because the team programs with this objective involved mostly teachers.

Students respond well to programs that allow them to develop the knowledge and competencies that will aid them in dealing with the world beyond the school. This includes programs that let them participate in decisions about the operation of the school. These bring them into working partnership with adults. It is not helpful just to make students feel better about themselves, an objective generally associated with programs of the morale-building kind. Teacher morale programs also do not help.

Thus what seems to work in high schools is a thrust toward active, responsible participation and involvement in solving real problems. This is more effective than making students or teachers feel better or better understand themselves (though this may be a byproduct of participation and involvement).

It is also more effective than trying to control student behavior. For teachers, however, there may be some advantage in programs aimed at making school rules clear and well understood (for example, by developing and publicizing a discipline handbook). In schools with such programs, teachers report a better climate and believe students are safer from attack. Students do not share these views.

Team programs are less effective against theft and drug use¹ in high schools than in changing the perceived safety of students and teachers and the school's climate generally. We have very little to say about effective approaches to high school theft and drug problems save that efforts to involve teachers may be of some help. It is possible that changes in school climate and safety (and the changes in attitudes and acting-out behavior these suggest) will eventually be followed by reduction in theft and drug use. We found that theft does tend to decrease with longer team interventions.

¹ Assuming our measure of reported drug availability is related to student use of drugs.

Reducing Crime in Middle Schools

Vandalism

Vandalism is measured by teacher reports of school safety from vandalism and theft.

A discipline thrust is the most effective in reducing vandalism in middle schools. Both communications and human relations thrusts are relatively ineffective.

The teams that are most effective in reducing vandalism in middle schools try to do one or more of the following:

- increase the security of the school
- reduce the vandalism problem

The teams that are least effective in reducing vandalism in middle schools try to do one or more of the following:

- give students information needed to cope with life problems
- increase student self-esteem
- increase the human relations skills of students or teachers
- involve parents in school activities

No one program thrust is more effective than another in reducing theft in middle schools.

The teams that are most effective in reducing theft in middle schools try to do one or more of the following:

- improve teacher/parent relationships
- create opportunities for parents to participate in school decisions

Theft

Theft is measured by student and teacher reports that they have had possessions stolen or damaged. This includes teacher cars.

Theft (cont.)

The teams that are least effective in reducing theft in middle schools try to do one or more of the following:

- give students information needed to cope with life problems
- increase student self-esteem
- increase the human relations skills of students
- increase teacher morale
- involve parents in school activities

Drug and alcohol availability

Drug and alcohol availability is measured by student reports of how easy it is to get alcohol, marijuana, and hard drugs at school.

No one program thrust is more effective than another in reducing drug and alcohol availability in middle schools.

The teams that are most effective in reducing drug and alcohol availability in middle schools try to do the following:

- create opportunities for parents to participate in school decisions

The teams that are least effective in reducing drug and alcohol availability in middle schools try to do one or more of the following:

- give students information needed to cope with life problems
- increase the human relations skills of students or parents

Attacks on students

Attacks on students are measured by student and teacher reports of incidents of student victimization and by judgments of student safety from attack.

No one program thrust is more effective than another in reducing attacks on students in middle schools.

The teams that are most effective in reducing attacks on students in middle schools try to do one or more of the following:

- create opportunities for parents to participate in school decisions
- reduce the vandalism problem
- reduce the level of drug use in the school

The teams that are least effective in reducing attacks on students in middle schools try to do one or more of the following:

- increase the clarity and understanding of school rules
- give students information needed to cope with life problems
- involve parents in school activities
- increase the human relations skills of parents

Attacks on teachers

Attacks on teacher are measured by student and teacher reports of verbal and physical attacks on teachers and of classroom disruption.

A discipline thrust is the most effective in reducing attacks on teachers in middle schools.

A human relations thrust is the least effective.

The teams that are most effective in reducing attacks on teachers in the middle schools try to do one or more of the following:

- increase the security of the school
- improve teacher/parent relationships
- reduce the vandalism problem

Attacks on teachers (cont.)

The teams that are least effective in reducing attacks on teachers in middle schools try to do one or more of the following:

- give students information needed to cope with life problems
- increase the human relations skills of students, teachers, or parents
- create opportunities for students, teachers, or parents to participate in school decisions

School climate

School climate is measured by student and teacher reports of tension in the school, rule-breaking and illegal behavior, and their own fear while in school.

A discipline thrust is the most effective in improving school climate in middle schools. Both communications and human relations thrusts are relatively ineffective.

The teams that are most effective in improving school climate in middle schools try to do one or more of the following:

- increase the security of the school
- improve teacher/parent relationships
- create opportunities for parents to participate in school decisions
- reduce the vandalism problem
- reduce the level of drug use in the school

The teams that are least effective in improving school climate in middle schools try to do one or more of the following:

- give students information needed to cope with life problems
- increase the human relations skills of students or teachers

The following are ineffective in improving teacher views of school climate, but have no effect on students.

- create opportunities for students to participate in school decisions
- involve parents in school activities
- increase student self-esteem (*this has a negative impact on teacher perception of tension in the school but not on other climate measures*)

Middle schools: a summary of findings

Middle school teams that try to improve the school's handling of discipline and security are the most effective in reducing attacks on teachers and on the school and in improving school climate. Attention to the security of the school and to the problems of vandalism and drug use appear to be the key ingredients in this approach.

Middle schools are more disruptive places to be, for both students and teachers, than either high or elementary schools. Programs that deal with the visible signs of disorder seem to help. Changing the way students are disciplined does not work as well as making the school more secure, while publicizing school rules is associated with decreased student safety.

Like high schools, middle schools benefit from a parental presence in the life of the school. Not all kinds of parent participation are helpful. Programs aimed at improving teacher/parent relationships are effective in reducing theft and attacks on teachers and in improving school climate. Human relations training for parents is not. Involving parents in school decisions is effective, but involving parents in other school activities is not. It may be that what is needed in middle schools is the active involvement of parents around problems of obvious concern to the school community.

Students and teachers do not respond to parents in the same way. Middle school teachers see disorganization in the school and respond well to attempts to bring order and to work jointly with parents. When parents become part of decision-making groups, however, though students feel safer, teachers feel the reverse. Teachers may see parent participation as disruptive to the already fragile order in the school.

Students see disorganization in the school and they too respond well to attempts to bring order. They also respond well to parents in problem-solving roles. Activities that are ineffective with students--human relations training, providing knowledge about the world beyond the school--may only complicate an environment that is already difficult to manage.

Reducing Crime in Elementary Schools

Vandalism

Vandalism is measured by teacher reports of school safety from vandalism and theft.

A discipline thrust is the most effective in reducing vandalism in elementary schools. A human relations thrust is the least effective.

The teams that are most effective in reducing vandalism in elementary schools try to do one or more of the following:

- increase the security of the school
- create opportunities for parents to participate in school decisions

The teams that are least effective in reducing vandalism in elementary schools try to do one or more of the following:

- improve the school's disciplinary system
- improve student academic performance
- increase teacher morale

Theft

Theft is measured by student and teacher reports that they have had possessions stolen or damaged. This includes teacher cars.

A discipline thrust is the most effective in reducing theft in elementary schools. A human relations thrust is the least effective.

The teams that are most effective in reducing theft in elementary schools try to do one or more of the following:

- increase the security of the school
- improve the school's disciplinary system
- increase the clarity and understanding of school rules
- increase the human relations skills of students
- involve students and teachers in school activities
- improve student/teacher relationships
- create opportunities for students and parents to participate in school decisions
- reduce the level of drug use in the school

Theft
(cont.)

The teams that are least effective in reducing theft in elementary schools try to do one or more of the following:

- improve student academic performance
- increase the human relations skills of teachers
- create opportunities for teachers to participate in school decisions

Drug and alcohol availability

Drug and alcohol availability is measured by student reports of how easy it is to get alcohol, marijuana, and hard drugs at school.

A communications thrust is somewhat more effective than a human relations thrust in reducing drug and alcohol availability in elementary schools.

The teams that are most effective in reducing drug and alcohol availability in elementary schools try to do the following:

- increase the human relations skills of teachers

The teams that are least effective in reducing drug and alcohol availability in elementary schools try to do the following:

- create opportunities for students to participate in school decisions

Attacks on students

Attacks on students are measured by student and teacher reports of incidents of student victimization and by judgments of student safety from attack.

No one program thrust is more effective than another in reducing attacks on students in elementary schools.

The teams that are most effective in reducing attacks on students in elementary schools try to do one or more of the following:

- increase the security of the school (*this gives students an impression of greater safety, but is not borne out by other measures in this category*)
- improve student/teacher relationships (*this affects teacher, but not student, views of student safety*)

Attacks on students
(cont.)

The teams that are least effective in reducing attacks on students in elementary schools try to do one or more of the following:

- improve the school's disciplinary system
- increase the human relations skills of students
- create opportunities for students to participate in school decisions
- increase teacher morale

Attacks on teachers

Attacks on teachers are measured by student and teacher reports of verbal and physical attacks on teachers and of classroom disruption.

Both a discipline and a communications thrust are more effective than a human relations thrust in reducing attacks on teachers in elementary schools.

The teams that are most effective in reducing attacks on teachers in elementary schools try to do one or more of the following:

- increase the clarity and understanding of school rules (*this has a stronger effect on classroom disruption than on direct attacks on teachers; improving security and discipline tend to reduce the latter*)
- give students information needed to cope with life problems
- involve students, teachers, and parents in school activities
- improve student/teacher relationships
- create opportunities for students and parents to participate in school decisions

The teams that are least effective in reducing attacks on teachers in elementary schools try to do the following:

- create opportunities for teachers to participate in school decisions

School climate

School climate is measured by student and teacher reports of tension in the school, rule-breaking and illegal behavior, and their own fear while in school.

A discipline thrust is the most effective in improving teacher views of school climate in elementary schools. A human relations thrust is the least effective. Results are inconsistent for students.

The teams that are most effective in improving school climate in elementary schools try to do one of more of the following:

- focus programs on changing students

The following are effective in reducing teacher but not student perception of tension in the school.

- involve students in school activities
- create opportunities for students to participate in school decisions

The following are effective in reducing student, but not teacher, fear.

- involve parents in school activities
- increase the human relations skills of parents
- focus programs on changing parents

The teams that are least effective in improving school climate in elementary schools try to do one or more of the following:

- increase teacher morale
- create opportunities for teachers to participate in school decisions
- involve students, teachers, or parents in school activities (*this is ineffective in reducing student, but not teacher, reports of illegal behavior*)

The following are ineffective in reducing student, but not teacher, fear.

- increase the human relations skills of students (*this is associated with decreased teacher fear*)
- increase the human relations skills of teachers

Elementary schools: a summary of findings

Elementary school teams that try to improve the school's handling of discipline and security are the most effective in reducing vandalism, theft, and attacks on teachers and in improving teacher perceptions of school climate. As was true for middle schools, attention to the security of the school is important to the effectiveness of this strategy thrust. Team efforts to improve the handling of discipline help to reduce theft and attacks on teachers, but have a negative impact on vandalism and student safety.

Student relationships with adults are important in elementary schools. Teams that try to improve relationships between students and teachers are effective in reducing most school problems. Involving parents in school decisions and in other school activities is also helpful. It reduces both classroom disruption and student fear. Working on teacher/parent relationships is less important than it is in either middle or high schools, probably because parents are already more involved with teachers at the elementary level.

Teams that try to change teachers tend not to do well, particularly those concerned with developing teacher human relations skills and the involvement of teachers in school decisions. Both of these efforts are associated with a human relations strategy thrust which is generally ineffective in elementary schools.

Working on changing students has mixed results. This is true for efforts to involve students in school decisions and in other school activities, to increase student human relations skills, and to increase both academic and nonacademic knowledge. Teams using these programs are effective in reducing theft and attacks on teachers, but ineffective in reducing attacks on students or improving school climate. The price for widening options for students in elementary schools may be an increase in student fear and their perception of vulnerability to attack.

Our study included both K-6 and K-8 schools. We sampled 6th grade students from one and 6th-8th grade students in the other. The latter overlap in age with middle school students. The findings reported here may reflect this mixture of different age groups.

Summary

The original problem for our research was to test the effectiveness of the School Team Approach as a way of reducing crime and disruption in schools. We showed that crime reduction was linked to the length of effective team intervention. We then looked for what our research could offer as leads to how teams can be most effective in their specific crime prevention and reduction efforts. We reviewed here the relationships between a variety of approaches to crime reduction and the changes occurring in six dimensions of school crime. What have we learned?

What problems respond to team efforts?

It is harder to change theft and drug use in schools than to reduce attacks on students, teachers, or the school or to improve school climate. Our research indicated that theft decreases only after long periods of team activity. We suggested that theft and drug behavior may be affected only after school climate and safety have been improved.

An exception is elementary schools in which reduction in theft parallels a reduction in attacks on teachers. This suggests that, for younger students, stealing represents a different statement of how the student views the world than it does in either middle or high schools.

A program focus on the problem of theft is unrelated to change in the theft problem, and a focus on drugs is unrelated to their reported availability in the school. In high schools, however, a team focus on the drug problem shows some link to reduction in theft, suggesting that theft and drug use are related behaviors. In middle schools, a team focus on the drug problem is related to a reduction in attacks on students, suggesting that drug use there is part of a different set of behaviors.

The point we wish to make is that the meaning of problem behavior appears to vary by age, or school level. Crime reduction efforts thus need to consider not only the behavior but what the behavior represents.

Theft as an expression of a general rebellious stance, for example, is different than theft as a way to support the use of drugs.

What strategy thrust should teams use?

Our findings are clear on this point. In high schools, the best results are obtained by efforts to increase communication within the school and between the school and parents/community. In middle and elementary schools, the best results are obtained by efforts to improve the school's handling of discipline and security. Efforts to improve self-understanding and interpersonal skills are ineffective across all three school levels.

What changes should teams work for?

Our research suggests three general themes that hold across all three school levels.

Order is a basic need if schools are to function. In high problem schools, this need must be met before other changes can be addressed. Except for drug use, crime and disruption are higher in elementary and middle than in high schools. Elementary and middle school teams that work to increase the orderliness of the school--particularly its security--are effective in reducing classroom disruption and attacks on teachers and the school. In elementary schools, theft is reduced as well. This approach does not work in the high schools where disruption and attacks on others are less of a problem and the basic need for order is better met.

It may be easier to change people through their participation in work on problems of importance to them than through efforts to bring about personal change. It does not help to assist people to understand themselves, feel better about themselves, or acquire the skills needed to get along better with others. What does seem to help is to open up communication between adversary groups: students and teachers, teachers and parents. What makes these programs different from relationship and morale-building programs is their emphasis on interaction and joint problem-solving.

It helps to involve parents. The optimal form of this involvement varies from one school level to another, but the presence of parents in some kind of active role is related to the reduction of crime.

Diversity across school levels

In planning how to reduce school crime, it makes a difference whether the school is an elementary, a middle, or a high school. This should not be surprising. Students at different ages see themselves differently in relation to adults, and there are differences in how adults view them.

High schools. High school students do not respond well to efforts to control behavior. They do respond to programs that help them cope with the world outside the school and those that give them a chance to take part in decisions about the school. They also benefit from the increased involvement of teachers and from opening up communication between students and teachers and between teachers and parents.

High school students are approaching independence from adults. What they need is both opportunity to learn how to exercise independence effectively and evidence that they matter to the adults around them.

Middle schools. Middle schools are the most turbulent of the three. What helps in middle schools is an emphasis on school security, a focus on the problems of vandalism and drug use, and an active parental presence in the school--all signs that disorder is being brought under control. Bringing parents into school decision-making and working to improve teacher/parents relationships are also effective. Programs that place students in unfamiliar roles are not.

Middle school students are in transition from childhood to adult status. The change is stressful, to both students and their teachers. A simplification of the school environment may be needed, rather than increased stimulation and complexity.

Elementary schools. Elementary school respond well to efforts to improve student/teacher relationships and to bring parents into school decision-making and other activities. Both theft and attacks on teachers--

particularly classroom disruption--yield to concern for security, discipline, and rules and to the involvement of teachers in school activities. The involvement of students is also helpful, as well as a variety of other programs focusing on student change.

Elementary school students are still dependent on adults. A strengthening of relationships with adults is important. Opening opportunities for new learning and new roles is of benefit, but may also lead to increased anxiety.

Our results are not written in granite. We have not established rigorous causal connections between program processes and school outcomes. Nor, in the ever-changing context of American education, should our findings and implied recommendations be seen as in any way permanent or universally applicable. We are not, however, counseling pessimism. Our data are the most extensive available, and the process of deriving valuable insights from them will continue for years to come.

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