

School Safety Update

The Newsletter of the National School Safety Center

April 1999

Alternative educational placement: Study shows alternative program to be a successful pathway

Violence plagues today's schools and communities. Nearly three million crimes have taken place in or near schools annually. That is equivalent to a school-related crime occurring every six seconds of a school day.¹ According to the weekly compilation of Presidential Documents, the number of students who report gangs in their schools has nearly doubled.² The 1994 Metropolitan Life Survey of Teachers found that more than one-fourth of the teacher respondents feared assault inside or near their schools, one-fifth of the student respondents worried they would be assaulted, and 13 percent of those students reported carrying weapons to school.³

All students deserve safe schools and orderly learning environments. Thus school administrators must address the issue of eliminating delinquent behavior in schools. Statistics reported by the United States Department of Education for the 1996-97 school year reveal that more than 400,000 incidents of crime in public schools were reported, including 187,890 fights without weapons; 122,650 thefts and robberies; 98,490 incidents of vandalism; 10,950 fights with weapons; and 4,170 rapes or sexual batteries.⁴ Students expelled from school for delinquent behavior are increasingly assigned to alternative school settings and programs with the primary goal being to modify such behavior while carrying out the national mandate to educate youth.

Texas legislation supporting school safety

In Texas, House Bill 1 has been implemented to restore safety in schools. This bill's legislative and policy measures strengthen safe school environments by requiring the removal of disruptive and/or dangerous students from classes. Texas' Senate Bill 133, Chapter 37 offers a further resource for school districts "to

use in the implementation of discipline management strategies."⁵ Subchapter A of Chapter 37 addresses the issue of providing alternative settings for students in need of behavior management. Although school districts are not required to rely exclusively on Chapter 37 and are encouraged to implement their own discipline management strategies, using Chapter 37 S only as a guide, the law does require that components of the code of conduct be followed.

Specifically, section 37.006 of Senate Bill 133 allows school administrators to exercise "discretion regarding alternative placements [of students] for nonviolent conduct."⁶ Once a school district adopts a student code of conduct, the code must be posted and prominently displayed at

"One of the trends we are seeing in school districts across the country is the development of alternative education placements for disruptive students in all grade levels—elementary through high school."

Ronald D. Stephens
Executive Director, NSSC

each school campus.⁷ Furthermore, the student code must specify the circumstances under which a student may be removed from a classroom, campus or alternative education program, the conditions that authorize or require a principal or other appropriate administrator to transfer a student to an alternative education program, and outline conditions under which a student may be suspended or expelled.⁸

Reasons for AEP placement

There are several reasons a Texas student can be removed to an alternative education program (AEP). Mandatory placements, as outlined in Texas Senate Bill 133, Chapter 37 and Texas House Bill 1, can result due to conduct punishable

as a felony, a terroristic threat, or an assault. In addition, the 1977 Texas Penal Code also lists offenses that can result in a mandatory placement. Specifically, the Texas Penal Code refers to such behaviors as Title 5 offenses, which include murder, sexual assault and aggravated assault. Regardless of whether these offenses occur on or off campus, each will result in a mandatory placement.⁹

There are also several reasons a student, by law, must be expelled to a Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP). Mandatory expulsions, according to Senate Bill 133, Chapter 37 and House Bill 1, can result from conduct punishable as a felony either on school property or while attending a school-related activity on or off school property. Examples of these offenses include possessing an illegal knife or weapon, arson or murder and engaging in sexual assault.

According to these two bills, a student may also be expelled to a JJAEP if the student continues to engage in serious or persistent misbehavior that violates the district's student code of conduct while in an AEP.

Texas Senate Bill 133, Chapter 37 also stipulates that if a student is to be removed to an AEP, a school administrator must notify all necessary persons of a conference hearing. After being removed from a class by a principal, teacher or other appropriate administrator, a conference must occur "not later than the third class day after the day on which a student is removed." At the conference, "the student is entitled to written or oral notice of the reasons of the removal, an explanation of the basis for the removal, and an

opportunity to respond to the reasons for the removal.”¹⁰ The principal can then order the placement of the student following the conference.

Students with disabilities

Students with disabilities are also subject to discipline. Particular guidelines must be followed before any action can be taken regarding these students. For example, Section 37.004 of Texas Senate Bill 133, Chapter 37 states that a student receiving special educational services can only be placed in an AEP if he/she meets “the criteria for alternative placement in Section 37.006(a) or 37.007(a).”¹¹

Special education laws

According to the Texas Education Agency’s 1997 explanation of rights and procedural safeguards of parents with children having disabilities, only an Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee or a due process hearing officer can place a student with disabilities in an alternative setting.¹² Either the committee or the hearing officer must determine that the conduct of the student meets the “criteria applicable to children without disabilities for AEP placement.” If the criteria are not met, then the student cannot be disciplined in a matter requiring an AEP placement.

The primary decision for an ARD committee is to determine if a link exists between the child’s disability and his/her conduct that is being subject to discipline. This relation must be reviewed “immediately, if possible, but not later than 10 school days after the day the decision is made” to remove the child from the current placement.

If the ARD committee decides to place the child in an AEP, the AEP must: enable the student to continue to participate in the general curriculum, although in another setting, and to continue to receive those services and modifications — including those described in the child’s Individual Education Plan (IEP) that will enable the child to meet the goals set out in that IEP. The AEP must also include services and modifications designed to address the child’s conduct subject to discipline so that it does not recur.¹³

Texas Senate Bill 133, Chapter 37 recommends that “AEPs must utilize certified special education instructors” to ensure that their educational needs will be met. According to Texas’ Special Education Laws, the school may also “file a due process hearing seeking an order by the hearing officer” placing the child in an AEP. In determining the appropriateness of such a placement, the hearing officer must follow specific guidelines that are outlined in “An Explanation of Rights and Procedural Safeguards of a Parent with a Child with Disabilities in School.”¹⁴

National implementation of AEPs

Although new rules and regulations have been adopted by many school districts across the country, the implementation of these AEPs have had mixed reviews. Cox, Davidson, and Bynum¹⁵ reviewed several empirical studies of AEPs and concluded that small school size, a supportive and noncompetitive environment, and a student-centered curriculum are structural characteristics commonly associated with program success. Reilly and Reilly¹⁶ contend that students already performing at high levels of academic achievement will continue to be successful in AEPs, whereas lower achieving students can be expected to be unsuccessful, especially if they have attendance and/or disciplinary problems. In contrast, researchers such as Young¹⁷, Garrison¹⁸, and Gottfredson¹⁹ have concluded that low school achievers should perform better in AEPs than in traditional schools or programs and that programs focusing on specific target populations are more likely to produce positive results than are less focused programs, because the program structure will be centered on a definitive problem or need.

Effective AEPs

According to *Creating Safe and Drug-Free Schools: An Action Guide*, effective AEPs consist of many components and ideas. One aspect of successful programs is a low student-to-staff ratio that allows students to receive individualized help in a safe and controlled environment. Strong and stable leadership characterized by highly trained and carefully se-

lected staff also ensures that students receive appropriate discipline and proper instruction.

A vision of set objectives for the program needs to be shared by all staff and integrated into how the staff and administrators interact within the program. An additional aspect of a successful AEP is having districtwide support of the program. AEPs need to have working relations with all parts of the school system and with other agencies that provide critical services to youth aides in the overall structure of the program. Finally, AEPs should consist of intensive counseling and monitoring of their students. This will allow at-risk students to work on their underlying issues and be held accountable for their behavior by trained staff as well as by their peers.²⁰

Deficiencies in AEP documentation

Many reviews of alternative education programs are incomplete. Reviewers such as Garrison²¹ and Barr et al.²² have pointed out that the alternative education literature mainly focuses on the history and structure of alternative programs rather than on outcome variables. Deficiencies among studies of alternative education programs include:

- failure to report detailed student demographic data;
- omission of accurate statistical analyses in justifying programs;
- omission of report on staff qualifications;
- lack of information detailing core subjects that fulfill educational requirements;
- lack of accurate analyses of overall program environments.

Description of the study’s AEP

A review of AEPs considered to be successful in the research and an examination of the issues and problems associated with AEPs led to the development and implementation of the alternative educational placement examined in this study. The main goal of this AEP program was to enable students to be successful in school as well as in society. The remainder of this article details this AEP, located in a large Southeastern Texas school dis-

trict.

Mandatory placement in this AEP is 60 days, which can be reduced to 30 days with the student's participation in the counseling program and good behavior. Unless the student's parents appeal the AEP assignment, or charges are dropped, or other special circumstances arise, students must complete their assigned times. Absences, suspensions, tardies and rule infractions can add days to the length of placement.

On a student's first day, an intake meeting convenes the student, parent/guardian, and AEP staff member. This process includes an explanation of the program and its rules. Both the parent/guardian and student are given a behavior checklist and an AEP packet that contains rules, guidelines and consent forms pertaining to the program. At this time, the student and parent/guardian are also given a pre-test to complete. The purpose of the pre-test is to gain insight into the perspectives of both the parent and student to determine if any problems need to be addressed immediately. The pre-test is also used as a basis for comparison when the student is ready to transition to his/her home school.

The school day for students in this AEP consists of attending classes in four core subjects as well as group counseling and participating in a physical education class. Each student can only receive credit for the four core courses, which include math, science, English and social studies. No credit is given for elective courses unless the student is a senior, a provision that allows many seniors to graduate on schedule.

Core classes

The AEP consists of three classrooms, one for intermediate students in grades six through eight and two for high school students, grades nine through 12. Two teachers are assigned to class, with the teacher/student ratio being one to nine. Each instructor teaches two of the four core subject areas. The curriculum chosen for the district is followed by this AEP to ensure that students keep pace with their home schools.

Counseling

The goal of the daily counseling class is to help the students work on various issues that will allow them to succeed when they return to their home schools. Counseling is an integral part of the program. By the time many students arrive at the AEP, they have been in serious trouble with not only their school, but also with the court system. At this AEP, students are provided opportunities to assess the causes for their AEP assignment and to focus on finding alternatives to the behavior/s that contributed to their alternative education placement.

The counseling program consists of students participating in group sessions with their peers led by a trained counselor. In such sessions, students discuss issues ranging from relationships to substance abuse and work to improve behaviors that relate to such issues. Each student is also seen individually by a counselor once a week or on an as-needed basis for emergencies. In addition, families are also encouraged to participate in family counseling. Parents are encouraged to attend at least one session, but may come as often as necessary. No fees are charged for any of the counseling services provided through the AEP. For this reason, families/students are strongly encouraged to work intensively with the counselors to help their family/student achieve and maintain improved academic and behavioral standards. If further therapeutic interventions seem needed, the necessary referrals are provided.

Teachers' qualifications

All teachers at the AEP have master's degrees and each is cross-trained in several different personnel areas. These areas include a teaching, coaching, counseling, administration and certified special education. The AEP staff is also well-trained in crisis prevention methods as well as therapeutic holding techniques.

Behavior sanctions

To maintain a structured classroom, behavior modification is the main priority and students are held to high behavior standards. While one teacher is providing instruction, the other focuses on dis-

cipline. This arrangement allows for the teacher to teach material and most importantly, to provide an environment in which learning can occur. The environment of the classroom is extremely structured and one in which students feel safe. Due to the delinquent behavior of many students at this AEP, most have spent a lot of time outside of the classroom. It is imperative that they not only learn the rules of the classroom, but also the sanctions for rule infractions. The consequences for any behavior infractions are explained to all students and rules are expected to be followed.

Each day, all students begin with a clean slate. Students are allowed to receive up to four checks for behavior infractions. After the fourth check, the student is suspended. A student can be automatically suspended if s/he is doing something extreme, such as fighting or engaging in behavior for which s/he has been repeatedly warned. After the second suspension, a staffing meeting is held to review the student's lack of progress and discuss what can be done to rectify the situation. After the third time a student is suspended, it is recommended that the student be sent to JJAEP. Each case is handled on an individual basis.

Community AEP support

Other programs within the community are also part of the rehabilitation of these students. Speakers visit and discuss topics such as drug and alcohol abuse. Judges and probation officers work with AEP staff to help students maintain acceptable behavioral and academic standards. The goal is to use as many resources as possible in helping these students modify their behavior and get back in good standing with their families, schools and courts.

After successfully completing the assigned AEP time, the student is ready to return to his/her home school. An exit meeting is scheduled during the last week of the student's AEP time. The exit meeting is attended by the assistant principal from the home school and the principal, counselor and teacher from the AEP. During the exit meeting, the student's progress in counseling along with transfer grades is given to the student's home

principal. All students are encouraged to participate in support groups at their schools once they return. Any further recommendations on behalf of the AEP staff are then presented to the parent and home school principal to facilitate a smooth transition to the home school. Lastly, the student and the parent/guardian are required to complete a behavior checklist, as they did during intake.

Once a student has completed his/her AEP placement and returned to his/her home school, an AEP counselor follows up on the student's progress. The first follow-up takes place after two weeks, then again at six weeks. Year-end reports from the individual's home school are provided to the AEP for final compilation of program results.

Analysis of the AEP

The purpose of the present study is to examine the effectiveness of this particular AEP program. Pre- and post-program data yielded four problem areas. The first area was the number of discipline referrals received by students both pre- and post-program. It was hypothesized that students successfully completing the program would have an 80 percent reduction in discipline referrals upon returning to their home school. The second area was the number of referrals to juvenile justice agencies. It was hypothesized that students who successfully completed the program would have a 70 percent reduction in referrals to juvenile justice agencies upon returning to their home campus. The third area was the number of police agency contacts. It was hypothesized that students who successfully completed the program would have a 70 percent reduction in police contacts upon returning to their home campus. The last area was the reduction in behavior problems as defined by the Youth Self-Report. It was hypothesized that students who successfully completed the program would have a reduction in behavior problems in at least one identified area of the Youth Self-Report

Method

Participants

Participants in this investigation were

approximately 151 high school- and intermediate-level students from a large school district in Southeastern Texas. Students from any school in this district who had been suspended for persistent misbehavior or felony offenses, whether the offense was on or off campus, were enrolled in this AEP. AEP students were admitted for a minimum of six weeks and in some cases were required to remain in the program for as long as 12 weeks. Participants ranged in age from 11 to 18 years, and ethnicity was representative of the surrounding community.

Instrumentation

All participants completed the instrument alone in an office setting. The intake questionnaire packet was designed to secure demographic data and information relevant to the statistical analysis. The participants and their parent/guardian provided information concerning age, grade level, ethnicity, one- or two-parent home life, and parent/guardian's occupation. In addition, information concerning the student's past discipline record, referrals to juvenile justice agencies and contacts with any police agencies was also obtained.

Youth Self-Report (YSR)

The YSR²³ was designed to obtain 11- to 18-year-olds' reports of their own competencies and problems in a standardized format. A Competence Scale and a Problem Scale comprise the YSR. The Competence Scale has four subscales, including: an Activities Scale, a Social Scale, a Mean School Performance Scale, and a Total Competence Score. The Activities Scale is composed of four scores, each ranging from 0 to 2, summed to yield a total of 0-8 points. The Social Scale is composed of six scores, each ranging from 0-2, summed to yield a total of 0-12 points. The Mean School Performance is not plotted, but consists of the mean rating ranging from 0-3 for three to seven academic subjects. The Total Competence Score is the sum of the totals for the Activities Scale, the Social Scale, and the Mean Academic Performance Scale, which yields a Total Competence Score of 0-23 points.

The Problem Scale consisted of 112 questions with possible responses ranging from not true (0) to very true (1) or often true (2) and is composed of eight syndrome scales. These syndrome scales were given descriptive labels based on items empirically found to make up each syndrome. The four labels in the internalizing broad-band group are "Withdrawn," "Somatic Complaints," "Anxious/Depressed" and "Social Problems." "Thought Problems," "Attention Problems," "Delinquent Behavior," and "Aggressive Behavior" constitute the second broad-band group. The last T-score reported is the Total Problem Score.

Normative data for the YSR were drawn from a subset of subjects in a national sample chosen to be representative of the 48 contiguous states with respect to socio-economic status, ethnicity, region, and urban-suburban-rural residence.²⁴ A normative sample was constructed by drawing subjects who were 11 to 18 years old when they completed the instrument and who had not received mental health services or special remedial school classes within the preceding 12 months as reported by their parents.

Design and procedures

Students who were recommended to attend the AEP program by the student's home school made appointments to attend an intake interview on an individual basis. Both the student and his/her parent/guardian were given an intake packet that included the rules and regulations of the program and all pertinent consent forms. In addition, the home school provided information concerning the student's discipline referrals. The parent/guardian or students also provided information concerning contacts with police agencies, along with a number of juvenile justice agency contacts. Once all information was obtained and consent forms were signed, the student was given the YSR by a program counselor. As indicated earlier, all students were required to stay in the program for up to 12 weeks.

Upon completion of the YSR, all responses were entered into a computer where the YSR program scored data and printed profiles. Results of the YSR were

given to the program counselors for use in individual and group counseling sessions. The T-Scores for the Total Competence Score, the eight Problem Scales, and the Total Problem Score were all entered into a statistics program as pre-test scores. When students completed the program after a six-week stay, or in some cases after a 12-week stay, they attended an exit meeting. The meeting was attended by the student, the student's parent/guardian, an AEP teacher, an AEP counselor, and a home school representative. After the exit meeting, the student was given a second YSR by a program counselor. All responses were entered into the computer and scored by the YSR program. A second set of T-Scores was entered into the statistics program labeled as post-test scores. In addition, once a student completed his/her AEP placement and returned to his/her home school, an AEP counselor followed up on the student's progress. Both a two week and six week follow-up, followed by a year-end report from the home school, provided information for final compilation of results.

Results

This AEP program has a maximum capacity of approximately 205 students per year. During the 1997-98 school year there were 184 students who were accepted to attend the program. However, only 151 students actually enrolled in the program from September 1, 1997 through August 20, 1998. From this group, 143 students successfully completed the program with no further need for AEP placement for the remainder of the school year. Eight stu-

dents required high levels of care after completion of the program, and nine students were required to repeat the program. In addition, 11 students transferred or withdrew from the district before completing the program.

Although 151 students attended the program, only 86 high school and intermediate level students responded to the YSR. In addition, only 70 students responded to both the pre- and post-tests of the YSR. Of the 86 total participants included in the study, 67 (77.9 percent) were male and 19 (22.1 percent) were female. Ages ranged from 11 to 18 years with a mean of 14.26 years and a standard deviation of 1.57. The ethnic composition of the sample was consistent with the surrounding community. There were 52 (60.5 percent) Caucasian participants, 22 (25.6 percent) Hispanic students, 10 (11.6 percent) African-American students, 1 (1.2 percent) Asian student, and 1 (1.2 percent) student reporting other.

The student's home school provided information concerning the number of discipline referrals a student received before entering the program. After completion of the program, during a follow-up interview, the school provided the number of referrals a student had received since his/her return from the AEP. Table 1 summarizes the pre- and post-program percent reductions in school discipline and juvenile justice agency referrals as well as police department contacts. Overall there were 1,494 student discipline referrals reported pre-program and 43 discipline referrals reported post-program. This represents a 97.1 percent reduction

in student referrals upon completion of the AEP. In addition, students or their parent/guardian provided information concerning number of referrals to juvenile justice agencies and contacts with police departments both pre- and post-program. Reports indicate that there were 127 referrals to juvenile justice agencies pre-program and 6 referrals post-program. The reduction from 127 referrals to 6 referrals represents a 95.3 percent decrease in referrals to juvenile justice agencies. Furthermore, 17 pre-program police contacts were reported and 3 contacts were reported for post-program. This also represents an 82.4 percent decrease in police contacts.

Discussion

The purpose of this investigation was to examine the impact of an AEP on students with behavioral problems. There were four identified goals of the program that were the main focus of the investigation. The objective of the first goal was to reduce student discipline referrals by 80 percent after the completion of the program. Results indicate that student discipline referrals decreased by over 97 percent after students completed the program and returned to their home school. Overall, there were approximately 1,500 student discipline referrals issued before students attended the AEP and that number dropped to just over 40 referrals after students completed the program and returned to their home school. This 97 percent decrease in student discipline referrals significantly surpasses the original goal of 80 percent reduction.

Table 1
AEP Referrals and Police Contacts Pre- and Post-Program

<u>Referral Source</u>	<u>Pre-Program</u>	<u>Post-Program</u>	<u>%Reduction</u>
School Discipline	1,494	43	97.1
Juvenile Justice Agency	127	6	95.3
Police Department	17	3	82.4

Note: N=86

The aim of the second goal was to reduce juvenile justice contacts by 70 percent after the student completed the program. Reports indicated that student contacts with juvenile justice agencies decreased by 95 percent after students completed the program. Upon entering this program students, as a group, reported 127 contacts with juvenile justice agencies and after completing this program they reported 6 referrals to these agencies. This 95 percent reduction in referrals to juvenile justice agencies significantly exceeds the initial goal of 70 percent reduction.

The third goal was to reduce police department contacts by 70 percent after the completion of the program. Follow-up interviews report three (3) police department contacts with former AEP students and these contacts were down from 17 reported police contacts before students entered the AEP. This represents an 82 percent reduction in police contacts, well above the original goal of 70 percent.

The final goal of this study involved the reduction of behavioral problems in at least one identified area of the YSR. According to the results, students exhibited significant improvements in the areas of Attention Problems, Aggressive Behavior, and in the Total Problem Score as defined by the YSR. The remaining Problem Subscales, with the exception of the Withdrawn Scale, all indicated a decrease in behavioral problems by the end of the program. Although these improvements in behavior were not statistically significant, the areas of Somatic Complaints, Anxious/Depressed, Social Problems, and Thought Problems all approached statistical significance. The Withdrawn Scale scores, contrary to expectations, slightly increased over time while the Delinquent Behavior scores showed only a slight improvement. As expected the Competence Scale scores improved by the completion of the program. However, the improvement was not considered to be statistically significant.

Positive impact of AEPs

The idea that AEPs can have a positive impact on the reduction of student be-

havioral problems is obviously appealing to parents, school districts and a number of school agencies. The reduction of student discipline referrals, along with the decrease in police and juvenile justice agency contacts, is impressive. In addition, the significant reduction in three areas of the YSR provide strong evidence to support the claim that this AEP program is effective in reducing student behavior problems.

Although the results present strong evidence to support the effectiveness of this AEP, some potential problems may have obscured a more persuasive outcome. The limitations not only may have obscured more positive results, but they may also diminish the ability to generalize the results to the larger population. These potential problems are related to the participants and their length of stay.

With respect to the participants, the investigator assumed the students had sufficient reading ability to comprehend the questionnaire and the YSR. In addition, it was also assumed that students responded in an honest manner on the measuring instrument. In regard to the length of stay, no attempt was made to control for the time spent in the program for each individual student.

The importance related to these results, especially in the educational community, is that while expelling students to the streets gives rise to the possibility that further delinquency is inevitable, a placement in an AEP offers students a positive outlet. The strict, no tolerance, highly structured program of an AEP offers students and their parents an opportunity to break from the student's home school, yet relearn behaviors appropriate to the school environment. In addition, students learn more adaptive coping skills that are necessary not only to succeed in school, but that also may increase the quality of their home life.

Submitted by Joe Betters, M.Ed., Laura Shea-Clauson, M.S., Mike Daniel, M.Ed., Al Varisco, Ph.D. For information regarding the statistical analyses supporting the results of this study, please contact Dr. Al Varisco at 281/488-0860 or 281/335-1000, ext. 2509.

Endnotes

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Resource Update: Programs That Work

Several national public and private organizations have joined with the U.S. Departments of Justice, Education, and Health and Human Services to form the 5 Goals 4 Kids Coalition and to focus on the needs of America's youth, especially those most at risk and underserved, including the urban and rural poor, victims of abuse or neglect, juvenile offenders, children with disabilities and others.

A new 20-page pamphlet, *Programs That Work*, published by United Way of America, identifies the following five key goals established by Attorney General Janet Reno to reduce violence and lead to improved outcomes for children and youth throughout the U.S.:

- Reduce truancy by at least one-third in 200 schools across the nation;
- Create constructive after-school opportunities, including recreational activities in safe places for at least 100,000 more children;
- Develop new programs in at least 200 communities to reduce gun injuries, e.g., to teach gun owners about safe, responsible gun ownership and to stop the unauthorized, unsupervised use of guns by children;
- Ensure that at least 100,000 more children will participate in effective programs to prevent and discourage drug and alcohol abuse; and
- Enroll at least 500,000 eligible but uninsured children in health insurance programs, to ensure a healthy start in life.

Programs That Work provides a sampling of programs and practices that have been found effective in preventing crime and violence and in strengthening community efforts to eliminate risk factors that contribute to crime among youth. The model programs included in the pamphlet provide youth with positive alternatives and opportunities. The support organizations listed in the pamphlet are resources from which concerned youth-serving professionals may seek additional guidance and assistance.

For copies, please contact Kelly Owens, (703)836-7112 ext. 514 at United Way of America, 701 North Fairfax Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-2045.

Teacher preparation

According to a 1999 U.S. Department of Education survey, many public school teachers feel inadequately prepared for meeting many of the current challenges in education. The following percentages of teachers feel "very well-prepared" to:

- Maintain order and discipline in the classroom71%
- Implement new methods of teaching41%
- Implement state or district curriculum and performance standards.....36%
- Use student performance assessment techniques.....28%
- Address the needs of students with disabilities *.....21%
- Integrate educational technology in your assigned grade/subject20%
- Address the needs of students with limited English proficiency or from diverse cultural backgrounds*.....20%

1. U. S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Teacher quality: A Report on the Preparation and Qualifications of Public School Teachers*, NCES 1999-090, by Laurie Lewis, et al. Washington, DC: 1999.

* Percents are based on teachers who teach students with these characteristics.

Conference offers strategies, networking

Two full days of presentations, discussions and analyses regarding detention reform strategies, as well as an opportunity to network with policy makers and practitioners from jurisdictions across the country, will be sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation in Chicago, April 8 - 9, 1999.

The essentials of juvenile detention reform — including objective admissions screening, alternatives to detention programming, improving and maintaining conditions of confinement and using data to promote change — will be featured topics. Presenters will include officials and staff from the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative sites, various national experts and representatives from innovative programs and places.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation will

provide meals for attendees, and there is no registration fee.

For more information, please contact Doris Austin, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, 701 St. Paul Street, Baltimore, MD 21202; fax 410/223-2983.

Funding opportunity

The Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative, funded by the Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and Justice Departments, is designed to enhance and implement comprehensive communitywide strategies for creating safe and drug-free schools and promoting healthy childhood development. Eligible activities may include mentoring, conflict resolution, after-school programs, multisystemic therapy, functional family therapy, social skills building, school-based probation, student assistance, teen courts, truancy prevention, alternative education, developing information sharing systems, staff professional development, hiring additional school resource officers, and treatment efforts that involve the juvenile justice system and schools.

To be eligible for funding, applicants must demonstrate evidence of a comprehensive communitywide strategy that at minimum consists of six general topic areas: (1) school safety, (2) drug and violence prevention and early intervention programs, (3) school and community mental health prevention and intervention services, (4) early childhood psychosocial and emotional development programs, (5) education reform, and (6) safe school policies. The plan must be jointly developed by the local education agency, local public mental health authority, local law enforcement agency, family members, students, and juvenile justice officials.

Awards for up to three years will be made to approximately 50 sites, ranging up to \$3 million per year for urban school districts, up to \$2 million per year for suburban school districts, and up to \$1 million per year for rural school districts and tribal schools.

Detailed information regarding the Safe Schools Healthy/Students Initiative is available at: Internet: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS>.

Additional restroom strategies

NSSC thanks Hugh Riddell, assistant principal of Mountain View High School (Mountain View, Calif.) and a member of NSSC's International Association of School Safety Professionals, for sending us the following information.

A recent issue of *School Safety Update* focused on school restrooms and the some of the problems arising from vandalism, unsanitary conditions and lack of supervision. I would like to share some of the methods Mountain View High School has used to tackle problems similar to those covered in the *Update*.

- Two smoke alarms (hard-wire type, no battery models) have been installed in all bathrooms, student and faculty alike. Our school is a no-smoking facility. The installation of the alarms immediately solved the problem of smoking in restrooms.
- Air dryers rather than paper or cloth towel dispensers have helped to eliminate a large amount of waste and clutter and have saved a good deal of money as well.
- Nonbreakable, highly polished steel mirrors (not glass) have been installed high on the restroom walls at an angle where the walls meet the ceilings. This solution provides mirrors for the students while greatly reducing the amount of time students spend in the restrooms in front of the mirrors.
- As the budget allows, automatic faucets are installed. This has reduced water consumption and also helps to keep restrooms cleaner.
- Two campus aides have been assigned to patrol the restrooms on a regular basis.
- Restrooms at Mountain View High are all tiled, which allows custodians to wash them down using hoses as needed.

We still have some problems, particularly the wasting of paper protectors and toilet paper. For the most part, however, our students' feel safe to use the restrooms because the restrooms are no longer the "hangout" places they once were.

Mr. Riddell can be reached at Mountain View High School at 415/940-4600.

Scared Straight: 20 years later

On April 15, 1999, beginning at 8:00 p.m. (ET/PT), UPN will air a two-hour special, hosted by acclaimed actor Danny Glover. "Scared Straight! Twenty Years Later" begins with the original 1979 documentary that took a camera crew behind the walls of New Jersey's Rutherford State Prison and captured the raw, face-to-face confrontation between 17 juvenile delinquents and the convicts trying to steer them away from a life of crime.

The program then revisits the lives of the 17 teen-agers and the convicts who appeared in the original film. Were the kids "scared straight?" Are any of the convicts out of prison? How have their lives unfolded since the original film 20 years ago?

Of the 17 teen-age participants, 15 "went straight" and have since lived productive law-abiding lives. Several of the convicts agree that their participation in the program was their first step to self-esteem. While the former teens and the convicts credit the program with making a difference in their lives, they all agree that drugs and alcohol had once led to their downfall.

As the program prepares for broadcast, Arnold Shapiro Productions and UPN have launched a national community and educational outreach program designed to ensure that every parent and teen in America is aware of this event.

For more information, please call toll-free 877/9-SCARED.

Tell us your good news

NSSC urges you to contribute articles, reports, statistics, program evaluations and other such information about your own successful prevention and intervention efforts related to eliminating school crime and violence. Join an information network that supports the growth and development of our nation's chief resource — its youth.

Send your news and information to National School Safety Center, 141 Duesenberg Drive, Suite 11, Westlake Village, CA 91362; phone 805/373-9977; fax 805/373-9277; e-mail info@nsscl.org

School Safety Update is published by the National School Safety Center to communicate current trends and effective programs in school safety to members of NSSC's **International Association of School Safety Professionals**. Annual IASSP membership, including subscription, is \$99. (\$139 outside the United States). Correspondence should be addressed to: NSSC, 141 Duesenberg Drive, Suite 11, Westlake Village, CA 91362, telephone 805/373-9977, FAX 805/373-9277; e-mail info@nsscl.org.

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