

**National Evaluation of the
Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) Program**

**2009 Report to Schools and Communities:
Program Implementation Quality and
Preliminary Outcome Results**

by

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The Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) Program

The Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) program is a gang and delinquency prevention program delivered by law enforcement officers within a school setting. Developed as a local program in 1991 by Phoenix-area law enforcement agencies, the program quickly spread throughout the United States. The original G.R.E.A.T. program operated as a nine-lesson lecture-based curriculum taught primarily in middle-school settings. Results from an earlier National Evaluation of the G.R.E.A.T. program (1995-2001) found that the program had an effect on several mediating variables (factors commonly identified as risk factors) associated with gang membership and delinquency but found no differences between G.R.E.A.T. and non-G.R.E.A.T. youths in terms of these behaviors (i.e., gang membership and involvement in delinquent behavior).

Based in part on these findings, the G.R.E.A.T. program underwent a critical review that resulted in substantial program modifications. The revised curriculum (see Box A) consists of 13 lessons aimed at teaching youths the life-skills (e.g., communication and refusal skills, as well as conflict resolution and anger management techniques) thought necessary to prevent involvement in gang behavior and delinquency. The revised G.R.E.A.T. curriculum was piloted in 2001, with full-scale implementation occurring in 2003. Currently, the program is taught in middle schools across the country as well as in other countries. In school districts with school-resource officers, the G.R.E.A.T. program is generally taught by the SROs. In other jurisdictions, law enforcement officers deliver the program as part of their assignment in community relations divisions, while elsewhere officers teach the program on an overtime basis. Regardless of officers' assignments, all instructors must complete G.R.E.A.T. Officer Training and be certified prior to their assignment to teach in the local schools. This training (one week for officers with prior teaching experience and two weeks for others), in addition to introducing the officers to the program, includes sections on gang trends, issues associated with the transition from an emphasis on enforcement to one of prevention, middle school student developmental stages, and teaching and classroom management techniques.

The program's two main goals are:

1. To help youths avoid gang membership, violence, and criminal activity.
2. To help youths develop a positive relationship with law enforcement.

Box A: The G.R.E.A.T. Program

- 1. Welcome to G.R.E.A.T.** – An introductory lesson designed to provide students with basic knowledge about the connection between gangs, violence, drug abuse, and crime
- 2. What’s the Real Deal?** – Designed to help students learn ways to analyze information sources and develop realistic beliefs about gangs and violence
- 3. It’s About Us** – A lesson to help students learn about their communities (e.g., family, school, residential area) and their responsibilities
- 4. Where Do We Go From Here?** – Designed to help students learn ways of developing realistic and achievable goals
- 5. Decisions, Decisions, Decisions** – A lesson to help students develop decision-making skills
- 6. Do You Hear What I Am Saying?** – Designed to help students develop effective verbal and non-verbal communication skills
- 7. Walk in Someone Else’s Shoes** – A lesson to help students develop active listening and empathy skills, with a particular emphasis on understanding victims of crime and violence
- 8. Say It Like You Mean It** – Designed to help students develop effective refusal skills
- 9. Getting Along Without Going Along** – A lesson to reinforce and practice the refusal skills learned in Lesson 8
- 10. Keeping Your Cool** – A lesson to help students understand signs of anger and ways to manage the emotion
- 11. Keeping It Together** – Designed to help students use the anger-management skills learned in Lesson 10 and apply them to interpersonal situations where conflicts and violence are possible
- 12. Working It Out** – A lesson to help students develop effective conflict resolution techniques
- 13. Looking Back** – Designed to conclude the G.R.E.A.T. program with an emphasis on the importance of conflict resolution skills as a way to avoid gangs and violence; students also present their projects aimed at improving their schools

The National Evaluation of G.R.E.A.T.

In 2006, following a competitive peer review process, the National Institute of Justice awarded the University of Missouri-St. Louis funding to conduct the National Evaluation of the G.R.E.A.T. program. The evaluation consists of both process and outcome components that include student surveys, classroom observations in G.R.E.A.T. and non-G.R.E.A.T. classrooms, surveys of teachers, school administrators, and law enforcement officers, interviews with G.R.E.A.T. officers and G.R.E.A.T. supervisors, and observations of G.R.E.A.T. Officer Training (G.O.T.). In this report we focus on program fidelity (i.e., actual program delivery) and preliminary findings of program effectiveness.

As will be detailed below, we surveyed students attending 31 public middle schools in seven cities across the country. Based upon student responses to three waves of questionnaires (pre-test, post-test, and one-year follow-up), we are able to assess short-term program effects. That is, we examine the extent to which students receiving G.R.E.A.T. differ from non-G.R.E.A.T. students in terms of their delinquent activity and gang involvement. Additionally, we examine the extent to which risk factors addressed in the G.R.E.A.T. program also differentiate the G.R.E.A.T. students from the control group. However, prior to reporting on these outcomes, we describe results from our efforts to assess program fidelity; that is, was the program delivered in the manner that was intended and with sufficient quality to reasonably expect the program to have its desired effects? To answer this question, we rely upon approximately 500 observations of actual classroom program delivery and questionnaire responses provided by 230 teachers and administrators in the 31 schools participating in the evaluation.

Study Design

To implement a process and outcome evaluation of a school-based program that is offered in settings across the United States, it is important to select a sample that will be representative of the diversity of settings in which the overall program operates. Cost and logistics must also be factored into design decisions. Our overall strategy was to include four to six schools in six different cities. By including multiple schools in a single city we would reduce potential bias that could arise from including atypical schools. Having multiple cities in the evaluation would allow for inclusion of geographically diverse areas, different sized cities and

school districts, differential levels of gang activity, and a diversity of racial and ethnic groups. Within each participating school, classrooms would be randomly assigned to receive G.R.E.A.T. or to be designated as a control classroom. While apprehension about the random assignment and subsequent exclusion of some classrooms from receiving G.R.E.A.T. was expressed by some principals and teachers, ultimately 31 schools agreed to the design specifics.¹ We now describe the site and school selection process of the evaluation.

Site Selection

During the summer of 2006, efforts were made to identify cities for inclusion in the National Evaluation of G.R.E.A.T. Site selection was based on three main criteria: 1) existence of the G.R.E.A.T. program, 2) geographic and demographic diversity, and 3) evidence of gang activity. This site selection process was carried out in a series of steps. First, the research staff contacted the G.R.E.A.T. Regional Administrators² and Bureau of Justice Assistance³ personnel to identify locales with established programs. Consideration was given to factors such as the length of time the program had been in operation, number of G.R.E.A.T.-trained officers, and the number of schools in which the program was offered. Second, once this list of more than 50 potential agencies was constructed, the research staff contacted representatives in these cities to obtain more information about the delivery of the G.R.E.A.T. program. Third, given the focus of the program, information about gang activity in these potential cities was obtained from the National Youth Gang Center. Ultimately, we selected seven cities (varying in size, region, and level of gang activity) as our primary target sites. Given the difficulties associated with securing permission to conduct evaluations in many school districts, we were hopeful that six of these seven cities would cooperate.

¹ Two principals who were contacted declined their schools' participation. In one case, the principal had previously been a police gang investigator and, thus, "knew the program worked." In the other case, the principal would not agree to our study design (i.e., random assignment of classrooms). In a third school, while the principal agreed to participate, there was resistance to the evaluation design, and this school was ultimately dropped from the study. In each instance, other schools were selected to replace the non-participating schools.

² G.R.E.A.T. is a national program overseen by the G.R.E.A.T. National Policy Board (NPB). For administrative purposes, responsibilities for program oversight are held by (or "given to") agencies operating in different geographic regions: Northeast, Midwest, Southeast, Southwest, and West. Additionally, two federal partners—the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (BATF) and the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC)—are involved in program training and oversight.

³ The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) oversees the allocation of federal funds and grant compliance associated with the G.R.E.A.T. program.

Once these seven cities were identified, the research staff worked with the primary local law enforcement agency and the school district in each city to seek their cooperation. Much to our surprise, all seven districts agreed to participate. Rather than exclude one of the sites, we decided to expand our design from six to seven cities. These participating cities are: Albuquerque, New Mexico; Chicago, Illinois; Greeley, Colorado; Nashville, Tennessee; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Portland, Oregon; and a Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW), Texas, area location. With school district approval, we then identified potential schools for study participation and contacted the principals. Our intent in the selection of schools was to include schools that, taken as a whole, would be representative of the districts. Once initial agreement to participate was obtained from the school administrator, more detailed discussions/meetings were held between school personnel, G.R.E.A.T. officers, and the research team. Whenever possible, face-to-face meetings were held, but in some instances final arrangements were made via telephone. School and police personnel were informed of the purpose of the evaluation, issues related to the random assignment of classrooms to the treatment or control condition (i.e., receive G.R.E.A.T./not receive G.R.E.A.T.), procedures to obtain active parental consent for students in these classrooms, scheduling G.R.E.A.T. program delivery, and other logistical issues associated with the study design. We turn now to the process evaluation components assessing program implementation.

Classroom Observations

The G.R.E.A.T. program is intended to be taught in the same manner by officers across all settings. In G.R.E.A.T. Officer Training, officers are instructed to teach the curriculum as presented in the Instructor's Manual in terms of wording, ordering, and content, and to adhere to the suggested time frames for each component of each lesson. Members of the research team observed officers teaching the G.R.E.A.T. program in all of the 31 participating schools; this consisted of 520 classroom observations of 33 different officers. Each observer used a coding sheet to document whether or not the officer taught the lesson in its entirety and as intended. Specifically, the observer would indicate if each lesson component was addressed, the time spent on each lesson component, whether or not specified activities were conducted as intended, and made an assessment of the quality of student engagement. These observations allowed us to determine the extent to which the lesson was implemented and to rate the overall program

implementation quality of each G.R.E.A.T. classroom. Across the seven cities, there were 492 separate and unique observations plus another 28 inter-rater reliability (IRR) observations (multiple observers assessing the same lesson in the same classroom) for a grand total of 520 observations. We are able to report summary information by both observations of lessons and observations of officers. By lessons, we can summarize our observations as follows: Lesson 5 and Lesson 9 (44 observations apiece) were the most frequently-observed lessons across all cities and schools. Lesson 7 had the fewest observations, with a total of 29; the average number of observations per lesson was 40. In five sites, we were able to obtain at least one observation per each of the 13 lessons. By officer, our observations can be summarized in this way: twenty-six of the 33 officers were observed delivering seven or more of the 13 lessons. For 15 officers, we had at least 17 observations of their lessons; the average per officer was 15 lessons observed.

Results from these observations indicate that, overall, the G.R.E.A.T. program was implemented with high fidelity; 27 of the 33 officers were considered to have implemented the G.R.E.A.T. program with average or better than average fidelity. This means that if a treatment effect is detected in the outcome evaluation, then it would be feasible to attribute this effect to the G.R.E.A.T. program. Three additional officers delivered the program with below average fidelity, but students in these classrooms still received a sufficient amount of the program (dosage) with sufficient fidelity (program adherence) to link outcome effects to the program. Only three officers failed to teach the program with sufficient fidelity to reasonably expect the program to have any effect on the students in those classrooms. The clear majority of officers 1) had good to excellent time management skills, 2) adhered to suggested program time frames, 3) made considerable effort to cover all topical areas in each lesson, and 4) stimulated student interest and participation. Variations were found across officers, but typically not across classrooms; that is, officers were generally consistent in their program delivery when teaching in different classrooms.

The observations also identified a number of areas where difficulties arose, detracting from program fidelity. These were generally due to situations outside of the control of officers. Examples include shortened school days (i.e., schedule changes) and other policing duties that pulled officers from the classroom. Other situations, however, could be addressed by officers delivering the program. For example, officers sometimes had difficulties with disruptive students, often in combination with inattentive teachers. In these situations, greater attention to

officers' classroom management skills (perhaps in the G.R.E.A.T. Officer Training sessions) and greater involvement of the classroom teacher would have helped to resolve these disciplinary situations. Improving teacher involvement, as well as communication between G.R.E.A.T. officers and classroom teachers, may be warranted.

School Personnel Questionnaires

To assess educators' perceptions of school-based prevention programs in general and the G.R.E.A.T. program in particular, administrators and teachers in the G.R.E.A.T. grade levels (6th or 7th) in the 31 participating schools were asked to provide their responses to an anonymous questionnaire; 230 (62%) completed the surveys. The survey was conducted in the spring of 2007 and again during Fall 2007 and Spring 2008. School personnel were asked their perceptions of problems facing their schools, crime and gangs in their schools and surrounding neighborhoods, fear of crime and victimization experiences, their school as a work environment, law enforcement officers and prevention programs in schools, and prevention program content and delivery. Prior research has suggested that teachers' opinions about these topics may be related to their views of the G.R.E.A.T. program and the officers teaching the program.

Educators were generally positive about having law enforcement officers in schools. Most respondents' schools had a School Resource Officer (SRO), and these respondents had the most positive attitudes about police in schools. In addition, school personnel were supportive of prevention programs in schools and the role of schools in prevention, although only about half agreed that teachers should incorporate prevention program lessons into their own curricula. These findings generally bode well for the G.R.E.A.T. program. In regard to program content and delivery, over 70 percent rated the components in Table 1 as "very important" in helping youths avoid drugs, delinquency, and gangs, with decision-making, problem-solving, and conflict resolution skills receiving this rating by over 90 percent. The G.R.E.A.T. curriculum includes all of the 11 components, with an emphasis on a skills-building approach that culminates in activities designed to allow students to practice conflict resolution. The G.R.E.A.T. program also utilizes mostly "active teaching" methods such as small group activities and role-playing, which were rated as "very effective" (as opposed to "not effective" or "somewhat effective") means of prevention program delivery by 70 percent or more of

respondents, as well as class discussion, rated very effective by 60 percent. The G.R.E.A.T. program is not designed to be delivered using such didactic methods as lecture and written homework, rated as “very effective” by only 6 and 7 percent of school personnel.

Table 1. School Personnel Opinions about Prevention Program Content, by Job Position and Site

How important is each in helping youths avoid drugs, delinquency, and gangs? ^a	Total	Adm	Tchr	ABQ	CHI	DFW area	GRL	NSH	PHL	PTD
Goal setting ^b	83	97	79	78	85	84	90	88	89	73
Decision making	92	100	91	92	92	92	93	91	93	92
Anger management	88	94	87	89	92	81	87	88	93	87
Problem solving ^b	92	100	89	89	96	89	90	97	89	87
Refusal skills	82	86	80	75	77	72	90	88	82	92
Recognition of peer pressure	87	92	86	81	92	78	90	97	82	92
Anti-gang and violence norms	77	78	77	81	89	70	83	85	68	67
Communication skills	90	94	89	89	92	92	87	97	86	87
Conflict resolution	93	100	92	92	100	87	97	94	96	92
Social responsibility	86	89	84	89	77	87	87	94	79	84
Empathy and perspective taking	78	86	77	78	77	73	73	79	82	84

^a Percent of respondents who answered “very important,” as opposed to “not important” or “somewhat important”

^b $p < .05$, differences between Administrators and Teachers, chi-square measure of association

School personnel who were familiar with G.R.E.A.T. had positive views of the program, with about 90 percent in favor of having the program in their schools (see Table 2). Most believed the program materials to be appropriate and appealing, although fewer agreed that the length of the curriculum or the class time allotted were enough to cover the topics and materials. The majority of educators believed the program taught students skills necessary to avoid delinquency and gangs, addressed problems faced by their students, and improved student-police relations (the latter a key goal of G.R.E.A.T.), but only about half agreed that the program played a significant role in reducing youth gang participation in their schools and communities. Respondents’ views about G.R.E.A.T. were related to several attitudes elicited in the earlier sections of the survey; specifically, greater fear of crime in and around school, greater perception

of existence and enforcement of school rules, and more positive views of law enforcement and prevention programs in school were all related to more favorable views of G.R.E.A.T., and vice versa.

Table 2. Opinions about the G.R.E.A.T. Program, by Job Position and Site

Opinions of G.R.E.A.T. ^a	Total	Adm	Tchr	ABQ	CHI	DFW area	GRL	NSH	PHL	PTD
I am in favor of having G.R.E.A.T. in my school	89	94	87	96	91	96	92	85	89	76
G.R.E.A.T. curriculum is appropriate for students' age and comprehension levels	92	100	89	89	96	89	92	92	88	96
G.R.E.A.T. educational materials seem to be appealing to students	77	91	72	69	78	82	83	58	81	85
G.R.E.A.T. teaches students the skills needed to avoid gangs and violence	82	88	80	70	87	86	83	77	92	82
G.R.E.A.T. program improves students' perceptions of police	85	91	83	93	82	89	88	69	77	93
G.R.E.A.T. addresses problems facing students at my school ^b	86	100	83	89	87	96	92	73	88	79
G.R.E.A.T. plays a significant role in reducing youth gang participation in my <u>school</u> ^c	54	70	48	44	48	79	58	39	65	41
G.R.E.A.T. plays a significant role in reducing youth gang participation in my <u>community</u> ^b	47	73	40	42	39	71	54	46	48	26
Length of G.R.E.A.T. curriculum is enough time to cover important, relevant topics ^b	63	88	57	56	65	56	75	60	52	78
G.R.E.A.T. officers have enough time during class period to sufficiently cover materials for each lesson ^b	62	91	56	44	70	56	71	62	63	70

^a Percent of respondents who answered "agree" or "strongly agree"; other available responses were "strongly disagree," "disagree," "neither agree nor disagree"

^b $p < .05$, differences between Administrators and Teachers, chi-square measure of association

^c $p < .05$, differences across sites, chi-square measure of association

The G.R.E.A.T. officer teaching the program was also viewed favorably by the majority of respondents, in terms of both preparation and delivery of program and their interactions in the

classroom. Despite this overall positive assessment, responses to both the closed-ended and open-ended questions indicated that some officers struggled with classroom management or failed to attend on scheduled days. Open-ended comments revealed that many educators believed the success of the program to be tied to the officer, and additional analyses showed that respondents' views of the program were related to their views about the officer teaching the program. Views of the G.R.E.A.T. officer were also related to attitudes about law enforcement officers and prevention programs in schools; the more respondents supported officers and prevention programs in schools, the more favorable their views of the G.R.E.A.T. officer.

School personnel in whose classrooms G.R.E.A.T. had been taught also provided comments about their role in the program, and several findings are particularly salient. Most educators played at least some role in the program; although this was largely classroom management activities, some assisted the officer and others actively participated. Many used the time for grading or other paperwork. Almost half (45%) did not incorporate G.R.E.A.T. lesson content into their own curricula, mostly due to lack of time (a large concern was the amount of material to cover for mandated testing), but also because it was not relevant to their subject. The other 55 percent, especially those in relevant courses such as social studies, language arts, and health, did cover or reinforce G.R.E.A.T. content. Most (84%) did not use extended teacher activities associated with G.R.E.A.T. lessons, often due to lack of time, but almost as often because they had not been made aware of the activities by the G.R.E.A.T. officer.

In sum, there appears to be a good deal of support among administrators and teachers for both the G.R.E.A.T. program and officers. These views are most strongly tied to views of the role of law enforcement officers and prevention programs in schools and do not appear to be related to problems in schools such as delinquency and gangs, to fear of crime or crime victimization, to job satisfaction or other perceptions about school as a work environment, or to whether the respondents' school has a School Resource Officer. Aspects of the current educational climate, such as meeting standards set forth in the "No Child Left Behind" act, provide challenges to delivery and reinforcement of the G.R.E.A.T. program that can be addressed, in part, by locating the program in specific subjects. Finally, views of G.R.E.A.T. and the G.R.E.A.T. officer are related to each other, an important tie that provides avenues for improving even more the overall positive attitudes of school personnel.

Effectiveness of G.R.E.A.T.

The evaluation design of this project can best be described as an experimental longitudinal panel design. That is, classrooms in each of the participating schools were randomly assigned to the treatment (i.e., G.R.E.A.T.) or control condition (i.e., no program exposure), and students in these classrooms were scheduled to complete six waves of questionnaires (pre- and post-tests followed by four annual surveys). Thus, the final sample of students would be followed through their school experiences from 6th or 7th grade through 10th or 11th grade. Importantly, all students in the selected classrooms were eligible to participate in the evaluation. A total of 4,905 students were enrolled in the 195 participating classrooms (102 G.R.E.A.T. and 93 control classes) in the 31 middle schools at the beginning of the data collection process.

Active parental consent procedures were implemented in all sites. We worked closely with the principals and classroom teachers during the consent process. Teachers distributed and collected consent form packets. Each packet included a cover letter explaining the purpose of the evaluation as well as an informed consent form (explaining the risks and benefits of the students' participation) for parents/guardians to read, sign, and return to the teacher. When allowed by the districts, the research staff provided monetary compensation to the teachers directly for their assistance. In some instances, district regulations prohibited such compensation; in these cases, compensation was provided as a donation, made in honor of the teachers, to the school or district. Students were also given a small personal radio, calculator, or tote bag in exchange for returning a completed consent form. These rewards were provided to students regardless of whether the parent/guardian granted or withheld consent for the youth to participate in the study. Overall, 89.1 percent of youths (N=4,372) returned a completed consent form, with 77.9 percent of parents/guardians (N=3,820) allowing their child's participation.

Students completed pre-test surveys (prior to implementation of the G.R.E.A.T. program) with a completion rate of 98.3 percent and post-test surveys (shortly after completion of the G.R.E.A.T. program) with a completion rate of 94.6 percent. Students have also completed the first and second annual follow-up surveys (one and two years after pre-test surveys were administered) with completion rates of 87.3 and 82.9 percent, respectively. These response rates are excellent, especially given the highly mobile nature of the sample; at wave 3 (one year after

pre-tests), students were enrolled in more than 170 different schools in the seven participating school districts (not counting those students who were no longer attending schools in the original districts) and by wave 4 (two years after pre-tests), this number had grown to 216 different schools (66 different schools in Philadelphia alone). We obtained permission from principals at these schools to survey the transfer students – clearly, a time and labor intensive effort but one well worth achieving these high response rates.

Student Sample Characteristics

Table 3 presents the demographic information of the National Evaluation of G.R.E.A.T. sample for the entire group of youths, as well as separately by site, according to students' responses to the pre-test survey. The sample is evenly split between males and females; most (55%) youths reside with both biological parents; and the majority (88%) was born in the United States. The sample is racially/ethnically diverse, with Hispanic youths (37%), White youths (27%), and African-American (18%) youths accounting for 81 percent of the sample.

Approximately two-thirds of the youths (61%) were aged 11 or younger at the pre-test, representing the fact that 26 of the 31 schools delivered the G.R.E.A.T. program in 6th grade; three of the six Chicago schools and two of four schools in Albuquerque taught G.R.E.A.T. in 7th grade. Thus, the students in Chicago and Albuquerque were somewhat older than students in the other sites. Except in Chicago (in which Hispanics are over-represented and African Americans under-represented), the sample is similar to the demographic composition of the respective school districts.⁴

⁴ This disproportionate representation in Chicago occurred despite efforts by the research team to recruit schools that would be representative overall of Chicago Public Schools. One of the five originally-selected schools, which was comprised of nearly 100 percent African American students, was unable to meet the requirements of the study and was dropped from the sample. Given time constraints (i.e., too late in the school year to select a comparable school and implement the program with fidelity), we were unable to replace the excluded school during 2006-2007. Thus, the resulting sample was largely Hispanic, while the district was largely African American. To increase representativeness of the sample, the decision was made to add two primarily African American schools to the evaluation in the 2007-2008 school year, even though this meant that these schools would be one year behind other schools in the evaluation.

Table 3: Sample Characteristics at Wave 1

	Total	ABQ	CHI	DFW- area	GRL	NSH	PHL	PTD
	N=3820	N=591	N=500	N=614	N=582	N=590	N=457	N=486
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Sex								
--Male	50	50	50	54	52	55	43	42
--Female	50	50	50	46	48	46	57	58
Race/Ethnicity								
--White	27	16	7	20	34	45	12	51
--African American	18	4	29	21	2	23	44	7
--Hispanic/Latino	37	49	56	46	50	17	20	13
--American Indian	4	10	1	2	5	1	4	4
--Asian	4	2	1	6	1	6	4	9
--Multi-Racial	8	14	2	5	4	4	12	13
--Other	4	5	2	1	5	5	5	3
Age								
--11 or younger	61	35	18	74	77	80	61	79
--12	29	43	44	25	22	19	35	20
--13 or older	10	23	38	2	2	<1	4	1
Mean	11.48	11.87	12.22	11.27	11.23	11.19	11.42	11.21
Living Arrangement								
--Both Biological Parents	55	52	57	60	58	60	38	58
--Single Parent	20	20	19	15	14	18	24	15
--1 Biological/1 Step-Parent	13	15	12	14	15	12	18	13
--1 Biological/1 Other Adult	7	7	7	7	7	7	11	8
--Other Relatives	3	6	3	3	4	2	8	5
--Other Living Arrangement	2	1	1	1	3	2	2	1
Resident Status								
--Born outside U.S.	12	10	15	13	11	15	11	9
--Born in U.S.	88	90	85	87	89	85	89	91

Outcome Results

To reiterate, the G.R.E.A.T. program has two primary goals: 1) to help youths avoid gang membership, violence, and criminal activity, and 2) to help youths develop a positive relationship with law enforcement. The curriculum consists of 13 lessons aimed at teaching youths the life-skills (e.g., communication and refusal skills, conflict resolution and anger management techniques) thought necessary to prevent involvement in gangs and delinquency. To assess program effectiveness, we compare responses from students in the G.R.E.A.T. classes to the students in the control classrooms. We utilize the pre-test and the one-year follow-up questionnaires; these results, therefore, represent short-term program effects. The student questionnaire contains a number of questions that tap program components, including measures of gang membership, self-reported delinquency, and attitudes toward the police. Additionally the survey includes questions that were drawn from a variety of empirical studies assessing key risk and protective factors associated with youth problem behaviors.

In these preliminary analyses we included a subset of seven attitudinal measures and two behavioral measures. The two behavioral measures allow us to assess the extent to which the G.R.E.A.T. program impacts gang membership and involvement in illegal activity. Specifically, we ask the students to indicate whether they are in a gang (this approach has been found in research to be a valid and robust measure) as well as a 15-item self-reported delinquency inventory (see Appendix for specific items). To measure positive attitudes to the police, students were asked to respond to six questions tapping attitudes to the police (see Appendix). Additionally, we asked a series of questions measuring the students' attitudes about gangs (see Appendix). These four sets of questions allow us to directly assess the program's main goals.

G.R.E.A.T. was developed as a skills building program that identified a number of mediating risk factors; that is, skills such as conflict resolution, empathy, and resistance skills. We also examined the extent to which students exposed to the G.R.E.A.T. program (relative to those who had not received G.R.E.A.T.) had improved or enhanced skills that would enable them to better resist the lures of gang membership and resist peer pressure to engage in illegal activities. Among these skills are the following: empathy, risk-seeking, conflict resolution skills, resistance to peer pressure, and refusal skills. The G.R.E.A.T. program teaches lessons that directly address these particular skills.

Given the research design (individuals are nested within classrooms and classrooms are nested within schools), hierarchical linear modeling techniques were used to assess program effectiveness. The analyses revealed six statistically significant differences between the G.R.E.A.T. and non- G.R.E.A.T. students. Specifically, the G.R.E.A.T. students compared to non-G.R.E.A.T. students reported:

- More positive attitudes to police
- Less positive attitudes about gangs
- More use of refusal skills
- More resistance to peer pressure
- Lower rates of gang membership
- Lower rates of self-reported delinquency.

These findings address the two main program goals: 1) to reduce delinquency and gang affiliation and 2) to improve youths' relationships with law enforcement. Additionally, several program-specific skills-building objectives appear to be met, especially refusal skills. There were *no* statistically significant differences between the groups on measures of *empathy*, *risk-seeking*, and *conflict resolution*.

At this juncture, we can say that the preliminary results are supportive of a one-year post program effect. That is, students completing the G.R.E.A.T. program have lower rates of gang affiliation and self-reported delinquency than do students in the control group. Additionally, the G.R.E.A.T. students report a number of more pro-social attitudes, including more positive attitudes to the police, than do the control students.

These results are preliminary and reflect only short-term program effect. An important question remains: will these short-term program effects be sustained across time? The longitudinal design of the evaluation (i.e., surveying students annually for four years post program) will allow us to answer the question of whether the program has long-term effects on student attitudes and behavior. These results, however, will not be available for several more years.

Summary

The Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) program is a gang- and delinquency-prevention program taught by law enforcement officers in middle schools throughout the United States. The current National Evaluation of G.R.E.A.T. consists of both process and outcome components that include student surveys; classroom observations in G.R.E.A.T. and non-G.R.E.A.T. classrooms; surveys of teachers, school administrators, and law enforcement officers; interviews with G.R.E.A.T. officers and G.R.E.A.T. supervisors; and observations of G.R.E.A.T. Officer Training (G.O.T.). In this report, we focused on three sources of information (classroom observations, surveys of teachers and administrators, and student surveys) to assess program fidelity (i.e., actual program delivery) and short-term program effectiveness.

In order to determine the extent to which the program was implemented as intended (program fidelity), members of the research team conducted 520 observations of 33 officers as they taught the program in the 31 participating middle schools across seven cities. Overall, our observations indicated that the G.R.E.A.T. program was implemented with high fidelity, consistent with what officers are taught in the G.R.E.A.T. Officer Training: 27 of the 33 officers were considered to have implemented the G.R.E.A.T. program with average or better than average fidelity, three officers implemented with below-average, but still sufficient, fidelity, while another three officers failed to implement the program with fidelity. The clear majority of officers 1) had good to excellent time management skills, 2) adhered to suggested program time frames, 3) made considerable effort to cover all topical areas in each lesson, and 4) stimulated student interest and participation.

Sixty-two percent of administrators and teachers in the G.R.E.A.T. grade levels (6th or 7th) in the 31 middle schools provided responses to questionnaires about a variety of issues of interest and importance to the evaluation. Their responses reveal a great deal of support for the presence of law enforcement officers and prevention programs in schools and for both the G.R.E.A.T. program and officers teaching the program. Two specific findings deserve note here. First, both the observations of program delivery and the school personnel surveys pointed to difficulties among some G.R.E.A.T. officers with classroom management and with maintaining the agreed-upon delivery schedule (i.e., showing up to teach when scheduled). It is suggested that greater attention to these issues in G.R.E.A.T. officer training, greater incorporation of

classroom teachers during G.R.E.A.T. program delivery, and better communication between G.R.E.A.T. officers and teachers can address these deficiencies. Second, the vast majority of school personnel in whose classrooms G.R.E.A.T. had been taught reported that they did not incorporate G.R.E.A.T. lesson content into their own curricula or use the extended teacher activities associated with each lesson. A major reason was lack of time due to mandated curricula, but other key reasons were lack of relevance to subject matter or to the fact that the G.R.E.A.T. officer had not informed the teacher that additional activities were available. In the future, locating G.R.E.A.T. in relevant subjects (e.g., health, social studies, language arts) can be beneficial in two ways: G.R.E.A.T. content will naturally be reinforced in the class curricula, and material related to educational standards can be reinforced in G.R.E.A.T. curricula. Improving officer-teacher communication will also help to ensure that G.R.E.A.T. is, as intended, integrated into schools' curricula, as opposed to existing as a stand-alone program.

For the outcome evaluation component of the evaluation, a sample of 3,820 students, representing a consent rate of 78%, is slated to complete pre- and post-tests and four annual follow-up surveys, following them from 6th or 7th grade through 10th or 11th grade. Analyses of pre-test and one-year follow-up surveys revealed statistically significant differences between students who received the G.R.E.A.T. program and students who did not on six of nine measures selected for this preliminary analysis: G.R.E.A.T. students, compared to the control group, reported less positive attitudes about gangs, greater use of refusal skills, greater resistance to peer pressure, and, importantly for program-specific goals, more positive attitudes about police, lower rates of delinquency, and less gang involvement. No significant differences between the experimental and control groups were found for levels of empathy, tendencies toward risk-seeking, or conflict resolution skills. Readers may notice that in the School Personnel Survey, only about 50 percent of school personnel agreed that the G.R.E.A.T. program significantly reduces youths' gang participation in their schools and communities, while our outcome results indicated that youths who received the G.R.E.A.T. program had significantly lower rates of gang involvement than did students who did not receive the program. These findings are not necessarily inconsistent. The G.R.E.A.T. program is not intended to prevent or reduce gang involvement in entire communities, but rather among program participants, which it appears to do at least in the short-term; and, to the extent that the G.R.E.A.T. program reaches a large majority of a school's population, we may expect to see lower rates of gang involvement at the

school level. This is not the case in our study schools, however, as only half of the classes in one grade received program.

In short, the G.R.E.A.T. program appears to be implemented as intended; both the program and officer are viewed favorably by school personnel in our study schools; and the program appears to have short-term effects on the program's intended goals of reducing gang and delinquency involvement and improving youth-police relations, as well as on interim risk or skills. Because the program was implemented with fidelity and the evaluation utilized a randomized experimental design, we can have confidence that these effects are due to the program and not to other outside influences. Future analyses of other risk factors and skills and additional waves of data will allow for assessment of other program effects, including whether short-term effects reported here are sustained over the four-year follow-up period.

Appendix: Behavioral and Attitudinal Measures

Gang membership

Are you now in a gang?

Self-reported delinquency

How many times in the past 6 months have you ...

Skipped classes without an excuse?

Lied about your age to get into some place or to buy something?

Avoided paying for things such as movies, bus, or subway rides?

Purposely damaged or destroyed property that did not belong to you?

Carried a hidden weapon for protection?

Illegally spray painted a wall or a building?

Stolen or tried to steal something worth less than \$50?

Stolen or tried to steal something worth more than \$50?

Gone into or tried to go into a building to steal something?

Hit someone with the idea of hurting him/her?

Attacked someone with a weapon?

Used a weapon or force to get money or things from people?

Been involved in gang fights?

Sold marijuana or other illegal drugs?

Attitudes to police^a

Police officers are honest.

Police officers are hardworking.

Most police officers are usually friendly.

Police officers are usually courteous.

Police officers are respectful toward people like me.

I feel safer when police officers are in my school.

Attitudes about gangs^a

Gangs interfere with the peace and safety of a neighborhood.

Getting involved with gangs will interfere with reaching my goals.

I have limited my activities as a result of gangs in my neighborhood.

Refusal skills^b

And, every now and then we try to avoid doing things that our friends try to get us to do. During the past year when this has happened to you, how often have you done the following?

Told the person that I can't do it because my parents will get upset with me

Tried to get out of it by saying I have other things to do

Said no like I really meant it

Ignored the person

Just gone along with it

Resistance to peer pressure^c

Still thinking about your current friends, how likely is it that you would go along with them if they wanted you to do the following things with them?

- Bully another student at school
- Break into a home in your community
- Beat up a stranger on the street
- Cheat on a test at school
- Steal something from a store
- Drink alcohol
- Use illegal drugs

Empathy^a

- I would feel sorry for a lonely stranger in a group.
- I worry about how other people feel.
- I feel happy when I see other people celebrating.
- Seeing other people cry has no effect on me.

Risk seeking^a

- I like to test myself every now and then by doing something a little risky.
- Sometimes I will take a risk just for the fun of it.
- I sometimes find it exciting to do things for which I might get in trouble.
- Excitement and adventure are more important to me than security

Conflict resolution^b

Every now and then we get upset with other people. During the past year when you've gotten upset with someone, how often have you done the following?

- Talked to the person about why I was upset
- Tried to figure out why I was upset
- Did nothing and just stayed angry for a while
- Told the person off or yelled at them
- Hit the person

^a Responses: 1) Strongly Disagree 2) Disagree 3) Neither Agree nor Disagree 4) Agree 5) Strongly Agree

^b Responses: 1) Never 2) Sometimes 3) Often

^c Responses: 1) Not at All Likely 2) A Little Likely 3) Somewhat Likely 4) Likely 5) Very Likely

For more information about the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) Program, see the official G.R.E.A.T. website located at <http://www.great-online.org/>.

For more information about youth gangs and effective responses, see the official website of the National Youth Gang Center located at <http://www.iir.com/nygc/>.

For more information on the earlier National Evaluation of G.R.E.A.T., consult the following:

Esbensen, Finn-Aage. 2004. *Evaluating G.R.E.A.T.: A School-based Gang Prevention Program – Research in Policy*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs. Available online at: <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/198604.pdf>.

Esbensen, Finn-Aage, Adrienne Freng, Terrance J. Taylor, Dana Peterson, and D. Wayne Osgood. 2002. The National Evaluation of the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) Program. Pp.139-167 in Winifred L. Reed and Scott H. Decker (Eds.), *Responding to Gangs: Evaluation and Research*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice. Available online at: <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/190351.pdf>.

Esbensen, Finn-Aage, D. Wayne Osgood, Terrance J. Taylor, Dana Peterson, and Adrienne Freng. 2001. How Great is G.R.E.A.T.?: Results from a Quasi-experimental Design. *Criminology & Public Policy* 1 (1): 87-118.

Peterson, Dana and Finn-Aage Esbensen. 2004. The Outlook is G.R.E.A.T.: What Educators Say about School-Based Prevention and the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) Program.” *Evaluation Review* 28(3): 218-45.

For more information on the current National Evaluation of G.R.E.A.T., consult the following:

Finn-Aage Esbensen, Terrance J. Taylor, Bradley T. Brick, and Dana Peterson. 2007. *2007 Report to Schools and Communities*. National Evaluation of the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) Program, Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of Missouri-St. Louis.

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Krystle M. Leugoud, Finn-Aage Esbensen, Bradley T. Brick, and Terrance J. Taylor. March 2009. *Observing the Implementer: Description of Findings, Recommendations, and Conclusions from GREAT Program Implementation Observations*. National Evaluation of the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) Program, Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of Missouri-St. Louis.

Dana Peterson, Vanessa R. Panfil, Finn-Aage Esbensen, and Terrance J. Taylor. June 2009. *School Personnel Survey Report*. National Evaluation of the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) Program, Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of Missouri-St. Louis.

Terrance J. Taylor, Finn-Aage Esbensen, and Dana Peterson. June 2009. *G.R.E.A.T. Officer Training (GOT) Report*. National Evaluation of the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) Program, Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of Missouri-St. Louis.