

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

Observing the Implementer: Description of Findings, Recommendations, and Conclusions from G.R.E.A.T. Program Implementation Observations

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ABSTRACT

As part of the process evaluation for the National Evaluation of the G.R.E.A.T. program, this report summarizes the findings from direct observations of program implementation. For this component of the evaluation, trained research assistants observed G.R.E.A.T.-trained police officers as they taught the G.R.E.A.T. program to middle school youth. With a total of 492 unique and separate observations, this report explores the following topics in relation to program fidelity: 1) adherence to suggested time frames/time management, 2) coverage of topical areas/lesson adherence, 3) overall quality of the lesson, 4) discussions, activities, and student participation, 5) officer teaching characteristics and interactions with students, 6) student final projects, 7) atypical situations that disrupted the flow of the lessons, 8) the extent and nature of combined lessons, and 9) officer implementation fidelity. This report also addresses observer reliability through the analysis of 26 sets of inter-rater reliability observations. Findings are discussed in relation to implementation and program fidelity across sites. Recommendations for strengthening future implementation of the G.R.E.A.T. program are suggested based on observers' qualitative comments and analysis of completed observation instruments.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The current report provides an in-depth examination of G.R.E.A.T. program delivery by officers within schools. Both University of Missouri-St. Louis “in-house” (i.e., UMSL researchers) and “on-site” (i.e., trained undergraduate and graduate students residing within or near the seven study sites) research assistants used structured instruments derived from the G.R.E.A.T. Instructor’s Manual to assess issues of program fidelity. The purpose of these observations was to determine the extent to which officers delivered the G.R.E.A.T. program in the field “as intended” (i.e., as developed and conveyed during G.R.E.A.T. Officer Training). A total of 520 classroom observations covering 33 officers in the seven G.R.E.A.T. Evaluation sites were conducted.

While often excluded from program evaluations, assessments of program fidelity are critical components of successful evaluations. Program fidelity assessments allow insight into the context of outcome results by uncovering successful strategies used in the program, as well as barriers to successful implementation. The purpose of this report is to provide an assessment of how the G.R.E.A.T. program is delivered in the field, with a particular emphasis on quality of discussions and activities, adherence to suggested time frames, coverage of the topical areas, overall lesson adherence, and the overall quality of the lessons. Illustrations of successful strategies, as well as areas where improvement is needed, are included.

Results illustrate an overall strong fidelity to the G.R.E.A.T. program by officers delivering the program in the classrooms. *It is important to highlight that 27 of the 33 officers were considered to have implemented the G.R.E.A.T. program with average or better than average fidelity. That is, if 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 were classified as having good to excellent time management skills, adherence to suggested program time frames, making considerable effort to cover all topical areas in each lesson, and stimulating 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) or other policing duties which 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. A diligent attempt at improving teacher involvement, as well as communication between G.R.E.A.T. officers and classroom teachers, may be warranted.

This report presents a detailed discussion of the observation findings. Themes which arose from the observations are highlighted, and information for understanding how the G.R.E.A.T. program operates “in the field” is provided. Finally, recommendations for ways to enhance program fidelity are offered.

INTRODUCTION

Process evaluations are an important component of outcome evaluations of social programs. Whereas an outcome evaluation focuses on the success or failure of a program to produce a desired effect, process evaluations assess program fidelity – that is, the extent to which proper program implementation occurs. By utilizing both components in the evaluation of a program, evaluators are able to link program effects to the actual program.

Process evaluations that look at program fidelity provide evaluators with more information as to why a program does or does not work compared to stand-alone outcome evaluations (Melde, Esbensen, and Tusinski, 2006; Summerfelt, 2003). Evaluating program implementation is essential to understanding the program and how its components fit together to create a program that works. Failure to use a process evaluation in conjunction with an outcome evaluation may lead to faulty conclusions about the program and the strength of its components (Dusenbury, Brannigan, Falco, and Hansen, 2003). Without proper implementation, program effects may not be as strong or long-lasting as the program providers intended (Dusenbury et al., 2003). This report discusses one aspect of the process evaluation for the National Evaluation of the G.R.E.A.T. program - the use of classroom observations of program implementation.

Classroom observations provide an important mechanism by which researchers may determine the implementation of a program because use of this technique involves direct observation of the implementation as it exists in the field (Melde et al., 2006). Results from such observations can then be used to determine the level of implementation within classrooms. For this process evaluation, we chose to use both quantitative and qualitative components from the classroom observation instrument in order to gain a thorough understanding of the manner in which the program was taught, the level to which the delivery adhered to the actual material, and

the way teachers, officers, and students responded to the program, its messages, and techniques of teaching. Because this program is offered nationwide, a number of factors can influence program fidelity (e.g., officer characteristics and teaching styles, student and classroom characteristics, and school setting). With observations from 33 officers teaching G.R.E.A.T. in 31 different schools, we are able to examine the role of these factors.

This report addresses the use of observations to determine program fidelity in the areas of dosage, adherence, and quality. More specifically, we examine the components of the observations that include adherence to suggested timeframes, coverage of topical areas/lesson adherence, and overall quality of the lessons. Qualitative comments gathered from the observations are used to derive general conclusions as to the following: 1) classroom discussions; 2) activities and student participation; 3) information about officers; 4) the nature of student final projects; and 5) atypical situations that officers faced in the classrooms (i.e., something that occurred that interrupted the natural flow of the lesson).

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

The G.R.E.A.T. program is a school-based, officer-instructed program that targets primarily middle school students in the sixth and seventh grades across the country. The program is preventative in that it aims to provide students with the tools and skills necessary to resist delinquency, youth violence, and gang membership. As such, the program focuses on the following four skill areas: 1) personal skills (goal-setting, decision making, anger management); 2) resiliency skills (message analysis, problem solving); 3) resistance skills (refusal skills, recognition of peer pressure, anti-gang and anti-violence norms); and 4) social skills (communication skills, conflict resolution, social responsibility, empathy/perspective taking).

The G.R.E.A.T. program consists of thirteen 30-45 minute lessons that are designed to be taught in sequential order, with no more than one to two lessons taught to students each week. The program is predicated on a skills-building approach; that is, as the students are exposed to new skills or information they must be allowed to practice these newly acquired skills. Subsequent program components build on prior lessons (and sections within each lesson) in a logical manner.

An important characteristic of the G.R.E.A.T. program is that police officers go to the classrooms and teach students each lesson. This is partially to build a community partnership between students and officers and to enhance the development of positive attitudes towards the police. While improving student attitudes toward the police is one of the stated goals of the program, it also appears that the officers had another unintended role in the classroom; many of the officers observed in the course of this evaluation told students stories about their experiences as police officers. The stories they told reinforced the G.R.E.A.T. lessons by highlighting the consequences of illegal activity (e.g., they told stories about people they had arrested in the past, people who had been injured or hurt others because of bad decisions, and some even related their own stories of peer pressure and drug use/resistance in their past).

G.R.E.A.T. Lesson Overview:

The G.R.E.A.T. program consists of the following thirteen 30-45 minute lessons:

- Lesson 1 – Welcome to G.R.E.A.T. - acts as the introduction to the program and introduces the relationship between gangs, violence, drug abuse, and crime.
- Lesson 2 – What’s the Real Deal - consists of message analysis skills and “facts and fictions” about gangs.

- Lesson 3 – It’s About Us - focuses on different communities and how students are a part of these, including their responsibilities to their community or communities.
- Lesson 4 – Where Do We Go From Here - introduces students to the concept of goals and how to set realistic and achievable aspirations.
- Lesson 5 – Decisions, Decisions, Decisions - focuses on decision-making, in which students learn the G.R.E.A.T. decision making model and the impact their decisions have on their goals; students are able to practice making positive decisions.
- Lesson 6 – Do You Hear What I’m Saying? - teaches the importance of listening to others and the difference between verbal and non-verbal communication.
- Lesson 7 – Walk in Someone Else’s Shoes - instructs students in active listening skills and how to identify others’ emotional states through empathy-building techniques.
- Lesson 8 – Say It Like You Mean It - teaches refusal skills so students may resist peer-pressure to engage in deviant or delinquent acts; this includes learning about body language and tone of voice.
- Lesson 9 – Getting Along Without Going Along - consists of recognizing peer pressure and other influences that may push students into delinquency.
- Lesson 10 – Keeping Your Cool - teaches students to keep calm in the face of anger with anger management tips and practicing the “cooling-off” technique.
- Lesson 11 – Keeping It Together - consists of recognizing anger in others and learning to calm them.
- Lesson 12 – Working It Out - teaches students to work through problems without fighting and provides tips for conflict resolution, practice of such, and information about where to go for help in their communities.

- Lesson 13 – Looking Back - consists of a program review and the presentation and discussion of student final projects.

One program component that officers assign during Lesson 1 and provide several reminders throughout the program is the student final project. These projects are intended to capture the main messages of the G.R.E.A.T. program and/or to motivate students to think about positive ways to improve their schools and communities. Through this process of completing a final project, students often make others who are not in the program aware of the main messages of G.R.E.A.T. Although the Instructor’s Manual suggests that each student think of and complete their own project, some officers combined the projects into one large class project to be better able to monitor students while they completed their project. It should also be noted that several officers instructed their students to think of a project that could be done and then to write a short paper about what the project would consist of and how the students could accomplish the tasks if they were to put their ideas into practice (without actually completing the project).

The G.R.E.A.T. program also includes a short skit at the beginning and end of each lesson, entitled “Life in the Middle.” This introduction and review of the day’s lesson are structured into a skit so that students may either just read them aloud, or they may actually act them out for the classroom. The program materials also include parent letters to encourage parents to ask their children what they are learning in the program, as well as extended teacher activities that are optional for teachers to use. These consist of additional ideas for teachers to incorporate G.R.E.A.T. messages within other subject matter and/or class periods. These activities are suggested in the Instructor’s Manual, which all officers receive at training; however, it is up to the individual officer to inform the teacher of these possible activities. Because these activities take place during class time not devoted to the program, the observations

in this study were unable to capture the extent of, and/or use of this supplemental material (see the School Personnel Report for discussion of teacher use of these extended teacher activities).

DATA AND METHODS

Two different sets of observations were collected: 1) observations of lessons being taught and 2) observations of both treatment and control classrooms during which time the program was not being taught. Observations of control classrooms were important to determine whether there were any unique characteristics of the different classrooms (e.g., physical arrangement of classrooms, resources available to students, etc.) that might produce systematic differences between treatment and control classrooms. Additionally, these observations allowed us to determine if there were any systematic differences between teachers in whose classes G.R.E.A.T. was taught compared with teachers in the control classes. While the random assignment of classrooms should have controlled for this potential problem, we nonetheless wanted independent confirmation that there was no confounding effect associated with the classroom assignment. A total of 108 control observations were completed in both treatment and control classrooms. Based on these observations, we did not find any substantive differences between the treatment and control teachers or classrooms. In fact, in some instances the same teacher would have both control and treatment classes throughout the day. For the remainder of this report, we will focus on the 492 observations of treatment classrooms. We will also report on the results of 26 sets of inter-rater reliability observations completed in treatment classrooms.

Procedures

Both “in-house” (i.e., members of the UMSL Research Team) and “on-site” (i.e., advanced undergraduate and graduate students hired from universities in each respective site) observers assessed program fidelity by visiting classrooms in which officers were delivering the G.R.E.A.T. program. It was initially intended for all observers to come together for two days of training so that uniformity in observing could be attained; however, such a strategy became unworkable within the time constraints of the grant award and when G.R.E.A.T. instruction began in each school. In-house research assistants were provided training on the program and through observing the G.R.E.A.T. Officer Training sessions. All observers were provided training on how to use the observation instrument and instructed on the extent of documentation necessary. As completed observation instruments arrived at the central research office (upon completion of a classroom observation, observers e-mailed or mailed them to the UMSL office where they were reviewed and then sorted and filed by city and classroom), the Principal Investigator and senior researchers reviewed the observation reports for quality control purposes and contacted observers to give them feedback on the observational process.

Observation Instruments

In order to receive uniform observational reports, researchers created an observation checklist instrument from the G.R.E.A.T. Instructor’s Manual as an outline of each lesson. These checklists included all aspects of the lessons that officers were to teach from the Instructor’s Manual. Components of these instruments included total time spent on the lesson, total time spent on each section of the lesson, general qualitative comments, a checklist of lesson components, and a rating system at the end of the checklist for observers to rate how interested

students appeared to be in the discussions and activities. Observers were then asked to rate the lesson and the officer based on adherence to suggested time frames, coverage of topical areas, overall lesson adherence, and overall quality of the lesson. Finally, observers were instructed to write comments assessing the quality of student discussions/activities and the lesson in general. This approach mirrors that successfully used in prior studies (see Melde et al., 2006, Sellers et al., 1998).

In-house Ranking

Observers indicated in their reports whether program components were taught and the time spent on each lesson component; these data were entered into an SPSS database to facilitate assessment of program fidelity. We examined the length of time spent on each section of the lesson and the overall time devoted to each lesson. Further, each on-site observer also included rankings of the quality of discussions, activities, adherence to suggested time frames, coverage of the topical areas, overall lesson adherence, and the overall quality of the lesson. After reviewing each observation and its components, one of the UMSL research assistants conducted an in-house ranking for each of the items scored by the observers in the field. These in-house rankings were completed based on the information given in the observation instrument. This allowed for two rating systems, one in which the person observing rated the lesson and one in which the in-house researchers rated the lesson based on the completed observations. This was done in order to achieve consistency on the rankings as the observations were completed by numerous researchers at the seven evaluation sites.

“In-house” observers were employed at UMSL and their work was devoted entirely to the project. “On-site” observers were recruited through contact with colleagues at local universities.

Known colleagues at local universities were contacted and asked to refer students who they considered to be particularly qualified to conduct these duties. Additionally, we requested that job announcements be posted in the local universities. Potential observers were screened and hired by senior researchers at UMSL. This approach yielded mixed results across the sites. In six sites, “on-site observers” were located and hired. In one of these sites, scheduling conflicts arose during the study period which limited the lessons observed by on-site personnel; thus, “in-house” observers attempted to pick up observations when possible. In one site, no on-site observers were located, necessitating in-house researchers to complete all observations in the site. Clearly, this required considerable additional travel and expense and resulted in fewer observations than initially intended. In spite of such logistical issues, we were still successful in completing at least six observations per officer in all seven sites.

Table 1 displays the total number of observations by lesson and officer that are included in this report. There were a total of 492 separate and unique observations.¹ Lesson 2 was the most frequently observed lesson across all cities and schools (53 observations). Lesson 10 had the fewest observations with a total of 29. Each lesson was observed at least once in every site with only four exceptions (Lessons 12 and 13 were not observed in Chicago and Lessons 7 and 11 in Nashville). The average number of observations per officer in this study was 15 times.

¹ In addition to unique observations, 26 observations were conducted for inter-rater reliability (IRR). A total of 26 IRR observations were completed with the ‘regular’ observer and one IRR observer; two sets of IRR observations were completed with the ‘regular’ observer and two IRR observers. Thus, the total number of IRR observations is 28; however this report will use the number of ‘sets’ of observations (n=26).

Table 1. Number of Observations of G.R.E.A.T. Officers by Lesson.

City	Officer	G.R.E.A.T. Lessons													Totals
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
<i>Albuquerque, NM</i>															
	A	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	1			2		15
	B		2	4	2	4		3	4	2	2	2	1	1	27
	C	1	2	2	2	3	3	1				3	3	1	21
	D		3	3						1	2	2			11
<i>Chicago, IL</i>															
	A	3	1	1	1										6
	B*		3	3	2	2	1	1							12
	C		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1				9
	D*		4	1	2		2	1	2	1		2			15
<i>Dallas/Ft. Worth, TX</i>															
	A	2	2	2	2	2			2	1		1	1	2	17
	B	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	1	3	1		2	2	20
	C	2	2	2	2	1	4		3	2	1	2	2	2	25
	D			4	2	2	4		2	2	2		2	2	22
<i>Greeley, CO</i>															
	A	1	2		1	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	2		17
	B	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	2	20
	C	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	18
	D	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	19
<i>Nashville, TN</i>															
	A	2		2		1			2		1		2		10
	B	2	2			2			1	1					8
	C		2	1	1	1	2			1	1				9
	D	1	3	1			2			2				2	11

City	Officer	G.R.E.A.T. Lessons													Totals
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
<i>Philadelphia, PA</i>															
	A	2	2		1	1	1	1		3	1	2	1	2	17
	B	2	1	1	2		1	1		2	1		2		13
	C	1	1	1	1	1		1		2		1	1	1	11
	D	1	2	1		1	1	2	2	2					12
	E	2	2			2	2		2	2		2	2	2	18
<i>Portland, OR</i>															
	A	1		1		1	1		1				1		6
	B	1	1		1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	11
	C	1	1	1	1	1		1		1	1	1	1	1	11
	D	2	2	1	2		2		1		2	2	2	2	18
	E	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	1		2	2	2	1	19
	F	1	1	1	2	2			1					1	9
	G	2	2	2		2	2	2	2	2		2	2	2	22
	H	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	13
	Totals	40	53	46	37	43	42	28	37	40	26	32	37	31	492

Note: Based on 492 unique observations.

*Officers taught G.R.E.A.T. in multiple schools.

Inter-rater Reliability

Throughout the observation period, steps were taken to provide inter-rater reliability assessments of the observations. As a general rule, UMSL research staff conducted the inter-rater reliability assessments but in a few instances, the on-site observers did so. A total of 26 classroom observations were included in the inter-rater reliability (IRR) observations - that is, two researchers observed the same lesson in the same classroom and independently took notes. The observations from the “regular” observer were treated as any other report with the exception that they were flagged to allow for subsequent comparison with the second observer’s report.

To determine the inter-rater reliability concordance, both the qualitative and quantitative components of the two sets of observations were compared and contrasted. The primary determinant of reliability was observer indication that lesson components were taught by the officer. Observers completed IRR observations for 14 of the 33 total officers; therefore, almost half of the officers included in this evaluation were observed by multiple researchers.

The overall inter-rater reliability percentage of agreement was a respectable 85.43 percent; 11 of the IRR observations had a concordance rate of 90 percent or higher, seven sets of observations were between 80 and 89 percent, six were between 69 and 79 percent, and only two were less than 69 percent (46% and 29%). These last two IRR observations were from one officer who was determined to have delivered the program with such low quality that one could not conclude that the program was actually taught with sufficient fidelity to have the desired program effect.

RESULTS

Time Management and Adherence to Suggested Time Frames

Adherence to suggested time frames for the program is related to time management on the part of the officers in that it impacts whether all components of the lessons could be taught. The clear majority of officers had good to excellent time management skills. This is despite the different school schedules and class time allocated for the program across schools and sites. When officers appeared to have trouble adhering to the suggested time frames, it was either because of disruptive student behavior or an atypical situation (something that occurred that interrupted the natural flow of the lesson).

Officers used a variety of methods in order to keep the students focused, which appeared to greatly increase their adherence to suggested time frames. In this regard, officer strengths appeared to be calling on a limited number of students in order to complete a discussion without losing valuable time. Another technique that allowed officers to complete lessons on time was their ability to control student behavior. One observer noted how an officer did this,

“The officer exercised good classroom management. To control classroom volume, the officer would use phrases like, ‘folks, what is with the noise?’ and ‘show respect!’ At one point the officer warned them that if they continued to talk, he would wait until they were ready. He notified them that they have a choice to be quiet or not. If not, the consequence would be that they would have to conduct more work at home.”

One officer whose classes proved problematic stopped a lesson in order to have a “heart-to-heart” talk with the students about why they were participating in the G.R.E.A.T. program and what benefits came from the program, even if it did not seem like it at the time. After this talk, the students in this officer’s class appeared to calm down and focus their attention on the officer.

Another officer had an inventive idea for controlling students when they were rowdy and would not be quiet. After several reminders to students that they must stay in their seats and quit

talking, the officer finally stopped the lesson and told the students they would be doing a different activity. He told students to sit in their chairs and be quiet. As an activity, he introduced the concept of listening to his police radio (which he turned on in class, but did not turn the volume up all the way). He instructed students to write down everything they heard on the radio, and they had to be quiet while doing so in order to hear it. After about five minutes, the officer turned off the radio and asked what students heard, and then he interpreted what they heard on the radio and told them what it meant. The observer in this instance noted that this activity had a positive effect on students in that they quieted down and sat in their chairs for the remainder of the lesson.

Those officers who had trouble controlling student behavior in their classrooms did not fare as well on adherence to suggested time frames because the students themselves became disruptive to the officers, and it was often hard for officers to stay on topic. Those who had trouble controlling behavior or who had problem students appeared to struggle for the majority of the lesson with correcting behavior, and thus lost valuable time in each lesson. In some of these instances, student behavior was made worse when the regular classroom teacher left the room during lesson delivery or if teachers did nothing to correct student misbehavior during the lessons, leaving discipline and teaching to the officer.

If officers had problems with adherence to suggested times and it was not because of student behavior, it was often because of an atypical situation. Some of the atypical scenarios that arose were fire drills, announcements, school assemblies, state testing, activity day schedules, and field trips. Some of these instances would affect an entire class (e.g. if the fire drill was during the G.R.E.A.T. lesson, then all students were affected). If the situation involved school assemblies (such as recognizing honor students), then the situation tended to affect about

half the class as those who made the honor roll were called out of class. In these instances, the officer continued teaching the G.R.E.A.T. lesson to those students who remained in the class. In the case of fire drills, officers stopped instructing and began again after the drill ended.

A common trend throughout the observers' notes was that officers often did not know ahead of time when scheduled activities were taking place at the school; and therefore, could not prepare for the situation. Sometimes observers noted that the officer came to class at the regularly scheduled time and therefore missed part of the "re-scheduled" or shortened class period. When officers had less time due to a school schedule conflict, they quickly taught the lessons and appeared to make an effort to cover the main points of the lesson before leaving the class. The part of the lessons that officers most often skipped for the sake of time appeared to be the Wrap-Up section of the lessons, which consisted of a review of the day's activities. The second most skipped section of the lessons due to time constraints were the Introductions to the lessons, which familiarized students with what the lesson was going to cover that day. It should be noted that when officers left out the Introduction aspect of the activities, they still allowed students to participate and read aloud the "Life in the Middle" (LIM) skit. This is consistent with training guidelines about how officers are to handle time management (i.e., skimming introductions and wrap-ups if necessary, but always including LIM). It also appeared in the clear majority of observations that students thoroughly enjoyed the LIM component of each lesson.

Some officers, in spite of outside occurrences, still exhibited excellent time management skills. It was common for these officers to do so by shortening discussions, activities, and student writing projects. It appeared that officers covered the main components of each part of the lessons, but may have eliminated some of the time students had to complete such activities. Those officers who chose this method of delivering the lesson in the face of a shortened class

period tended to have better on-site and in-house implementation scores due to the fact that they still taught the lesson as intended, but merely shortened some of the time frames for each section of the lesson.

Some officers had more time than was necessary to teach the entire lesson for the day. These officers tended to fill the extra time by allowing students more time for discussion and completion of workbook activities; some filled the extra time with stories based on their experiences working with suspects. Students appeared to really enjoy it when officers had time to answer their questions in relation to what they did on patrol, and students appeared interested when officers related G.R.E.A.T. material to their experiences on patrol.

Again, the majority of officers had good or excellent time management skills. Among the few exceptions to this was one officer who was noted as a “slow talker” by numerous observers - and therefore had trouble getting through the entire lesson. Instead, this officer would thoroughly cover the first part of the lesson until time ran out, at which point the officer would end the lesson and appeared to not come back to the missed sections. Another officer taught 62% of his lessons in 20 minutes or less. This officer was deemed to have poor time management because this officer combined lessons, therefore not covering any particular lesson in great detail. Combining lessons appeared to be due to the fact that this officer was being reassigned at the end of the calendar year (December) and therefore unable to finish the curriculum after the winter break.

Adherence to Suggested Time Frames and Fidelity Scores for Officers

For the purpose of assessing program fidelity, we determined that any lesson taught in 20 minutes or less would be deemed as not implemented as intended. This is because 20 minutes is

about (or a little under) half of the estimated time for each lesson. When using this criteria, the majority of officers (n=19) had no lessons completed in 20 minutes or less and another nine officers had only one observed lesson completed in this time frame. Table 2 shows the number of officers that taught lessons in 20 minutes or less. It can be assumed that those officers who taught only one, two, or even three lessons in 20 minutes or less may have done so because of influences beyond their controls (atypical situations). Therefore, it appears only one officer had poor adherence to suggested time frames, and this was an officer who was being reassigned at the end of the year. This finding is supported by the qualitative comments offered in the observations and by the officer implementation score assigned in-house. Such a score was based on all six topical areas where observers could rate officers. It was determined that only three officers had the lowest implementation score (poor), and of these officers, only one was given this low score based on poor time management.

Table 2. Number of Officers Teaching Lessons in 20 Minutes or Less.

<i># of Lessons under 20 min.</i>	<i># of Officers</i>
0	19
1	9
2	3
3	1
More than 3	1

In the area of adherence to suggested time frames, it appears that the atypical scenarios, which tended to result in less class time to teach, presented officers with the most problems. Therefore, a recommendation for future implementation would be to increase and/or strengthen

communication between teachers and the officer. If the lines of communication are open (in that officers know how to contact teachers and teachers know how to contact officers), officers may be more prepared to deal with these atypical scenarios. In situations where the teachers and officers have each other's contact information, they should be encouraged to communicate scheduling changes well in advance. If officers can plan for some of these scenarios, they may be able to teach a quality lesson even though there is less time to do so. In addition, officers might be encouraged each week to review the next week's schedule with the teacher, in hopes of learning about schedule changes.

Because student misbehavior also became a problem for some officers, regular communication between the officer and teacher should again be encouraged. If officers and teachers give each other mutual feedback, then the officer may feel more compelled to ask for the teacher's help in disciplining students when they prove to be a distraction. In classes where the teacher was attentive to the lesson, officer, and students, the teacher was better able to help the officer maintain control of students. Further, it appeared that students were slightly more receptive to their teachers when s/he corrected their behavior compared to when it was just the officer correcting behavior. This type of recommendation would require teachers to be in the classrooms and to pay attention to student behavior when officers are teaching the lessons.

Observers noted that many teachers left the room while the officer was there, or used the time as a planning period, or they simply read a book or played computer games. Although districts may require the teacher to stay in the classroom while G.R.E.A.T. is being taught, observers often commented that the teacher left the classroom for parts of, or the majority of the lesson. Perhaps officers could enlist teacher help from the beginning by visiting, or setting up a meeting, with the

teacher before the program begins so that they can both plan a course of mutual action for when students misbehave and do not listen.

A final recommendation would be for teachers not to interrupt the lesson when the officer is teaching. A few teachers would call students over to their desks for meetings, or would actively grade student assignments while giving feedback to the student. In these scenarios, the officer and the lesson were both interrupted and it appeared difficult for the officer to stay on topic. In addition, when teachers called students aside during the lessons, observers noted that other students would watch what the teacher and student were doing, even if they were in the back of the classroom. This is an additional area which can be addressed through officer – teacher communication.

Coverage of Topical Areas/Lesson Adherence

Officers appeared to make considerable effort to cover all topical areas in each lesson even when they were short on time. Those who had “excellent” adherence had near perfect coverage of the topical areas and they followed the lesson plans and components from the G.R.E.A.T. manual in the order in which they were intended to be presented. These officers also adhered to the intended discussions and activities and made sure that students were instructed to talk or discuss correct topics.

Officers who had “average” coverage of topical areas and average lesson adherence tended to teach the program as intended; however, some of their lessons may have been combined, and thus the officer was not able to review all topics in one class period. Another characteristic of officers’ average coverage of topical areas and lesson adherence was when they covered all or most topics, but they did so out of order. Presenting lesson components out of

order is counted against officers in this study because G.R.E.A.T. is a skills building program, in which the topics are intended to be taught sequentially so as to build-on and strengthen skills learned in prior lessons. Each lesson itself also builds on skills learned within the same lesson.

Other officers received average topical coverage and lesson adherence ranking because they tended to lecture instead of pushing students to discuss and participate in activities. The Instructor's Manual and G.R.E.A.T. Officer Trainings (GOT) indicate that officers should not rely exclusively on lectures, but instead should strive to include students in active learning techniques by having them participate in discussions, group activities, and by sharing their written answers. An example of this is when officers would attempt to start a discussion by asking a question. If no one volunteered, they would answer the question themselves. This differed from officers who had excellent lesson adherence and coverage of topical areas because these officers would call on students if no one volunteered. Those officers with excellent adherence would often ask every student to share his/her answer and they would sometimes bring in small gifts for students who did participate. This seemed to set a tone for the classroom that students should feel free to participate. Those officers who had average implementation generally would not institute these ideas; and therefore, their lessons tended to be focused more on lectures than student activities. Officers who tended to have "poor" coverage of topical areas and lesson adherence were ranked as such because they combined lessons (necessitating a reduction in the content/topical areas of each lesson) or because their presentation of the material was so disorganized that it was difficult for the observer to note each topical area covered. One observer commented,

"The officer rambles so it is hard to follow the lesson; officer talks a lot about personal life and experiences such as family and past arrests."

The other characteristic that led officers to have poor lesson adherence/coverage of topical areas was going over lesson components in great detail, which generally resulted in the officer not being able to finish the lesson in its entirety. When officers slowed down the lessons, it not only added to students losing attention to the program components, but also did not allow the officer to finish the lessons.

Those officers who covered topical areas in an exceptional manner nonetheless would experience difficulty covering all topical areas when an atypical situation occurred. When officers were seemingly surprised by an atypical situation or student behavior problems, they would skip topical areas as needed in order to be able to finish the lesson in the designated class period. One teaching method that appeared to allow officers to stay on topic was to have class discussions, led by the officer, instead of breaking students into small groups for discussion, which tended to result in students getting off topic. This technique had the added benefit of allowing the officer to be able to participate in the conversation and s/he could then clarify concepts for students if they had trouble understanding, instead of waiting to come back together as a class and discovering students did not understand what they were to be discussing. This technique required students to stay on-topic during discussions and allowed officers to cover topical areas more thoroughly.

When officers with lower lesson adherence faced an atypical situation, it tended to result in the officer getting off-track in the lesson. Atypical factors consisted of, on average, shortened class periods due to an “activity schedule,” fire drill, or snow day. Officers also had to manage teaching lessons during instances when some students were not in the classroom because of an award ceremony. Field trips in other classes also contributed to some students not being in the classroom when the officer arrived, although this only occurred twice. Further, when it began

snowing outside, students often got distracted. Albuquerque experienced an unusually wet winter when the observations were being completed, and it was noted in several observations that students ran to the window to watch the snow fall. When officers faced these situations, they tended to not cover all topical areas, and would sometimes present the lesson out-of-order. An example of this is when one officer decided to draw student attention away from the window by completing the activity first, instead of after teaching the lesson and discussions. Completing the sections of the lesson out of order slightly counted against officers in scoring lesson adherence and coverage of topical areas.

Recommendations to help officers with future coverage of topical areas and lesson adherence would be to have officers review the specific lesson and components they will be teaching that day. Perhaps then, if a situation arises where the officer is unable to teach the entire lesson, he/she may pick the main topics and still provide a quality lesson. This ability requires that officers familiarize themselves with the program and its components to the extent that they know which topics can be covered quickly in the face of impromptu problems. Trainers at the G.R.E.A.T. Officer Trainings (GOTs) might suggest to officers that they consider using guided class discussion rather than group activities if time is short. Further, officers should try to stay within the time estimates for each section of a lesson. Although this may be stressed in training, it appears that in practice this is harder to implement and deserves special attention from officers.

Overall Quality of Lessons

Lessons were as good as the officers were at teaching them and as good as the students were at behaving and being involved in the lessons. Our observations of lesson delivery lead us

to conclude that the vast majority of lessons were taught in a manner consistent with the training provided at the GOT. It appeared the best quality lesson resulted from a strong and supportive relationship between officer and teacher, and positive and respectful student behavior. When teachers helped officers maintain classroom control, the lessons tended to run smoothly and quickly. Further, when teachers reinforced points of the lessons by being involved in discussions, the students appeared to have greater interest in the program and showed more respect and were better behaved overall. In a classroom where the teacher appeared to have a positive relationship with the officer, the observer noted the following,

“Students raise hands and ask questions. The teacher is involved in the discussion on how to improve your community; teacher stresses keeping the community and neighborhood nice and the school clean.”

Another positive relationship appeared when one observer noted, “(The) teacher walked around the room to check students’ (G.R.E.A.T.) books and quietly ensured that they were completing the activities.”

When teachers ignored student misbehavior, used the telephone in the classroom, left the room, or interrupted the lessons themselves, then student behavior tended to become a problem in the classroom. Students appeared to not take the program as seriously if they had teachers who were not involved and/or listening to the classroom instruction. This was especially the case when teachers would call students over to their desk to give students grades or talk to them about an assignment. In such an instance one observer noted,

“(The) teacher was not only completely uninvolved in the G.R.E.A.T. program, but was disrupting the discussion by calling out students to bring their (unrelated) journal assignments to her and going over their journals with them while the officer was teaching the lesson. Also, the teacher did not control students when they were loud or not paying attention. The officer just tried to talk over them.”

Occasionally, researchers noticed such things as “funny” comments and student suggestions and ideas that were contrary to the G.R.E.A.T. program content. In one class, during

a skit in which students were supposed to reject delinquent behavior, a boy in this class agreed to spray paint the boys' bathroom (instead of refusing the peer pressure to do so). This required the officer to take an additional five minutes to explain to the student and the class that this was not the correct response and why this behavior was unacceptable.

One classroom in particular displayed very disrespectful behavior toward the officer during one lesson. The teacher had the students write apology letters to the officer and to apologize as a class when the officer arrived for the next G.R.E.A.T. lesson. This technique seemed to work as students were subsequently much more respectful toward the officer.

Because the overall quality of the lesson heavily relied on teacher and student behavior, the importance of forging a relationship with the teacher(s) in whose classes they will be teaching should be stressed to the officers. If the officer attempts to relay his/her frustrations and suggestions in relation to students and student behavior, then teachers may be able to assist officers in maintaining student control during the lesson delivery. If officers and teachers can come together and cooperatively agree to help each other, then the overall quality of lessons can only improve. A synergistic approach between teachers and the program is stressed to officers at G.R.E.A.T. Officer Training and can be enhanced through use of the extended teacher activities.

Discussions, Activities and Student Participation

Students appeared to enjoy discussions more when they were able to ask officers about their jobs, weapons, and stories from "the streets." In classes where a School Resource Officer (SRO) taught students, the students were very interested in stories from their schools, such as gang incidents and fights that the officer helped to control. Students tended to like discussions about the G.R.E.A.T. material, as well; however, students appeared to be less interested in the

follow-up discussions of activities they completed in groups or as a class. These follow-up discussions generally occurred after a student activity and after students wrote about the activity in their workbooks. When it came time to discuss the students' written answers, officers often had to push for answers by calling on students if there were no volunteers. One observer noted that this problem was alleviated by the officer changing these discussions so that they were done as a class and not in small groups, with the officer overseeing all aspects of the follow-up discussions.

“Compared to the other officers, this officer’s method of doing the review questions as a class, as opposed to giving the students time to answer them independently, generated more discussion. This may be because students may not always understand the questions, but doing it as a class offers the officer the opportunity to paraphrase the questions when necessary. This method is also less time consuming.”

To facilitate discussion, officers should be encouraged to review lessons in advance in order to be better prepared to highlight lesson goals and objectives. This enhanced familiarity with the teaching goals of each section would allow the officer to guide the discussions by informing students about the lesson goals. When students know what to look for from the beginning of the activity, they may feel more compelled to answer questions afterward as they would have prepared the answers during the activity. Further, this would give the officer greater comfort with the material and allow him/her to rephrase questions from the student workbook in order to encourage student participation in these discussions.

Students appeared to enjoy activities, especially the ones that required getting out of their chairs and acting in front of the class. One activity that students enjoyed was the “refusal skills practice” (Lesson 9), which required the officer to give each student a possible peer pressure scenario which they were to refuse using one of the skills they learned in the program. One observer noted, “Because both officers and students could be creative in this activity, it tended to result in students laughing and having a good time.” In one class, the students begged the officer

to be able to refuse more scenarios. Students also appeared to enjoy other activities, although in some classes (usually in disordered schools or when teachers were not present) it was often hard for the officer to keep control of students if they were instructed to complete the activities in small groups, as the G.R.E.A.T. program suggests.

Student participation tended to be good overall; however, there was a definite pattern of low student participation in the early morning and in the last class period before school dismissal. In one class, the schedule was such that the officer began the lesson (about 15 minutes), then had to break for lunch (about 30 minutes) and then return to class to finish the G.R.E.A.T. lesson (this is a schedule to be avoided). This caused the officer to have to vie for student attention, and therefore, resulted in less time for the officer to present the material. Several observers noted that after lunch, the students tended to be more disruptive and it was hard for the officer to finish the lesson in a timely manner because of student disruptions and bad behavior.

Overall students seemed to enjoy the program. Across the multiple schools, there was similarity in the “flow” of the G.R.E.A.T. program. The program tended to start with the students being shy in front of the officers; however after Lesson 2, student participation increased. Around Lesson 10, student participation started to wane again. Observers noted student enthusiasm and participation lessened as the program progressed as indicated by the following statement, “Students show a definite decline in participation and enthusiasm as compared to earlier in the program.” Students generally appeared to enjoy learning about gangs (“Facts and Fictions about Gangs,” in Lesson 2), but did not appear to care as much for the second half of the program in which they learn anger management skills, how to calm others, and conflict resolution skills (Lessons 10, 11, and 12). In all classes, student participation was

enhanced when officers dispersed small prizes for those who participated in discussions and activities. In the GOT, the facilitators inform the officers that G.R.E.A.T.-logo items can be found online from the official G.R.E.A.T. website. Some officers used these items, while others were able to bring items with their department logo, and still other officers would bring small gifts like pencils and erasers.

Officers may also be able to increase student participation by using “name tents,” which was a technique suggested in the GOT. These “tents” consist of a piece of construction paper folded to sit upright or hang over the front of a student’s desk. Students can keep these name tents in their G.R.E.A.T. workbooks and put them on their desks so that officers can familiarize themselves with student names. The ability to identify students by name had two positive consequences: 1) it allowed the officer to better lead class discussion and 2) officers were able to call specific students out for negative behavior and quickly move on with the lesson. Officers appeared to encounter more disciplinary problems when they did not know student names and therefore could not reprimand them or call attention to them during the lessons. In these cases, the officers would often say things like, “hey, young man in the corner,” which did not necessarily have the same effect as addressing the student by his/her name. If teachers did not intervene in these situations, it was not uncommon for the officers to lose control of the students and the lessons appeared to suffer in quality as a result.

The initial shyness of students that was noted in many of the observations of Lesson One suggests that officers may want to introduce ice-breaker games in the first and/or second lesson. Such ice-breakers are intended to increase familiarity and comfort; as students become more comfortable with the officer they will be more likely to participate in discussions of personal topics included in the G.R.E.A.T. lessons. Several observers noted that students were

comfortable with the SROs because they had seen them on the school grounds and had some prior exposure to these officers. Several examples of potential ice-breaker activities include: throwing around a bean bag and naming one's favorite dessert or forming a circle and playing a short game of catch while naming funny television shows. Such activities would serve to introduce officers during a fun activity rather than beginning with a formal lesson delivery.

Officer Teaching Characteristics and Interactions with Students

One cannot forget the difficulty officers may have in managing their time between patrol, SRO and other duties, and teaching the G.R.E.A.T. program. Some of the officers in this study were school resource officers who were stationed at the school or within a school district and generally did not focus their time on street patrol duties. In these cases, the main issue these officers encountered was when they were needed to respond to a school disturbance. When this occurred, officers left the classroom but usually returned after a short absence to continue teaching the lesson. This type of interruption did not tend to impact the G.R.E.A.T. lessons as much as when officers were called back to patrol duty to assist another officer. In a few instances, observers noted that the regular classroom teacher wrapped up the lesson for the officer, but the more common situation was for the officers to excuse themselves from the class and return to that lesson the following week.

Despite these slight interruptions, overall officers did well in the classrooms when teaching the G.R.E.A.T. program. Even if a particular officer was rated as average or below average in program implementation, observers still noted that officers were interacting in a positive manner with students. Officers commonly told stories of juveniles they encountered on the streets while on patrol and the bad decisions some of these teenagers made. Many officers

attempted to teach students “life lessons” and be a positive role model for them. One officer put his name and cell phone number on the chalkboard and told students to write it down and to call him if they ever needed help or had questions or just needed to talk with someone.

Overall, the majority of officers maintained a positive attitude when teaching and tried to be a positive influence on the students. Many officers provided examples from their own childhood and school experiences. One officer told a story about a friend when they were both teenagers; this officer pointed out that because his friend made bad decisions he ended up in prison. Another officer shared his story about a time in high school when two friends asked him to smoke marijuana with them; this officer pointed out that in hindsight they were probably not such good friends. The officer explained what went through his mind in this situation and how he said ‘no’ to the offer of drugs.

There were a few observations in which officers made derogatory comments and/or insensitive remarks toward students. In one class, for instance, the observer wrote the following commentary:

“Officer still picks on the students and says: ‘I know you’re a rumor-spreader; you look like a rumor-spreader,’ to one girl; a bit of chauvinism/stereotyping going on; when (the officer) gave the scenario, it was two girl students, one who spread a rumor about the other; officer said, ‘cuz it’s always girls, huh?’ Later, ‘guys can just drop it, but not when it comes to girls, eh?’ ‘Guys forget about it in like, what, two minutes, and girls? Girls carry it for two years.’ Most students seem okay with this type of talk, but a few looked uncomfortable, especially when comments were directed at them.”

Recommendations to increase positive relationships between officers and students include the provision of an officer phone number or general hotline for students to call when they are facing trouble or need advice. Although one officer gave students his cell phone number, it might be a better idea for those officers who teach many students to give the non-emergency phone number to the police station or create a hotline or a designated officer who is to receive

calls from G.R.E.A.T. students. This potential for interaction between officer and students may help reinforce the concepts of the G.R.E.A.T. program for students beyond the school year in which they were taught and allow the positive relationships the officers hope to establish with students to be maintained over time.

Another recommendation is for officers to stay upbeat and positive. Although the majority of officers in this study were positive and acted as positive role-models, a few officers were not quite as positive. We could not determine from the observations if the officers who made negative comments to students were new, did not like teaching G.R.E.A.T., or if this was their general demeanor. GOT trainers may want to re-enforce the importance of a positive presentation of self when the officers are teaching G.R.E.A.T.

Student Final Projects

Based on observer comments, it appeared that the G.R.E.A.T. student projects assigned in Lesson 1 and due during Lesson 13 did not always go as planned. It was not clear from the observations if students enjoyed these projects and if they understood how these projects fit into the G.R.E.A.T. curriculum. The low completion rates of the projects may hint that students did not understand that this project was to be the culmination of information they learned in the program and their chance to show others in their schools how to apply what they learned.

Many observers noted that almost half of students in most classes did not complete the project. The final project is intended to be adaptable to numerous school and community environments; therefore, officers are instructed in both trainings and the manual that they have considerable freedom with regard to appropriate G.R.E.A.T. projects. In this regard, some officers assigned each student an individual project of their choosing, others decided it would be

better to do one project as a class, one officer turned the project over to the teacher who decided to complete a class project, and still other officers had students make posters or write a short paper (1-2 paragraphs) about what they would do if they were to do a project and how they would complete it. Only one officer did not assign or even address the final project.

Some examples of complications associated with the projects follow. In one class, the observer noted that 17 out of 25 students did not complete a project. This was a class in which students were expected to think of, design, and complete their own projects. In another class where students were also supposed to complete their own projects, the observer noted, “Over two-thirds of the students did not complete project or take project seriously. The students laughed about not having completed the project.”

As may be expected, classes that initiated a group project were more likely to complete the final project than were classes that did individual projects. Completed student projects included the following: 1) one class implemented an after-school program titled “Stay Active,” designed to encourage physical fitness and discourage the use of drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes; 2) one student wrote about expanding bus services in the school district to those students not currently served; 3) another student decided to implement a program called “Making Recycling Fun,” which was an idea to install a small basketball hoop over recycling bins already in the schools so students might feel more compelled to recycle paper products; and 4) another student suggested that the G.R.E.A.T. graduates work with the local police department in order to get more officers in the schools to increase student safety and “overall peacefulness.”

To increase student project completion rates, officers may want to consider offering incentives for completing the projects. For example, one officer worked with the classroom teacher so that those who completed a project received 100 points and those not completing the

project received no points toward a grade in the class. Another officer offered small prizes to students who completed their projects. These prizes included G.R.E.A.T. t-shirts, pencils, erasers, and rulers. Yet another officer told students they must present a project idea or they would not receive a G.R.E.A.T. graduation party. This appeared to work in that all students completed the project in that class. Officers might also be encouraged to have students discuss their projects and challenges throughout the curriculum or to describe projects completed by previous classes, highlighting the fact that students found these school/community improvements helpful and useful in their daily lives. Showing students the impact these projects can have on their communities appears to enhance student interest. This would help reinforce the importance of the student projects and also provide examples of potential projects to students who are having difficulty deciding on a project. By being aware of student projects, officers could link lesson components to the projects, thereby reinforcing how the projects relate to the skills they are being taught in the G.R.E.A.T. program. Teachers could also be encouraged to remind students about the importance of completing their projects.

Atypical Situations

In this study, atypical situations occurred when something external to the officer disrupted the regular flow of the lesson. The most common atypical occurrence was an outside influence (n=57), such as an activity day schedule, snow day, fire drill, or some other event that required the school to shorten class periods. Sometimes these shorter periods resulted from field trips the students took in another class or assemblies that were held at the school which necessitated the shortening of class periods throughout the day. The weather outside also proved to be a distraction in classroom that had windows. When it snowed or when it stormed, typically

student attention was drawn to what was going on outside. One observer noted in Albuquerque that when it started to snow, students ran over to the windows, which required the officer to take five minutes out of the lesson delivery. It should be noted that outside influences also occurred when the officers' job duties required them to leave during the middle of a lesson in order to attend to SRO or patrol duties.

Unique and rare outside influences also occurred, such as when a mouse was present in one classroom during the delivery of an entire lesson. Another officer encountered a group of school principals from China that was touring the school and stopped in this officer's class because they had never before seen police officers in schools. These principals stayed in the classroom for 30 minutes and asked questions of the officer. When this occurred, the officer was unable to finish the G.R.E.A.T. lesson in that class.

Another atypical situation was when the class had a substitute teacher (n=14). This was considered atypical because it usually resulted in the students being more disruptive during the lesson. Classes tended to be slightly disorganized when substitute teachers were present (causing lessons to start late). The substitute teachers also were unfamiliar with student names and were less able to assist the officer with classroom control of student behavior, resulting in some of these lessons not being completed.

One last example of an atypical situation was the presence of a substitute officer (n=4) in the classroom. This occurred only at one site where the officers taught the G.R.E.A.T. program on their days off; however, if they had to go to court or work overtime, another officer would teach the class at the scheduled time. Having a different officer was considered an atypical situation because the new officer often did not know student names and sometimes was not familiar with the particular lesson he/she had to teach that day. The substitute officers were

G.R.E.A.T.-trained, but observers noted that these officers appeared unsure of their lesson delivery. This required the substitute officers to proceed slowly through the lessons in comparison to the officer who regularly taught these classrooms. Importantly, student behavior did not seem to suffer when there was a substitute officer.

Atypical situations will be omnipresent during the implementation of school-based programs. This reality should be discussed in the GOT so officers will be better able to adjust to these unexpected situations. Suggestions could be given by the trainers as to how the officers could make accommodations in these situations. As mentioned above, one strategy to minimize the effect of atypical situations is for officers to review their lesson at the beginning of the day so that they can more readily adjust to atypical situations. While officers generally did not know when an atypical situation would occur, some situations (e.g., shortened class schedule or change in school schedule) could be avoided through better communication between the officer and teacher. The bottom line, however, is that officers need to be flexible and patient with schools, teachers, and students because things do not always go as planned in the classroom.

Combined Lessons: Why, how, and how often?

Contrary to concerns that had been raised by some of the G.R.E.A.T. Regional Administrators, we did not find officers combining lessons on a regular basis nor did there appear to be any systematic pattern to the instances in which lessons were combined. It appears safe to conclude that when officers did combine lessons, it was in response to external conditions. In the following paragraphs, we detail these cases in which we observed officers combine the teaching of two lessons during one class period.

The combining of lessons was most common in Albuquerque (n=16 lessons combined), but it was also the site with the most disruption to the school schedule due to an unusually snowy winter. Three of four officers in this site were observed combining lessons. One officer with a poor implementation rating accounted for eight of these combined lessons. This particular officer took a number of personal or vacation days that contributed to the need to combine lessons in order to finish the program on schedule. Compounding these numerous absences was the officer's failure to communicate with either the teachers or the schools about these absences, resulting in considerable confusion about program delivery. This officer appeared to combine almost every lesson and therefore did not have any particular lessons that were always combined. When this officer combined lessons, he usually turned them into a strictly lecture-based format, with some student discussion, but little or no student activities or group work.

For the other officers in this city, it appeared officers combined lessons toward the end of the program for either personal reasons or based on their opinions of the core component of each lesson. One officer combined some of the last lessons because of personal reasons that required him to be out of the school. Another officer determined that Lessons 12 and 13 should be combined because Lesson 13 "was just review." It appeared this officer failed to realize the core component of Lesson 13 was for students to present their final projects and what they had learned throughout the program, and not necessarily just to review the entire program.

Two officers in Nashville combined a total of five lessons. However, one officer who combined two lessons did so because early in the program there were many students absent in the class. Therefore, when he came the next week, he reviewed the second lesson and then taught the third lesson in its entirety. In these circumstances, the lesson for the day was within the estimated time frames, with the review of the prior lesson only taking approximately five to

ten minutes of class time. This officer combined only Lessons 2 and 3 for this particular circumstance of having many absences in the class during the previous lesson. The other Nashville officer combined a total of three lessons because he was under the impression the program had to be completed by December. When he realized he had until the summer to finish the program, he discontinued combining lessons. Observers noted on the last combined lesson checklist that this officer was performing “double duty at the high school,” which required him to leave the middle school (where he taught the program) on a regular basis. However, this officer would finish the previous lesson before starting the next lesson.

One officer in Greeley combined Lessons 11 and 12. In this situation, the officer gave students the definitions of key terms and allowed minimal classroom discussion, but no activities. Lesson 12 lasted for 18 minutes; we do not know how long Lesson 11 lasted.

One officer in Portland combined four lessons, but this was due to the special nature of the officer-teaching relationship, where officers from this city taught the program while working overtime or on days off. Therefore, the lessons were sometimes not delivered every week, based on the officers’ schedule. Because of this, one officer had other responsibilities, such as patrol duties, and therefore had to combine lessons near the end of the program in order to be able to finish before the end of the school year. When this officer combined lessons, it appeared that s/he was able to still spend almost up to the estimated time frame for each lesson because this school district had classes that generally lasted from 50 to 65 minutes. Thus, when this officer combined lessons, it did not affect the time spent on each lesson.

One Chicago officer combined three lessons because he was finishing the previous lesson before moving on to the next lesson. This officer would teach a lesson until the class period ended. If there was still part of the lesson remaining, the officer would finish it at the beginning

of the next class meeting. Therefore, when this officer combined lessons, he did so not to cut-out content within each lesson, but to thoroughly cover the material within each lesson in its entirety.

To summarize, of the 33 officers observed, eight were noted as combining lessons. With the exception of one officer, the combining of lessons did not appear to be a calculated attempt to reduce the length or coverage of G.R.E.A.T. lessons. Rather, the officers taught more than one lesson in a class period in order to complete the prior lesson (that had not been completed during the scheduled time) or to accommodate restricted time frames for completing the program. We should note that, in the course of the evaluation, we heard rumors that officers in one of the participating agencies had been instructed to teach the program by the book and not to combine lessons; the supervisor was apparently under the impression that their officers were being evaluated and wanted his agency to receive a positive review. Clearly this suggests that there may have been an evaluation bias in this particular site and that officers generally did combine lessons in this city.

Officer Implementation Fidelity

To determine officer implementation fidelity, we used the qualitative comments from completed observations and both the on-site and in-house rankings of discussions, activities, time adherence, coverage of topical areas, and overall quality of the G.R.E.A.T. lesson. The officers were then placed into one of five categories based on the rankings and qualitative comments. These categories consisted of: those with poor implementation (n=3), below average implementation (n=3), average implementation (n=10), above average implementation (n=8), and excellent implementation (n=9). *It is important to highlight that 27 of the 33 officers were considered to have implemented the G.R.E.A.T. program with average or better than average*

fidelity. That is, if 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.

Those officers who were determined to have poor implementation (n=3) were deemed to have not implemented the G.R.E.A.T. program with sufficient fidelity to reasonably expect program effects. These officers consistently eliminated student discussions and activities, and tended to deliver the lessons in a lecture format. These officers either failed to cover main topical areas or failed to complete the lessons. In some of the observed instances, these officers combined sections within the lessons, so that the topical areas were obscured to the point of not being recognized by observers.

The three officers judged to have below average implementation of the G.R.E.A.T. program tended to be inconsistent in their delivery of lessons across classrooms and across lessons. These officers appeared to suffer from lack of time management skills, therefore requiring them to omit parts of the lessons, such as discussions and activities. Further, these officers also tended to exclude some of the topical areas in their delivery of the lesson. All of these characteristics appeared to be due to poor time management skills, where the officers would start the lessons and teach the individual sections in order, and then run out of time and not be able to complete the lesson. These officers did not go back to finish the lessons in the following class periods. These officers were considered to have implemented the program, but not well.

Ten officers were judged to have delivered the program with average implementation fidelity. These officers tended to have reasonably good time management skills, but this group included many of the officers that combined two lessons in one class period. Some of these officers also tended to skip either the Introduction or the Wrap-up sections. Even though these sections serve as an overview of the lesson and a re-cap of the day's activities and topics, they are nonetheless important lesson components. Most officers omitted only one of these sections, not both. These officers led worthy student activities and students were allowed to participate in the lesson, discussions, and activities.

The eight officers implementing lessons in an above average fashion tended to do so by finding a balance between the positive and negative aspects of implementing a school-based program. For instance, if an officer's implementation of a lesson was interrupted by a school fire-drill, then the officer would adapt to the circumstances and cut-out less important aspects of the lesson, such as the Wrap-up, while still maintaining the integrity of the lesson by covering all topical areas. These officers tended to have a tight and succinct program delivery and appeared very knowledgeable and comfortable with the program material. These officers also tended to use examples from their patrol duties to supplement the lessons' messages. These officers covered all topical areas, although some skipped the Wrap-up section if time did not permit. Further, if these officers were short on time, they tended to adapt the activity to the circumstances. For example, one officer took a small-group activity and turned it into a classroom activity where he maintained control of the students and kept them focused while still allowing all students to participate and learn.

The remaining nine officers exhibited excellent program implementation. These officers showed great confidence with the G.R.E.A.T. material and were able to deliver lessons without

referring to the manual or the lesson outline. These officers adapted to atypical circumstances in the classrooms quickly and with efficiency. Further, these officers tended to correct negative student behavior without having to disrupt the flow of the lesson. These officers appeared to benefit from a strong officer-teacher relationship, where the teacher often stepped in to help the officer with student problems while s/he continued to teach the lesson. These officers showed enthusiasm about teaching and being in the classroom, were able to answer student questions without missing a beat, and were able to orchestrate student discussion and activities in spite of the typical interruptions encountered in the school setting. These officers often brought in small prizes to reward student participation and often enhanced lessons with examples and stories from their patrol duties.

CONCLUSION

One major component of the process evaluation of the G.R.E.A.T. program was the observation of program delivery. During the first two years of the funding period, members of the evaluation team observed officers teaching the program at the 31 schools participating in the evaluation (29 schools in AY2006 – 2007 and 2 schools in AY2007 – 2008). A total of 520 G.R.E.A.T. classroom observations provide the data represented in this report. An additional 108 control classrooms were observed to allow for assessment of the possibility of non-random bias of the sample. Our observations allowed us to conclude that there were no systematic differences between the G.R.E.A.T. classes and the non-G.R.E.A.T. control classes. As such, this report focused on the 520 observations of G.R.E.A.T. program delivery. Importantly, we structured the observation schedules to allow us to assess the fidelity of the program delivery for classrooms, officers, and lessons. Specifically, all G.R.E.A.T. classrooms were observed a

minimum of four times; this allows us to categorize each classroom according to its treatment level. All officers were observed teaching the program an average of 15 times; this allows us to assess the extent to which each officer adhered to program standards and to rate each officer's quality of implementation. Additionally, each lesson was observed an average of 40 times by a number of different observers across a variety of school settings. This allows us to address implementation issues associated with each of the 13 G.R.E.A.T. lessons.

Based on the observations summarized above, we provide three summary or concluding statements about program implementation fidelity. First, we did not observe any systematic differences in program delivery between different classes taught by the same officer. That is, each officer appeared to have similar levels of program implementation quality in all of his/her classrooms. One exception was noted; one officer taught the program in a very disruptive classroom in which the observers concluded that the program was not delivered. Four other classrooms taught by this same officer were rated as having average implementation. Second, with respect to officer level of implementation, there was a high degree of consistency in observer ratings and assessments of program implement fidelity. As reported above, 27 officers were rated as implementing the program with average to excellent fidelity, three officers had below average fidelity scores, and three other officers failed to meet minimum standards of implementation fidelity. Third, there was considerable consistency in observers' assessments of the various lessons. All of the lessons appeared to engage the students, although some lessons suffered when officers significantly changed the lesson outline by eliminating student discussions and activities. Of those officers who tended to alter the majority of the lessons they taught, student behavior appeared to worsen and students did not appear to be grasping the overall concepts taught within each lesson. However, when officers implemented lessons in an

average to excellent fashion, students appeared interested in the lessons and tended to complete the final project. To conclude, our structured observation outline provided guidelines for observers to record information concerning lesson content, officer adherence to program components, and student participation/reaction to the program. Based upon 520 observations of G.R.E.A.T. lessons, we conclude that, if taught with fidelity, the G.R.E.A.T. program is age-appropriate and keeps students interested and engaged in the program throughout all 13 lessons.

Recommendations

- Open and continued communication between officers and teachers is a necessity. If the lines of communication are kept open in regard to such things as scheduling conflicts, illnesses, or situations that preclude the officer from teaching the G.R.E.A.T. lesson of the day, both officers and teachers will benefit from knowing this in advance. If the officer has a scheduling conflict or if there is a schedule change at the school, this information should be conveyed in a timely manner to allow teachers and officers to better plan their class periods and program delivery.
- Not only do the lines of communication between officer and teacher need to be open; they also need to be used. If officers and teachers communicate, officers will also be able to communicate to teachers potential problems they are having with students in the class. If teachers know of problems, then they may deal with them at a time of their choosing, instead of during the G.R.E.A.T. lesson. If lines of communication stay open before, during, and after school, then teachers may not have to interrupt lessons to communicate with officers and/or students.

- Officers are encouraged to review their GOT Manual and/or the lesson(s) they will be teaching each day in order to reduce the potential that they will skip or inappropriately adapt sections of the lesson.
- After time in the classroom, officers may unknowingly adapt program material to their own needs and desires. Although the program is intended to be adaptable to differing school environments, it appeared that when an officer chose to modify program elements it was due to choice or an atypical experience. The changes that come from the latter reason are less worrisome as atypical situations are unavoidable. However, when officers knowingly or unknowingly adapt the material to their desires, the program risks losing its skills-building approach.
- Officers need to remember some of the simple ideas they learned in training (e.g., the use of name tents and “ice breakers”). Name tents allow officers to call-on students by name and enable officers to directly address students who are causing disruptions in the classroom. One goal of the G.R.E.A.T. program is to improve students’ attitudes toward the police by allowing students to become familiar with officers in a non-threatening environment. Using name tents to get to know students can help officers achieve this goal. “Ice breakers” can also assist in breaking barriers between students and officers. By increasing student comfort these activities encourage students to participate in class activities and discussions sooner rather than later in the program.
- As taught in training, officers must remember to leave their stress and outside problems on the school-house steps. Although it can sometimes be difficult for an officer not to do, it appeared that when officers made insensitive and/or

derogatory comments to students, it was out of frustration or due to a negative attitude toward the lesson or the students.

- Police departments may consider not wasting precious resources on officers by sending them to training if they are not interested in teaching students the G.R.E.A.T. program in the first place. If officers are not interested in interacting with students or if they lack the patience for such tasks, they should be encouraged to maintain their officer duties and let another officer who appreciates the subtleties of teaching students attend training and implement the program.
- To increase positive relationships in general between police departments and middle school students, police departments may want to consider instituting a phone line for students to call if they need help in non-emergency situations. This may help students view the entire police department as being helpful and effective and not just the officer that comes into their school to teach them. This would help to broaden one of the main goals of the G.R.E.A.T. program in improving officer and student relationships.
- Finally, officers and teachers may want to discuss the necessity of a final project for students. If students understand the project is a culmination of what they have learned over the school year, they may be more apt to complete the project and/or take it more seriously. In addition, officers should encourage teachers to provide credit for the final project as those teachers who did offer grades to students for the projects tended to have higher rates of student participation.

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