

**Reducing Bullying, Threats, and Intimidation
in Westwood, MA:
An Evaluation of a Problem Solving Partnership**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1999, the Town of Westwood, Massachusetts received a School-Based Partnership grant for \$113,350 from the COPS Office. The grant enabled the Westwood Police Department to implement problem-solving strategies at Thurston Middle School. Westwood is the smallest, most affluent, and most ethnically and racially homogeneous community among the five communities chosen for the national evaluation of school-based partnerships. Neither the school nor the community suffers from a serious crime problem. Like all middle-schools and junior high schools however, Thurston Middle School has experienced its share of typical adolescent problems such as teasing and bullying. The focus of the problem solving efforts therefore was bullying, threats, and intimidation. This report highlights the findings from a process and impact evaluation of the School Based Partnership project.

Evaluation Design

The evaluation team relied on a variety of data sources for examining the School Based Partnership project in Westwood. We conducted five surveys: two waves of student surveys, two waves of teacher and staff surveys, and a bus driver survey. We also analyzed archival data, including the Vice Principal's disciplinary records, bus driver disciplinary referrals, and open-ended student surveys conducted by Principal Carol Gregory in April 1999, just after the Columbine shootings. Finally, we relied heavily on transcripts and field notes from numerous interviews, meetings, and observations conducted on site in Westwood.

We also considered a number of evaluation design options. Unfortunately, many of the more rigorous designs for evaluating programs, such as randomized experiments, were not available to us for a number of reasons. Principal among these reasons was the timing of the evaluation. The project team had already begun its work before we arrived on site in Westwood, therefore it was difficult to collect "true" baseline data. Second, the School-Based Partnership program was intended to be what evaluation researchers call a "full coverage" program; it was designed to benefit all students in the school. It is much easier to evaluate the success of partial coverage programs that are implemented among a subset of students, since other subsets of students can serve as an effective control group. Since this was a full-coverage program, and since Westwood has only one middle school, we were unable to develop a control group within Westwood. We could have asked a middle school in a similar community to serve as a control group, but this is a questionable evaluation method. Furthermore, this method is potentially embarrassing to the other school since it would serve primarily as a "straw man" against which to compare a school that is potentially more innovative.

We also hoped to develop a "time series" database useful for tracking school safety data over a long period of time to determine whether the School Based Partnerships program improved perceptions of school safety and reduced bullying, threatening, and intimidating behavior. Unfortunately, due to the timing of the evaluation, missing data, and inadequate records, we were unable to do this. In the end, the evaluation relied heavily on qualitative evidence collected during interviews and observations, and quantitative evidence in the form of simple before-after

comparisons. This is among the weaker of potential evaluation designs and we offer one simple prescription for ensuring that future evaluations are able to rely on stronger designs. The COPS Office and other funding agencies should not award evaluation grants after program grants are awarded - they should either offer evaluation grants before program grants are awarded, or they should offer the two types of grants concurrently. Institutionalizing this practice will make it easier for evaluators to rely on stronger evaluation designs and draw firmer and more authoritative conclusions.

Program Implementation

The annals of evaluation research are littered with promising programs whose champions were not able to implement them successfully. Understanding how implementation efforts succeed and fail is an important part of understanding organizational change, therefore we undertook a careful study on the implementation of the School Based Partnerships grant in Westwood. As a condition of the grant from the COPS Office, the implementation of the School-Based Partnerships project involved a process known in policing as the “SARA” model: Scanning, Analysis, Response, and Assessment.

In the Scanning phase, the project commenced with meetings between the school principal, the police chief, and the school resource officer. Three police officers volunteered to participate in the project, with the SRO serving as the police coordinator. Three faculty members also volunteered to participate in the project, with the school’s guidance counselor serving as the school coordinator. Three two-person teams were formed, each consisting of a police officer and a teacher, and assigned to one of Thurston’s three grade levels (6, 7, & 8). Each team met approximately twice a month with a cross-section of students during focus group meetings. Students shared their perspective on school safety issues. Some of the findings were common across grade levels, while others were unique. Bullying, threatening, and intimidating behavior were common issues in each of the focus groups.

In the Analysis phase, students began to brainstorm about potential solutions. For instance, students stated clearly that they wanted the school’s rules to be clearly outlined and then uniformly and consistently enforced. They were confused by the inconsistent messages being given to students. They also felt that having more teachers present in the hallways and staircases would help to alleviate some of the teasing, pushing and shoving that occurs. They also decided that peer mediation was an important method for reducing disputes and disagreements between students.

After the first full year that the project was in operation, the project team learned that the principal, Carol Gregory, would be leaving. This administrative disruption effectively stalled plans for the implementation of new programs until the new principal arrived. In addition, the school coordinator resigned from her position. Both of these individuals were instrumental in the early development of the project and their departure had an effect on the flow of implementation.

The new principal, Peter Sanchioni, implemented a peer mediation program within the first year of his administration. The new guidance counselor trained the staff and students; the training

took the whole academic year and the first peer mediation session commenced in the Fall semester of 2002. Numerous other programs were implemented by the new principal as well.

Meanwhile, the team members continued to meet with their focus groups. The groups' mission began to evolve. The Middle School has no student government and the focus groups took on an advisory component. There was a great deal of trust between the adults and the students; the students felt they could ask questions and obtain straightforward answers. Moreover, other students would approach these students to seek answers about their questions or concerns.

In addition to serving in an advisory capacity, the students participated in four problem-solving training sessions conducted by an outside vendor. They learned about decision-making, effective problem solving tools, and conflict resolution. From these training sessions, they developed some potential solutions to problems and presented their ideas to the administration. For instance, the cafeteria seating arrangement caused a great deal of stress and conflict for the students during their lunch periods. They discussed the problem and a variety of possible solutions within their focus groups and then presented the best possible option to the principal. The principal is considering those solutions and will make changes based on the proposals presented by the students.

The project team did not conduct a formal Assessment of the Response phase. Informally, the members of the project team, including both students, school officials, and police officials, all viewed the collaboration as positive and successful. The police officers appeared to enjoy getting to know the students as well as the teachers. The officers reported gaining a fresh perspective on the role that teachers play and the issues they face on a daily basis. The teachers also reported that they enjoy their partnership with the officers as well as meeting with the students outside the typical classroom setting. The teachers in the project group report that they now feel confident about calling upon the police officers with questions, to report incidents, for advice, or to help teach a class. Officers feel they can approach the teachers with investigative questions and know that the teachers will be truthful and helpful.

In spite of the successes enjoyed by participants within the focus groups, the project's benefits do not yet appear to have diffused to the larger school population. In other words, so far, the School-Based Partnerships program is a partial coverage program whose benefits are enjoyed by a small segment of the student population. This is not necessarily a permanent condition. The administrative transition from the old to the new principal made it difficult to implement new programs on schedule. Now that the new principal has settled into place, the School-Based Partnerships program may evolve into a more full-coverage program.

Program Impact

Assessing the impact of the School-Based Partnerships program was in many ways like trying to find a needle in a haystack. We arrived after the program was implemented, therefore we were not able to collect our own baseline data; we had no control school; portions of the Response phase had still not been implemented at the time this evaluation report was written; numerous other programs were implemented by the new principal during the evaluation period; and the

tragic terrorist incidents of September 11, which was during the study period, have had a ripple effect on American society, especially our children. All of these circumstances limit our capacity to attribute changes in bullying, threats, and intimidation during the study period to the School Based Partnerships project. Furthermore, simply measuring those changes for descriptive purposes was difficult because we encountered numerous problems with both the survey data and school records.

In spite of these problems, we were able to generate a handful of definitive findings about changes in Thurston from Spring 2001 to Spring 2002.

- ∃ The number of incidents of bullying, threatening, and intimidating behavior appearing in the Vice Principal's disciplinary records decreased from 28 to 18.
- ∃ The number of students reporting that they were bullied or teased until they felt unsafe did not change significantly.
- ∃ The number of students reporting that they were hit, kicked, punched, tripped or pinched did not change significantly.
- ∃ The number of times students reported having a conversation with the School Resource Officer did not change significantly.
- ∃ The number of students reporting that they would feel comfortable discussing problems with the School Resource Officer decreased significantly.
- ∃ The number of students who know the School Resource Officer's name increased slightly, but the change was not statistically significant.
- ∃ The number of students reporting that the School Resource Officer spoke in their class about violence or school safety did not change significantly.

Combining these findings with the baseline data presented in the full report, it appears that there is some cause for celebration and some cause for consternation. There are some victories, some defeats, and numerous ties.

Conclusion

Thurston Middle School does not appear to be a school in trouble. Students are not carrying guns or engaging in serious forms of violence. Many report feeling safe and secure. On the other hand, like all schools, Thurston is home to a variety of minor problems. Surveys and school records demonstrate that issues like theft of student property (by other students), bullying, teasing, fighting, disrespect, and other forms of misbehavior occur regularly throughout the school year. Some students are afraid to go to school; some are afraid to use the bathrooms or ride the bus. Many report that they would respond to aggression toward them by behaving aggressively themselves. The evidence presented in this report represents a useful source of intelligence about how to reduce fear, discourage misbehavior, and enhance feelings of safety. We applaud the Westwood community for its efforts so far, and encourage their ongoing efforts to make Thurston Middle School as safe as it can be.

I. INTRODUCTION

In 1999, the Town of Westwood, Massachusetts received a School-Based Partnership grant for \$113,350 from the COPS Office. The grant enabled the Westwood Police Department to implement problem-solving strategies at Thurston Middle School. Westwood is the smallest, most affluent, and most ethnically and racially homogeneous community among the five communities chosen for the national evaluation of school-based partnerships. Neither the school nor the community suffers from a serious crime problem. Like all middle-schools and junior high schools however, Thurston Middle School has experienced its share of typical adolescent problems such as teasing and bullying. The focus of the problem solving efforts therefore was bullying, threats, and intimidation. This report highlights the findings from a process and impact evaluation of the School Based Partnership project. A variety of qualitative and quantitative methods were used to conduct an intensive case study detailing the implementation of school-based problem-solving efforts, together with a multi-part quasi-experiment designed to determine whether the project resulted in a reduction in the number or severity of bullying, threatening, or intimidating episodes. The report concludes with a series of practical recommendations targeted at two levels: first, for school and police officials in the Town of Westwood; second, for researchers, police departments, schools, and federal agencies charged with designing, implementing, and evaluating school safety programs.

The Town of Westwood

Westwood, Massachusetts is a quaint New England town of approximately eleven square miles and 14,000 residents located 12 miles to the southwest of Boston. Westwood is primarily a residential community, with most of its work force commuting to Boston. In addition to its proximity to Boston, its other major appeals for potential residents are the availability of commuter rail and bus service, its location near three major highways (routes 93, 95/128, and 1), its low crime rate and its excellent schools. The community is growing, with previously undeveloped land becoming rapidly marketable for builders. There is a limit to this growth however, with approximately 85% of the available land already built upon (Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, 2000).

Exhibit One lists a variety of demographic, social, and economic characteristics for the Town of Westwood in the years 1990 and 2000. Westwood is a racially homogenous community, with 96% of the community reporting their race in the 2000 census as white. Only .5% of residents were black, and about 3.5% one or more other races. Census data suggest a slight increase in the proportion of racial minorities from 1990 to 2000, though a change in the methods used to collect race data by the Census Bureau in 2000 make it difficult to draw inferences about changes across census years. Nearly 90% of residents own their own homes, and about 70% live in the same home as they did five years ago. Compared with data from the State of Massachusetts and the United States, both figures suggest a very stable population base. Westwood also has the most racially homogeneous and stable population of the five sites included in the national evaluation.

– SEE EXHIBIT 1–

Westwood is also a very wealthy community when compared with the other four sites in the national evaluation and with averages from both the State of Massachusetts and the United States as a whole. Its median family income in the year 2000 was more than \$103,000. While median family income rose by 39% in Massachusetts and 42.1% in the United States from 1990-2000, it rose by 53.4% in Westwood. Only 2.5% of households are comprised of single mothers with children younger than 18.¹ Unemployment rates are also low, with only 1.6% of those 16 or older reporting being unemployed. Only 2.5% of persons and 1.3% of families live beneath the poverty level. Nearly 95% of adults 25 or older graduated from high school, and about 57% have earned at least a bachelor's degree. By every available measure, Westwood is a wealthy, educated community with little poverty or socioeconomic distress. In sum, it has the smallest, wealthiest, most educated, most stable, and most homogenous population of the five sites included in the National Evaluation of School Based Partnerships.

Westwood has also not experienced the serious crime problems faced by some of the other agencies included in the national evaluation. Exhibit Two provides crime statistics from the FBI Uniform Crime Reports for the year 2000. The town experienced no murders, rapes, or

¹ Our use of the term 'single mother' includes married women without a husband present in the home. This figure comes from the census designation 'female householder, no husband present, with own children under 18 years old.'

robberies, and only 21 assaults. There were only 1.5 violent crimes and 8.3 property crimes per 1,000 residents in 2000. The averages for the other four cities included in the national evaluation were 27.1 violent crimes and 62.7 property crimes per capita. No matter how it is measured, the crime rate is by far the lowest of the five cities included in the national evaluation. As Exhibit Two shows, It is also lower than the average for the State of Massachusetts and for the United States as a whole.

–SEE EXHIBIT 2–

Westwood has an open town meeting form of government. The town is governed by three elected selectmen who serve overlapping three-year terms. The selectmen appoint an “Executive Secretary,” a title used by many Massachusetts communities to refer to a professional town administrator, who serves an indefinite term at the pleasure of the selectmen. The Executive Secretary works for the Board of Selectmen and executes the policies of the Board in areas of municipal management, administration, coordination and supervision. In general, the duties include exercising administrative authority over town departments, commissions, boards, committees, and officers under the jurisdiction of the Board. More specifically, the responsibilities include supervising department heads, which may entail providing assistance in program planning, grantsmanship, personnel management, and budget development. In addition, the Executive Secretary investigates and makes recommendations on questions coming before the Board, prepares and presents the Town’s annual operating budget, represents the Town in grievances and lawsuits, as well as a number of other responsibilities. The town also has a Town Moderator who is elected for a one year term and presides at all sessions of the town meeting. He or she also has the power to appoint members to the Finance Commission, Personnel Board and the Permanent Building Commission. (Town of Westwood, General Bylaws and Chapter, 2001). This form of government and similar variations are typical for small New England communities like Westwood.

The Westwood Police Department

Like the town in which it is located, the Westwood Police Department is the smallest and most homogeneous of the five departments chosen as intensive case study sites. According to its 2000 annual report, the Department employed twenty-eight full time sworn officers, seven full time civilian personnel, and one part time administrative assistant.² The hierarchy within the Department contains four levels: one Chief of Police, two Lieutenants, six Sergeants, and nineteen sworn officers. Of the nineteen sworn officers, two are Hispanic and two are female. Among the full-time civilian employees are two female record clerks and six communications personnel, including two female communications officers. Grant functions within the Department have been coordinated by a civilian administrative assistant who is also a Ph.D. student at the School of Criminal Justice at the University at Albany. During the year 2000, the Department received more than 16,000 calls for service, responded to 578 motor vehicle accidents, issued nearly 1,900 traffic citations, and made 167 arrests. Descriptive statistics about

² The cross-site report contains a table based on 2000 FBI data which lists the Department as having twenty-seven full time sworn officers. One additional officer was hired in 2000 after the employment data were submitted to the FBI.

the Department and its activities are listed in Exhibit 3.

–SEE EXHIBIT 3–

The Department is led by Chief Robert Haas, who was appointed as Police Chief by the town selectmen in 1990. Haas served previously as a Lieutenant in the Morris Township Police Department in New Jersey, where he became a police officer in 1976. He is active in the police research and policy communities in a number of ways: as a proponent of geographic information systems (GIS) in policing (see Reid, 1999), as an influential member of the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association, and as a Ph.D. student in the Law, Policy, and Society program at Northeastern University. He regularly attends academic and professional conferences in criminal justice, criminology, and policing. Furthermore, he has presented a number of papers and workshops at these conferences (Haas, 2002; Haas and Schnobrich, 1999; Mazerolle and Haas, 1997; Schnobrich and Haas, 2000). He has also published a book chapter on the relationship between information technology and problem-oriented policing (Mazerolle and Haas, 1998). The citizens of Westwood, therefore, have the benefit of a Chief with deep connections to intellectuals and policy elites in policing and criminal justice more broadly. Through this and other avenues, the Westwood Police Department has ready exposure to innovative ideas and research findings in policing.

Despite its small size, under Chief Haas's leadership, the Westwood Police Department has undertaken a number of ambitious and innovative efforts. He introduced a School Resource Officer program within the school system. He implemented and oversaw a consolidated Public Safety Communications Center which now performs communications services for the Police and Fire Departments, and also serves as the Emergency Communications Center during emergencies. He introduced the idea of civilian communications personnel to staff the Communications Center and obtained \$38,532 in external funding from the COPS Office to help offset the initial expense. He led efforts within the department to replace the use of manual police logs and a manual records-keeping system with a fully automated Computer Aided Dispatch and Records Management System. He also developed and implemented a community-based juvenile diversionary approach that has been adopted by neighboring communities. Finally, he has also overseen two large scale interagency initiatives with other police departments in the region. These are described in more detail below.

From 1995 to 2000, working together with a criminal justice professor and a technology company, Chief Haas organized and established the New England Police Consortium, which was created to test the effects of problem-oriented policing and a customized geographic information system (GIS) on crime, disorder, and other problems facing the police (Reid, 1999). The Consortium was comprised of 30 law enforcement agencies in Massachusetts and New Hampshire. Multiple grants to support the Consortium from the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services totaled \$1.74 million.

More recently, Chief Haas is serving the first year of a two year term as president of the Metropolitan Law Enforcement Council, a nonprofit consortium comprised of 39 police agencies located south of Boston. The purpose of the Metro LEC is to offer a solution to these small local

police agencies when faced with a variety of situations that exceed their capacity to handle alone. These include critical incidents and large scale disasters, whether natural or man made, as well as cyber-crime, school and workplace violence, and other offenses or situations requiring interagency cooperation. The Metro-LEC has several operational components, each one led by a local chief: (1) the tactical team, (2) communications, (3) cyber-crime, (4) information technology, and (5) administrative functions (such as procuring external funding). Chief Haas has played a fundamental role in the creation and development of the Metro-LEC.

In August 1999, in anticipation of the School Based Partnership grant for which they had applied, Chief Haas re-assigned a patrol officer from his duties as the Department's Safety Officer, to serve as a School Resource Officer (SRO) at Thurston Middle School (as well as in five elementary schools). The SRO was instrumental in working with the school to apply for the grant and has played a central role in overseeing the grant and its administration. The SRO works closely with three other patrol officers assigned to cover the school's three grade levels (sixth, seventh, and eighth grade). Later in this report, we provide detailed information about the SRO and his role at Thurston Middle School.

Overall, the Westwood Police Department is responsible for a community that has not experienced chronic problems with crime and disorder. The leadership of the department is stable compared with the short tenure of many police chiefs today (Maguire 2002). As we will show, relationships between the police and the schools appear friendly and cooperative.

The Westwood School District

The Westwood School District is comprised of seven schools ranging from grades K-12, and was responsible for educating more than 2,600 students in the 2001-2002 school year. The District has five elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. The school committee is comprised of five members elected directly by the citizens, and has oversight responsibility for the School Superintendent's office.

Thurston Middle School is the town's only middle school; it covers students from grades six through eight. During the 2001-2002 school year, 636 students were enrolled. According to the survey of students that we administered in May 2001, 11% were 12 years old, 33% were 13 years old, 35% were 14 years old, 21% were 15 years old and less than 1% were 16 or older. The student body contains approximately equivalent numbers of males and females. The majority of students are white (88%), with about 3% of students claiming to be Asian, and about 6% listing another race or ethnicity. According to the 2001 teacher and staff survey, only one of the 65 responding employees who answered the question about race, an Asian, was nonwhite. Only 15 of 68 employees, or about 22%, were male. The student body at Thurston Middle School is more racially diverse than both the teachers and staff working within the school, as well as the population of the Town of Westwood more generally.

The school is housed in an attractive building with no visible signs of vandalism or graffiti. It appears to be a typical suburban middle school. A Visiting Committee from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (1999) praised the faculty, staff, and administration of the school:

“The school staff and administration are committed to sustaining a quality education, and they demonstrate a genuine concern about their students and each other. There is a sense of collegiality. The obvious mutual respect that exists between administration and faculty allows for productive communication and an effective professional environment” (p. 3).

The same committee also praised the students of the school:

“The climate of the school is positive, respectful, and supportive, and results in a sense of pride and ownership. This is demonstrated by the courtesy extended by the students to each other and to the adults in the building, the purposefulness of their activity, and the many signs of clubs and other student activities throughout the school” (pp. 4-5).

At the beginning of the School Based Partnerships project, the Principal of the school was Ms. Carol Gregory. Ms. Gregory is a gregarious woman who openly expresses her affection for her students and her concerns about the project. At the same time, she appears eager to learn more from the students about their fears and perceptions, and to enhance the reputation of her school. Although she reported that the town had experienced problems with researchers in the past, she accommodated all of the evaluation team’s requests: for meetings with faculty, for internal documents, for permission to conduct surveys of students and employees, and for a tour of the school, which she conducted personally.³

In 2001, the school experienced a change of administration as Ms. Gregory left Thurston Middle School to take a new job as Principal of John F. Kennedy Middle School in Northampton, Massachusetts. The School Committee selected Dr. Peter Sanchioni, Principal of Plainville Middle School in Connecticut, to take over Ms. Gregory’s job.⁴ Both Ms. Gregory and Dr. Sanchioni cited family reasons as instrumental in their decisions to move to a new community.

The School-Based Partnerships Grant

In 1999, the Town of Westwood received a School Based Partnerships grant for \$113,350 to implement problem-solving in collaboration with the Thurston Middle School. The grant budget included partial reimbursement for teachers’ and officers’ salaries, a full-time crime analyst for one year, travel to problem solving and community policing conferences, conflict management training, two computers, crime analysis software, mediation training, and a local evaluation. The

³ The Town’s Youth Commissioner conducted a survey in the Middle School in the late 1980s. The survey showed that the town’s youth were experience some problems with drinking, drugs, and engaging in sexual activities. The New York Times published an article about Westwood, focusing specifically on unsupervised teenage house parties (“Westwood Journal; Drawing Line for Teen-Agers, and Their Parents,” 1987). According to local officials, this negative media coverage embarrassed the town. The new police chief was hired shortly after that incident and the schools have since been reluctant to administer surveys.

⁴ Principal Peter Sanchioni received his Ph. D. in Educational Administration from Boston College. His dissertation was entitled “An Identification of Effective Middle Schools.”

project began at the end of the 1999-2000 school year as a pilot project intended for information gathering purposes.

During the Spring 2000 school semester, the project's staff selected a teacher from each grade level to work with a patrol officer to solve problems of bullying, threats, and intimidation at each grade. The selected teachers conducted a focus group with each of the grades in an effort to determine their willingness to discuss issues openly with them and the officers. The following academic year, letters were sent to parents in early October, describing the project and asking their permission to allow their children to participate.

During the 2000-2001 school year, a police officer was introduced to each group. Although the project's planners expected the kids to be reluctant to talk in front of a police officer, they were surprised at how openly the kids shared information. Each group focused on different issues, as the coordinators allowed the kids to nominate those issues concerning them. For instance, the 6th grade group focused on teasing, while the 8th grade group focused on bullying and harassment. These meetings showed that the problems reported by the kids are spatially and temporally concentrated: in the lunchroom, on the buses (which are described as an "adult-free" zone), and in the hallways between classes. Part III of this report will explore in much more detail the implementation of problem solving in Thurston Middle School.

II. THE EVALUATION PROCESS

This report describes a social scientific evaluation of the School-Based Partnerships program in Thurston Middle School. The evaluation has two major components. The first is a process or implementation evaluation designed to evaluate the extent to which the program was actually implemented. Research has shown that the process of implementing a program is at least as important as the outcome produced by a program (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984; Winn, 1999). Therefore, we use a variety of methods, both quantitative and qualitative, to assess the extent to which the police department and the school were able to implement successfully the program they described in their grant application to the COPS Office. The second component is an impact evaluation designed to assess the extent to which the program successfully reduced bullying, threats, and intimidation in Thurston Middle School. From a technical perspective, this question is very difficult to answer for several reasons. We will describe these constraints shortly, together with the evaluation design we chose to determine whether the School Base Partnership project in Westwood produced any tangible or measurable benefits.

This section of the report is divided into four subsections. We begin by examining the research questions of interest in the process evaluation. Next we discuss the principal research questions in the impact evaluation. We then describe the various data sources and research methods used to answer these questions. We conclude by discussing a variety of analytical and logistical issues inherent in the evaluation of school-based problem-solving initiatives.

A. Research Questions: Implementation Process

According to reformers, problem-oriented policing is a philosophy that must be tailored to the special needs and unique circumstances of the agency and the community (Goldstein, 1990). It is not a “program” that can be carelessly tacked onto the police agency as an appendage. Because the focus of POP is on designing customized solutions to unique local problems, there is some reluctance among reformers to endorse a “cookbook” approach to solving problems. On the other hand, for inexperienced agencies struggling to understand and implement POP, the availability of a concrete strategy can sometimes be useful for getting started. According to Goldstein (1990:66):

“The principal danger in providing a detailed procedure is that it will be used to oversimplify the concept: that more effort will be invested in moving mechanically through the recommended steps than in the explorations and thinking that the steps are encouraged to stimulate.”

The most well-known method for implementing POP is known as the SARA model, which stands for Scanning, Analysis, Response, and Assessment. The SARA model was first developed in Newport News, Virginia, by John Eck and William Spelman in 1987 (Eck and Spelman, 1987). A decade later, when the U.S. Department of Justice developed a new grant program to diffuse problem-oriented policing throughout the nation, all applicants were required to use the SARA model. Police officers throughout the United States can now be heard discussing the SARA approach to problem-solving. While it is a useful tool for many agencies,

it is important to remember that it is only one method for implementing problem-oriented policing. We now introduce the four elements of the SARA process.

Scanning involves a variety of methods for identifying the problems to be solved. Police and schools can do surveys, check calls-for-service records, or request information about problems from other agencies.

Analysis means collecting and analyzing data about the problems selected during the scanning stage. During this stage, officers and others must open their minds to the various kinds of data that might be useful in solving a problem. Armed with useful data and insightful analysis, officers, students, teachers, and others involved in the project are often able to uncover information that is useful for developing creative response strategies.

In the *Response* stage, officers and other problem-solvers use the information collected during the analysis stage in an attempt to solve (or reduce the scope of) the problem. In some instances, the response can constitute a single action (such as an arrest) by a single agency. In other cases, the response may be a complicated, multifaceted strategy that relies on the cooperation of police, school officials, parents, and students.

In the *Assessment* stage, the agencies systematically examine the efficacy of their response strategy. In some cases, the assessment may be very simple. For instance, if the source of the problem is a single offender, and the offender has moved a far distance away or has been transferred to another school (or has been incarcerated), then the problem may have been effectively solved. In most POP cases, the assessment should be more involved and more systematic. The basic question to be answered during this stage is whether the response was effective. Good assessments move beyond this simplistic approach, examining the duration of effectiveness. For instance, if police attempt to alleviate a problem with speeding motorists by issuing citations over a short period, they should follow this up by determining how long it takes before the effects of the increased enforcement begin to diminish. Another important issue during assessment is displacement. A response cannot be judged completely effective for reducing crime in one area if it increases crime in another area. This stage of the SARA process is systematically ignored by many agencies professing to practice POP. Taking this stage seriously is one of the major challenges to implementing POP.

Since implementing the SARA process is a fundamental component of all School-Based Partnerships grants, one important aspect of the evaluation is determining the extent to which it was successfully implemented in Thurston Middle School. Thus, the process or implementation evaluation will examine in detail each of these steps. The evidence used in this portion of the evaluation is entirely qualitative. It is drawn from field notes collected by members of the evaluation team during interviews and observations conducted within the school and the police department. Some of the research questions asked during this portion of the evaluation include the following:

Scanning Phase

- ∃ How were the problems identified?
- ∃ What process was followed, and by whom?

∃ What problems were decided upon?

Analysis Phase

∃ What kinds of analysis were done to examine the extent of the problem?

∃ Who was involved? What types of data were used?

∃ What were the sources of the information?

∃ Did the analysis phase examine offenders, victims, and locations?

∃ How long was this phase (months, days)?

∃ What problems and obstacles did the project team encounter during this phase and how were they solved?

Response Phase

∃ What were the primary responses that were implemented?

∃ What was the dosage or coverage of these responses?

∃ How was the response implemented?

∃ What resources did the implementation team draw upon to conduct the response phase?

∃ How long was this phase (months, days)?

∃ What problems and obstacles were encountered by the team during this phase and what solutions were decided on to deal with these problems?

Assessment Phase

∃ How was the assessment of the response conducted?

∃ Who was involved?

∃ What types of data were used in this phase?

∃ What is the working relationship of the partners?

B. Research Questions: Impact

While it is important to know if programs or policies have been successfully implemented, all programs and policies are a means to one or more ends. Therefore, another fundamental element of a thorough evaluation is determining the impact of a program or policy on a set of outcomes. Impact evaluations are always normative in the sense that they require the evaluator to state a set of measurable outcomes and then determine whether the program or policy had any impact on these measures. It is important to recognize that the selection of outcome measures is an important step in this process. It would be simple to set the bar low so as to ensure a successful impact. Evaluators often do the opposite, setting the threshold for “success” too high, or defining it too narrowly, leading to the now-clichéd conclusion that “nothing works.” The solution is to adopt a middle-level stance, selecting a variety of potential outcome measures, neither guaranteeing that the evaluation will find a successful impact, nor setting the program or policy up for failure by setting the threshold for success too high.

In this project, the primary yardstick for determining success is the incidence, prevalence, and perception of bullying, threats, and intimidation. At the same time however, the project team also set at least two other ancillary goals. First was improving the relationship between police and the school. Second was improving overall feelings of safety within the school. Therefore, in our efforts to determine whether the School Based Partnerships program had an effect, we will consider these three dimensions:

1. The incidence and prevalence of bullying, threats, and intimidation within the

- school;
2. The relationships between the police and the school, including students, teachers, staff, and administration;
 3. The overall perceptions of safety within the school.

Conducting an impact evaluation on these questions will require the use of numerous data sources. These are described in detail below.

C. Data and Methods

During the course of the evaluation, we collected many different kinds of data, both qualitative and quantitative, designed to help answer the research questions we just reviewed. The different data sources included surveys, official police data, official school data, and transcripts of interviews and observations conducted by the research team, newspaper articles, and a variety of internal agency documents provided by the school and the police department.

Surveys

As part of our effort to learn more about life within Thurston Middle School, we conducted five surveys between June 2001 and June 2002: two waves of student surveys, two waves of teacher and staff surveys, and one bus driver survey. All five surveys were voluntary, with potential respondents instructed that no harm would come to them for failing or refusing to participate. Nonetheless, response rates were quite high for three of the five surveys. The bus driver survey and the wave two teacher survey both produced low response rates.

The first wave of teacher and staff surveys was administered at a faculty meeting on June 4, 2001. Toward the end of the meeting, the teacher coordinator gave a brief explanation about why the surveys were being administered, together with a brief description about the project. She then distributed the surveys for the faculty to complete. The teachers were told that their participation was voluntary and their answers would be anonymous and confidential. The teachers had the option of staying and completing the survey to hand in to the teacher coordinator at the end of the meeting, or taking it away to complete in privacy and return the next day. The teacher coordinator kept track of who handed in a completed survey and attempted to retrieve a survey from every adult in the building, including teachers, teacher aides, administrators, secretaries and custodians. The survey was 3 pages long, and 69 employees responded. The survey instrument is contained in Appendix 1.

On June 20, 2001, the last full day of classes, we conducted the first wave of student surveys. Given research demonstrating that seeking active consent from parents can lower response rates and contribute to sample selection bias, we chose to use a passive consent procedure (Andeman, et al., 1995; Esbensen, et al., 1996).⁵ A notice was sent home to let parents know that a survey was being administered to the students and if they had questions regarding the survey, they could call the school; if they did not want their child to participate, they could let the school know.

⁵ Active consent means requiring participating students to submit written permission from a parent to participate in the survey. Passive consent means informing parents that a survey is being planned and instructing them to notify school officials if they do not want their child to participate.

About 4 or 5 students did not participate in the survey due to their parents' request. An explanation about the survey and its importance was relayed to the teachers along with written instructions about how to administer the survey. The surveys were completed on a volunteer basis by the students and they were told that their answers would be anonymous and confidential. Once the students completed the surveys, the teacher collected them, placed them in an envelope, and brought them to the guidance counselor's office.⁶ The sixth graders completed their surveys during 5th period with their teacher, while the seventh and eighth graders completed their surveys during X-Block with their home room teachers.⁷ There was no attempt to administer the survey to students who happened to be absent on the day the surveys were distributed. 575 students responded. The survey instrument is contained in Appendix 2.

The second wave of teacher and staff surveys was administered on June 10, 2002 at the last faculty meeting of the year. The new principal asked the teachers to complete the survey and return it to him at the end of the meeting. The teachers were told that their participation was voluntary and their answers would be anonymous and confidential. There was no attempt to follow up on faculty or other adults in the building to solicit their participation. The survey was 3 pages long, and only 33 employees responded, fewer than half the number of respondents in the first survey. As we will discuss later, the low response rate in the second wave of the teacher and staff survey was a significant setback; it limited severely the extent to which we could make inferences about change between waves 1 and 2. The survey instrument is contained in Appendix 3.

The second wave of student surveys was administered on June 10, 2002. Teachers received an envelope containing surveys and instructions in their mailboxes from the principal. The surveys were completed on a volunteer basis by the students and they were told that their answers would be anonymous and confidential. The second wave survey used only selected questions from the one conducted the year before and the entire instrument was only two pages long. Students completed the surveys during their X-Block period. Teachers collected the surveys and returned them in the envelope to the Principal's office. The project staff members who were integrally involved in the project were away at a conference when the surveys were administered, so they were not available to assist in the distribution of the survey or to answer questions that faculty or students may have had. Consistent with the second wave of teacher and staff surveys, the second wave of the student survey generated fewer completed responses (only 483, compared with 575 during wave one). The survey instrument is contained in Appendix 4.

Finally, we also conducted a brief survey of bus drivers in June 2002. We were unable to enumerate a precise list of bus drivers, though we believed that about eleven altogether were responsible for driving buses to and from Thurston. The Vice Principal and the Bus Driver Coordinator administered the bus driver surveys. The Bus Driver Coordinator was instructed to distribute surveys to all the bus drivers and notify them that their participation was voluntary. A

⁶ The guidance counselor served as the teacher coordinator for the first year and half of the project.

⁷ X-block is a free period during the day that the students spend with their homeroom teachers; it serves as a time for the school to implement projects or for students to work on homework.

self addressed stamped envelope was given with each survey so that the bus drivers could complete the survey at their leisure and return it to the grant coordinator. The bus driver survey produced only six valid responses. Although we did not conduct a survey of bus drivers the year before, we chose to conduct one toward the end of the evaluation for two primary reasons. First, only weeks before, we obtained copies of disciplinary slips filled out by bus drivers and submitted to the school's administration. Although the problems contained within these reports are generally minor, there were enough completed disciplinary slips to suggest that bus drivers probably have insight into the behavior (and misbehavior) of Thurston students. Second, we became aware of recent research which found that the number one health and safety concern of bus drivers is disciplining children.⁸

In addition to these surveys, we also relied on a variety of other data sources.

- ∃ A survey of students conducted in April, 1999 after the Columbine incident, by then-Principal Carol Gregory.
- ∃ The Vice-Principal's disciplinary log from 1999-2002.
- ∃ All available bus-driver disciplinary referrals used by bus drivers to inform the school administrators about disciplinary issues on the buses.

We used a variety of coding procedures to perform a systematic qualitative analysis of these three data sources. In addition, much of the report is informed by our analysis of transcribed field notes assembled by the research team during interviews and observations.

D. Evaluation Issues

Westwood has only one middle school. The problem-solving approach that the school and police department intended to introduce into the school was expected, from the beginning, to be a "full coverage" program that would produce benefits for all students, not just a select group. These two details - having only one middle school, and having a full coverage program within that school- have important implications for selecting an appropriate evaluation design. First, it is not possible to select an experimental and control group within the school. Such a design is only possible for partial coverage programs in which only a subset of the population (such as students or classes) is expected to receive access to the treatment or the program. This eliminates a number of possibilities for conducting a rigorous experiment or quasi-experiment. Second, it is not possible to select a comparison school within the community as we did in other sites. This leaves only a handful of other good options for potential evaluation designs.

Another potential set of design options are "reflexive control" designs which compare an organization (or other unit) before and after the implementation of a program or policy. This can be a weak or strong design depending on the number of data points, both overall, and before and after program implementation. Having a large number of time points enables evaluators to use sophisticated "time-series" methods which can be a good evaluation design. Having only two data points, known as a simple before-after or pre-post design, is a relatively weak design. We

⁸ A recent survey of more than 900 bus drivers found that 54% are concerned about disciplining children. Other concerns included lack of respect (36%); noise (35%); dealing with parents (33%); and violence, assaults, and threats (23%)(American Federation of Teachers, (2001).

approached the evaluation with the intent of compiling a time series database to examine changes in misbehavior over a large number of time periods. Unfortunately, data were not available over a large number of years, so it was not possible to develop a lengthy time series of yearly or semester-length data. The systematic temporal fluctuations that occur in the normal rhythm of the school year make it very difficult to use a time series design with smaller units of time like months, weeks, or days; summer vacations, the beginning of school, thanksgiving break, winter break, spring vacation, and the end of school are all periods that affect the volume of offending or misbehavior. It is difficult to control for these kinds of factors in a time series design. We could possibly minimize some of these concerns by creating a time series design using data aggregated at the monthly (rather than daily or weekly) level, but as we will show shortly, missing records and a low base rate made this approach unfeasible as well.

A final possibility that we considered and dismissed would have been to select a control school from a nearby community. However, there is little motivation for a principal or school board in another jurisdiction to agree to have their school used as a control school. Control schools by their very nature are those in which an innovative program is not taking place; they are a “straw man” against which to compare a school that is doing something new and evaluation-worthy. Massachusetts is well-known for the fiercely political nature of its local governments, and we decided from the beginning that asking a school from another community to serve as a control school would be threatening. For that reason, we chose not to attempt to enroll a control school.

After considering the evaluation-design options which we just described, and either dismissing or being unable to implement most of them, we were left with design options that are not very rigorous. We use some simple before-after analyses without a control group, some qualitative impressions, and some minimal time series analyses where the data permit. We revisit these decisions, and the issue of program evaluation in schools more generally, in the conclusion to Part V.

One step that the COPS Office and other funding providers can implement to strengthen the scientific body of evidence on the impact of crime prevention programs, both in schools and in other venues, is to pay more careful attention to the timing of evaluation research. In this case, the Town of Westwood was well underway in its program implementation efforts before the evaluation team began its work. It is common for programs (such as School-Based Partnerships) to be funded before evaluations of those programs are funded. At a minimum, evaluation grants should be funded concurrently with program grants. An even better solution, although perhaps logistically difficult, would be to fund evaluation grants before program grants. This will ensure that baseline data can be collected before students or citizens are contaminated by having been exposed to part of the treatment (such as the presence of a school resource officer). Furthermore, if evaluators arrive early enough, they can often make suggestions that assist program designers in formulating an implementation plan that is more amenable to a rigorous impact evaluation. The timing of an evaluation relative to the implementation of a program is always crucial. If the program has already been implemented, then the evaluator is limited to a relatively weak body of *ex post* evaluation designs. If the program has not yet been implemented, then the evaluator has more powerful *ex ante* design options available, including the most rigorous: the classic experimental design (Rossi and Freeman, 1993). This is a simple and powerful recommendation

that funding agencies can implement with relative ease to enhance the scientific knowledge base about what works in school-based crime prevention.

III. IMPLEMENTATION

“Implementation evaluations attempt to capture the essence of what programs *do* – the actions that make policy real.”

-Winn (1999, p. 1)

Implementing new programmatic innovations in complex organizations has proven to be a daunting challenge. This challenge arises in organizations of all types: public and private, profit and nonprofit, manufacturing and service (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984). Implementation theory focuses on the process of implanting new programs, policies and practices in organizations. The fundamental assumption is that no matter how well an innovation works, it is of little utility if not properly implemented (Winn, 1999). The landscape of administrative practice, both public and private, is littered with promising programs whose champions were not able to implement them successfully. Research and theory on implementation has therefore become an important component of the larger study of innovation in organizations (Repenning, 2001). Understanding how implementation efforts succeed and fail is at least as important as studying the impact of programs and policies.

This section discusses the implementation of problem-solving strategies in Thurston Middle School as a result of the School-Based Partnerships grant. Since the grant application asked all grantees to follow the SARA process, we describe the implementation according to these four steps: Scanning, Analysis, Response, and Assessment.

A. Scanning

The project commenced with meetings between the principal, Police Chief, and the SRO on how and where to start and who should be involved from the school as well as from the police department. It was decided when the grant was written that a team approach between a Thurston Middle School teacher and a Westwood police officer would be used to meet with groups of students in each grade level. The SRO solicited volunteers from the police department and three other officers showed interest in participating in the project, one for each grade level, while the SRO served as the coordinator. The school guidance counselor also solicited volunteers and was awarded with three other faculty members, one for each grade level, while she served as the coordinator. The teams initially chose students to participate in after-school focus groups to determine what issues students were most concerned about in the school and to give them a forum to discuss potential solutions to these problems. The teachers chose students from varying cliques and statuses in order to obtain a wide range of opinions and issues. These focus groups were also designed so that students would begin to establish a trusting relationship with adults in the school and in the community.

The program began in June 2000 with the training of teachers and officers in problem solving and group facilitating by Richard Cohen, founder of School Mediation Associates. In order to gauge the students' willingness and interest to speak openly about their concerns in front of teachers and officers, a brief pilot program was conducted with students before the end of the school year. Each teacher met with a representative group of students from each grade to describe the who, what, where, when, why, and how of teasing and bullying at Thurston Middle

School. These initial sessions with students allowed the teams to get a better understanding of how the focus groups should be run when school resumed in September 2000.

In the Fall of 2000, an informational letter/permission slip was sent home with every student to inform them and their parents about the project and to provide the students with an opportunity to participate in the program. Students who were interested in participating in the project returned the permission slip to the guidance counselor, who also served as the school coordinator. From this list of interested students, the school coordinator, with assistance from the team members, formed focus groups with special attention given to ensure an accurate cross section of the student population for each grade level group. It was also at this time that the project team needed to recruit a new teacher since one had left the school for a position in New York. A new team member was successfully recruited to the project in very short order and he blended right into the open slot for facilitating focus groups with his assigned grade level.

Groups met an average of twice a month to discuss what was going on in the school community that caused students to feel uncomfortable or unsafe. The first half of the year was treated as a fact-finding mission to determine what the students felt were the most pressing concerns. Students quickly became comfortable with one another and the adults running the groups. They were open and honest about their concerns and their suggestions about how to address these issues. Early in the school year it became apparent that these focus groups would prove instrumental in the Analysis and Response phases implemented to reduce bullying, threats, and intimidation.

The grade-level focus groups were important sources of information. There were some common issues for all students, as well as some that were particular to each grade level. The following is a list of concerns and general themes that students raised at meetings over the course of the 2000-2001 school year:

Grade 6

- ☐ Bullying/harassment on the bus
- ☐ Lunchroom intimidation
- ☐ Bullying in the cafeteria
- ☐ Throwing food and drinks in the cafeteria
- ☐ Popular kids that are mean to unpopular kids
- ☐ People nudging others when they make mistakes
- ☐ Bullying in general within the school
- ☐ Fear of guns being brought to school

Grade 7

- ☐ Cliques and group-hopping, causing conflict
- ☐ Being unpopular/fitting in, causing stress and conflict
- ☐ Being new to the school/establishing friendships
- ☐ Cafeteria group dynamics (popularity is emphasized)
- ☐ Teasing/harassment at dances

- ☐ Boys targeting girls for harassment
- ☐ Rumors as a form of harassment
- ☐ Harassment on the buses by older students (high school age)

Grade 8

- ☐ Teasing and bullying in less supervised areas, especially cafeteria
- ☐ Name calling
- ☐ Swearing
- ☐ Racism
- ☐ Harassment via E-mail; mostly centered on gossip and rumors spread by anonymous sources
- ☐ Dealing with changing peer relationships and maintaining friendships

B. Analysis

Once students were given the opportunity to talk freely about what they were most worried about in school, they were asked to identify how they would personally handle such situations, as well as to brainstorm about what they thought could happen to help address these concerns. Students indicated that they felt they should handle most situations on their own and could not always identify what the school or community could be doing to improve conditions. Solutions included telling an adult, telling a friend, avoiding the individual causing the problem, using a group of friends to help stand up to the bully, or writing a note to the person to tell him/her how the student feels.

Students also stated that they wanted the school's rules for appropriate behavior to be clearly outlined and then consistently enforced. They were confused by the inconsistent messages being given to students. They also felt that having more teachers present in the hallways and staircases would help to alleviate some of the teasing, pushing and shoving that occurs.

As a possible solution to address students' concerns, a peer mediation program was investigated. In March 2001, School Mediation Associates was contacted to provide information about peer mediation and determine whether it would be a viable option for the school. An information session was held for all students involved in the school/police collaboration program in order for them to gain an understanding of the purpose of peer mediation and how such a program would work in the school. For most students, it was their first exposure to the concept of mediation between students. The consultant explained what types of conflicts could be brought to mediation, who would be good candidates for the process, how a typical mediation works, and the training that is necessary to become a peer mediator. This information session ended with a few students role-playing the mediation process in order to gain some first hand experience with all aspects of mediation.

A follow-up meeting was scheduled with each grade-level focus group to debrief with students what they thought about the presentation by School Mediation Associates, as well as to get their feedback on whether or not they thought such a program would work at the School. Most students felt they left with a good understanding of a peer mediation program. At first, no one thought such a program would work at the School. After some discussion, the students began to

see the value of instituting such a program and thought there could be a need for it in their school. The teachers and officers also spent a great deal of time discussing whether the culture at the middle school would support a peer mediation program.

As a result of the students' genuine interest in the School Mediation Associates presentation and their confirmation that some formalized program would be beneficial to the student population, the project's staff submitted a grant application to the Westwood Educational Foundation (WEF) seeking funding for such a program. The WEF awarded a \$2,500 grant which was used to purchase materials and train individuals involved in the program. The Police Department administered the grant since it already had a grant coordinator in place.

In addition to gathering information about the level of safety within the school and the community, the team wanted to become more informed about relevant programs that could address their safety concerns. In June 2001, seven of the project's participants, four teachers and three police officers, attended the Colorado School Mediation Project's 10th Annual Conference on Violence Prevention in School Communities, entitled: *School Culture and Student Achievement: Bridging the Gap*. This conference, which was held in Littleton, Colorado, featured such workshop topics as: Character Education, Conflict Resolution, Restorative Justice, Whole School Approach, Peer Mediation, Building Community, Crisis Intervention Skills, Creating Security, and Creating a Healthy School Culture. The conference was a valuable experience for all those who attended. It was a chance to gather information from presenters and speak with others working in schools and communities on similar projects. The team collected a lot of valuable information from this conference regarding different programs that could potentially be used at Thurston.

After the first full year that the project was in operation, the project team learned that the principal, Carol Gregory, would be leaving. This fact effectively stalled the plans for any new program implementation since it would undoubtedly require the approval of the new principal. Additionally, the school coordinator was also leaving the community for a new position near her family in another state. Both of these individuals were instrumental in the early success of the project. The team continued to research new programs and hoped to approach the new principal early in the next school year with their plans for implementation. Some of the possibilities included:

- ∃ Second Step – created by the Committee for Children in Seattle, WA.⁹
- ∃ Peer Mediation – created by School Mediation Associates in Watertown, MA.¹⁰
- Resolving Conflicts Creatively – created by Educators for Social Responsibility in Cambridge, MA.¹¹

⁹ <http://www.cfchildren.org>

¹⁰ <http://www.schoolmediation.com>

¹¹ <http://www.esrnational.org/about-rccp.html>

- ∃ Character Counts – created by the Josephson Institute of Ethics in Marina del Rey, CA.¹²
- ∃ BEST program (Building Ethics/Esteem in Students Today) – created by the Institute for Human Resource Development in Notre Dame, IN.¹³

These programs center on a curriculum with lessons that can be incorporated into the classroom. Everyone agreed that the program that was to be chosen would need to be a school wide approach. The team members learned through their investigative efforts into other programs that in order to have any impact in effectively curbing bullying in the school, the program would need to consistently repeat the same message to the students through all three years in the Middle School. In June 2002, the team members again attended the Colorado Mediation Annual Conference and collected a great deal of information. A proposal was developed for implementation for the following academic year, however, with the change in Administration, program implementation was halted.

C. Response

The new administration did implement a Peer Mediation program within the first year. The new guidance counselor was responsible for training the staff and students while getting to know the student population and settling into a new position at the same time. The training took the whole academic year and the first peer mediation session commenced in the fall semester of 2002. Additionally, the new Administration instituted recognition programs for good behavior and good grades, which was consistent with the focus groups' intentions to promote a school culture in which it was considered "cool" to be good. Finally, the new administration also adopted a Character Education type program that will be implemented in the 2002 -2003 academic year.

Meanwhile, the team members continued to meet with their focus groups. These focus groups became more than just a fact-finding session for the team members and also more than just a forum to air complaints for the students. The Middle School has no student government and it quickly became apparent that these focus groups took on an advisory component. There was a great deal of trust between the adults and the students, where the students felt they could ask questions and obtain straightforward answers. Moreover, other students would approach these students to seek answers about their questions or concerns.

In addition to serving in an advisory capacity, the students participated in problem-solving training, which was provided to the students over a period of one month and included four sessions. The training was conducted by Richard Cohen of School Mediation Associates. The students learned about decision-making, effective problem solving tools, and conflict resolution. From this training session, they developed some solutions to problems and presented their ideas to the Administration. For instance, the cafeteria seating arrangement caused a great deal of stress and conflict for the students during their lunch periods. They discussed the problem and different possible solutions within their focus groups and then presented the best possible option

¹² <http://www.charactercounts.org>

¹³ <http://www.bestprogram.org>

to the principal. The principal is considering those solutions and will make changes based on the proposals presented by the students.

Furthermore, the students also assisted in reviewing the programs that the team members considered for implementation as a school-wide approach. The students were instrumental in providing their ideas and opinions about each program as well as presenting their views about which classes would best support the program.

D. Assessment

The project team did not conduct a formal assessment of the response phase. Informally, the members of the project team, including both students, school officials, and police officials, all view the collaboration as positive and successful. The students enjoy meeting in their focus groups and look forward with anticipation to their next meeting (which might also have something to do with the fabulous snacks that are provided at each meeting). The police officers appear to enjoy getting to know the students as well as the teachers. The officers report gaining a fresh perspective on the role that teachers play and the issues they face on a daily basis. The teachers also report that they enjoy their partnership with the officers as well as meeting with the students outside the typical classroom setting.

In addition to the relationships that have developed between personnel from the school and the police department, the officers and teachers have also established a mutual understanding and friendship with each other. The teachers in the project group feel confident in calling upon the SRO or other officers with questions, to report incidents, for advice, or to help teach a class. Officers feel they can approach the teachers with investigative questions and know that the teachers will be truthful and helpful.

In the aftermath of the problem-solving project, the SRO and one teacher have developed an after-school program called “The Science of Crime” that teaches students about investigative techniques used by law enforcement officers to solve crimes. It is anticipated by the school community and police department that work from this project will continue to be beneficial for the students, faculty, and the overall community. Future plans include continuing the grade-level focus groups to give students an opportunity to voice their concerns and implementing a school-wide program to address those concerns as well as continuing with the Peer Mediation program. All participants in the project, adults and students, appear invested in this work and are excited at the prospect of instituting a program that has the potential to make Thurston a safer learning environment for everyone.

IV. IMPACT

This section of the report contains three parts. Part 1 begins the impact evaluation by exploring the initial conditions that existed within the school before the School-Based Partnerships program was implemented. One of the most difficult evaluation issues in this and other sites was timing: the national evaluation grant was awarded well after the local School Based Partnerships grants were awarded to schools and police departments. Therefore, collecting baseline data was very difficult, and in some cases, impossible. The need for “before” data to compare with the data collected after program implementation led the research team to adopt a variety of both traditional and creative approaches. In some cases, this involved coding data sources (such as disciplinary records) collected by the school prior to our arrival.

Part 2, which forms the core of the impact evaluation, attempts to determine whether change occurred in the school during the study period. As we will show, due to a number of considerations beyond our control, the evaluation design we adopted is among the weaker designs available for answering causal questions. Furthermore, events occurring during the study period, both within the community and in the nation as a whole, make it difficult to attribute causal effects with any accuracy. Nonetheless, we do attempt to determine whether change occurred, despite potential difficulty with attributing those changes to the School Based Partnerships program.

Part 3 summarizes the findings of the impact evaluation and describes some of the impediments to quality evaluation research on externally funded police-school partnerships. Some of these are endemic in the natural life-cycles of schools, some are more closely related to the external funding process, and some have to do with the fear and threat that is inherent in allowing evaluators unfettered access to public agencies. This threat is particularly difficult to deal with when selecting a control group. All of these factors should be taken into account when designing federal or state funded school safety programs and evaluation research designed to assess the impact of such programs.

Part 1: Baseline Data

As a preliminary effort to understand the problems existing within Thurston Middle School, we present baseline data from a number of sources. Part 1 of this section examines three sources of data: a 1999 survey administered to the student body by the former school principal, quantitative and qualitative data from a 2001 survey of students that we administered, and quantitative and qualitative data from a 2001 survey of teachers that we administered.

1999 Principal's Survey

We begin by examining the conditions within the school as evident from a survey conducted in April 1999, immediately after the Columbine shootings, by then-Principal Carol Gregory. Ms. Gregory gathered the students in a school-wide assembly, spoke with them about the Columbine issue, and conducted a survey with just two questions:

1. What do you think makes Thurston a safe community in which to go to school?
2. What, if anything, do you think would make Thurston a safer community in which to

go to school?

Overall, 538 students responded to the anonymous survey. Below we present the results.

In response to Question 1, 397 students (nearly 74%) provided substantive feedback about what makes their school safe. We read through each answer and generated a list containing 36 themes characterizing the responses. We then assigned each response to a maximum of three themes. Exhibit 4 contains the top 19 themes, all of which appear in the responses of at least 10 students.

–SEE EXHIBIT 4–

The top three themes represented in the survey responses to Question 1 demonstrate an overwhelming sense of security and support exhibited by the staff at Thurston Middle School. Students' comments reflect that they feel strongly supported in at least three ways: by the staff and administration (23.9%); through teacher supervision (13.9%); and through teachers that are caring and trustworthy (13.1%). Together, these three themes are present in 202 replies, constituting 50.9% of the students surveyed. Students expressed strong feelings of security with comments such as:

- ∃ “One thing that makes Thurston a safe community is the teachers. They are very nice and kind and they do care about the students' problems and concerns. They are willing to listen and help the students.”
- ∃ “Teacher supervision of students throughout the building is a high priority.”
- ∃ “Genuine interest and concern towards students by adults in the building make them very involved with student's lives - they know what's going on and when something is not right, they act.”

Students also expressed comfort with, and dependence upon, the guidance counselor (9.1%). They also suggested that the school rules and handbook (8.8%) are followed and enforced. 4.3% of students stated that enforcement of consequences aids in ensuring student compliance with the rules.

Many students suggested that the size of the town and the school (7.1%), as well as good values and respect (8.6%), played a significant role in school safety. Others saw the kindness and friendliness of people at Thurston (4.5%) as playing a role in school safety, as reflected in the following survey response: “Most of the students and teachers in Thurston Middle School are nice, kind, and friendly toward others, which makes it a safe place to be.”

Another interesting finding is that fear appears to be bipolar at Thurston: 5.5% of students felt that there was no violence at Thurston Middle School, while 5.3% admitted that they do not feel safe at all. Another 5.5% state that teachers and staff are aware of issues - sometimes even through the “buzzing heard throughout the halls.” As we demonstrate in the next section, this represents another bipolar finding, since an equal proportion of students believes that teachers and staff need to be more aware of potential problems.

Other factors that students believe contribute to making Thurston a safe place are communication (5.5%), safety precautions (4.8%), parental support (3.8%), and locks on lockers and doors (3.5%). Exhibit 4 contains other student responses characterizing students' perspectives about the factors that make Thurston Middle School safe.

In response to Question 2, 407 students (nearly 76%) provided substantive feedback about how to improve safety within their school. We read through each answer and generated a list containing 50 themes characterizing the responses. We then assigned each response to a maximum of three themes. Exhibit 5 contains the top 20 themes contained within the responses.

–SEE EXHIBIT 5–

The most prominent theme, present in at least 14% of the students' responses, echoes classical deterrence theory: that the consequences for misbehavior need to be more severe, more certain, and applied more consistently. Several of the themes relate to making the property more secure by controlling access to the building (11.1%); implementing security technologies like alarms, cameras, or metal detectors (9.8%); providing locks for lockers (6.6%); and locking classroom doors (4.9%). With regard to lockers, a substantial number of students reported having experienced a theft from their lockers. Because this was not a victimization survey, we refrain from estimating the incidence or prevalence of theft. Nonetheless, dozens of students reported having experienced a theft at the school. These thefts are not routinely reported to the police and therefore do not show up in police records.

Students expressed alarm about the physical conditions of the school as well. Specifically, several students (5.7%) noted that the bathrooms are dirty, that the toilets and sinks are frequently out of order, and that there is frequent evidence of smoking in the bathrooms. For instance, one student noted that: "I hate when I walk into the bathroom in the 6th grade wing and all you can smell is smoke and there are cigarettes in the toilet and on the floor." Another noted:

"I think the bathrooms are a disgrace and it's not just graffiti. The toilets are absolutely disgusting and you see the same crud on the seats day after day. They are obviously rarely cleaned. The same with the sinks, all clogged with hair and grime and the dirty chips of soap we are supposed to use to wash our hands with. It is unsanitary. Also there is rarely paper towels or toilet paper."

Many of the students' comments are reminiscent of the broken windows hypothesis, which asserts that signs of disorder promote both fear and further disorder. Several mention that they avoid going to the bathroom: that they would rather try to "hold it in" until they get home at the end of the day.

Other comments reflect the students' perceptions that teachers and other staff members should exert more control over student behavior by monitoring the hallways and regulating hallway traffic (10.1%), being more alert about what is happening with the students (5.4%), paying more attention to teasing and bullying (3.9%), and identifying and working with students at risk for becoming offenders or victims (3.7%). Exhibit 5 contains a variety of other ideas nominated by students for making Thurston Middle School more safe.

2001 Student Survey

In June 2001, we administered an eight-page survey to all students present in the school. We received 575 completed surveys. Overall, the large majority of students at Thurston Middle School report feeling safe. The majority of students reported that they always feel safe or feel safe most of the time on their way to and from school (89%), in school (88%) and in their neighborhoods (94%).

1. Perceptions of safety while going to and from school. When students were asked how safe they felt going to and from school, 58% reported that they always feel safe, 31% feel more safe than unsafe, and 8% feel half safe/half unsafe. Only 3% reported that they either feel more unsafe than safe, or that they never feel safe, going to and from school. Almost all of the students (97%) reported that they had not missed school because they felt unsafe on their way to and from school. Only 3%, or 17 students, reported missing school because of safety issues. Of these 17 students, 15 reported missing 1 to 3 days because they felt unsafe on their way to and from school.

2. Perceptions of safety at school. 47% of students stated that they always feel safe at school; 41% reported feeling more safe than unsafe and 9% felt half safe/ half unsafe at school. The remaining 3% reported feeling either more unsafe than safe or never feeling safe at school. When asked where in the school they felt unsafe, students listed hallways, restrooms, stairwells and bus loading/unloading areas. 92% reported that that they had not missed school because they felt unsafe at school, while 3.4% reported missing one day, and 3.4% reported missing more than 2 days because they felt unsafe at school.

3. Perceptions of safety in neighborhoods. 73% of students reported that they always feel safe in their neighborhoods. 21% report feeling more safe than unsafe, and 4% reported feeling half safe/half unsafe in their neighborhoods. 1% reported not feeling safe in their neighborhoods. Exhibit 6 contains a comparison of students' perceptions of safety in three areas: at school, going to or from school, and in their neighborhoods. It demonstrates an interesting pattern that students' feelings of safety are greatest in their own neighborhoods, lower en route to school, and lowest at school.

–SEE EXHIBIT 6–

4. *Improving perceived levels of safety.* Students stated that adding mediation programs (103 responses); having teachers monitor the halls, bus loading areas and buses (75 responses); enforcing the rules (47 responses); eliminating the bad kids (44 responses); placing metal detectors in the schools (38 responses); and having better/friendlier/more involved teachers (32 responses) would make the school a safer place in their opinion. They also noted the need for wider hallways, locks on lockers, more SRO involvement and more SROs overall to improve school safety.

5. *Exposure to verbal or physical altercations.* The majority of students reported that they had seen students yelling at teachers (81.4%) and teachers yelling at students (92.2%). The majority (77%) reported that they had not been in a physical fight, though 72% reported seeing students fighting with other students. 16% of students reported that they had seen a student hit a teacher while 11% reported seeing a teacher hit a student. As we will show shortly, none of the teachers and staff reported seeing a teacher hit a student. 72% reported seeing a student hit another student. Exhibit 7 illustrates the proportion of students having seen various forms of physical and verbal altercations.

–SEE EXHIBIT 7–

When students were asked how many times they had seen a student fight, their answers ranged from 1 to more than 1,000, with 223 (60.1%) reporting they had seen 1-4 fights, 48 (12.9%) reporting they had seen 5-9 fights; 29 (7.8%) reporting they had seen 10-15 fights; and 71 (19.2%) reporting they had seen more than 15 fights. Excluding outliers (those reporting 50 or more fights), the survey data showed that the mean number of fights reported was about 3.

6. *Reasons for Physical Altercations.* 29% of students reported they knew why the most recent fight had started. Reasons included making fun of someone or joking around (92 responses), dislike each other (21 responses), boyfriend / girlfriend disputes (14 responses) and vandalizing property or stealing items (9 responses). 39% told someone about the fight; 87% of those told a friend, 11.2% told a teacher and 11.7% told a parent at home.

7. *Self-reported participation in fights.* 77% of students reported they had not been in a physical fight during the school year. 87% reported they had not been in a physical fight on school property during the school year. 88% reported they had not been in a physical fight on their way to or from school during the school year. 22% reported that they had been in a fight since the school year began. 18.6% reported that they had seen or been in a fight where someone had been injured and treated by a doctor as a result of a physical fight.

8. *Self-reported victimization.* 3% of students reported that their boyfriend or girlfriend had hit, slapped or physically hurt them on purpose during the school year. 1 female and 15 males reported that their boyfriend or girlfriend had physically hurt them. Over a quarter of respondents stated that they had been bullied or teased to the point that they felt unsafe or unwelcome at school. The majority, 72%, stated that someone said something cruel to them either at school or on the way to and from school. 54% reported that it occurred a few times, and 18% stated it has happened frequently or often. 44% reported that someone left them out of

activities or refused to play or socialize with them during the year. 51%, also reported that they had been hit, kicked, punched, pinched or something like that during the school year. Of this group, 23% reported this happened one time, 34% reported it occurred 2 or 3 times, 8% reported it occurred 4 or 5 times and 36% reported it occurred 5 or more times. 47% reported that they had property damaged or stolen on their way to school or at school.

9. Individual responses to victimization. When asked about what their response would be to someone calling them a name, 29% of students stated that they would call him/her a name back; 43% would ignore him/her; 12% would tell a friend; 5% would hit him/her for what they said; and 4% would tell a teacher, principal or parent. Only one respondent reported that they would tell the School Resource Officer. When asked about what their response would be to someone pushing or shoving them, 36% stated that they would push him/her back; 26% would ignore him/her; 16% would tell a teacher, principal or parent; 7% would hit him/her for pushing them; and 7% would tell a friend and not do anything else. Only two respondents reported that they would tell the School Resource Officer.

–SEE EXHIBIT 8–

10. Weapons. The large majority of students surveyed (95%) reported that they did not carry a weapon to school. 4% reported that they have felt so unsafe that they thought about bringing a weapon to school and 2% (13 students) reported that they brought a weapon to school for protection. When asked what type of weapon they brought, 6 reported they brought a screwdriver, 4 brought a pocketknife, 2 brought guns, and 1 brought a razor blade. Six reported bringing multiple weapons. Of those reporting that they had carried a weapon, 44% (7) reported they had carried that weapon 6 or more days, while 38% (6) had only carried it one day. 95% of the respondents said that they had not been threatened or injured with a weapon on school property. Almost 5% reported they had been threatened with a weapon. Eleven respondents reported they had been threatened once and 10 reported they had been threatened 2 or 3 times. 4 students reported being threatened 4 or 5 times. 26% reported that someone had shown them a weapon at school. Of this group, 117 students reported seeing a pocketknife, twenty-nine reported seeing a razor blade, eighteen reported seeing a screwdriver, none reported seeing a gun, and thirty-eight reported seeing another type of weapon. Among the types of weapons in the “other” category, one student saw a BB gun, one saw a paint-ball gun, one saw a spear, one saw a sharpened stick, two saw a stun-gun, and seventeen saw a lighter. No students reported seeing a gun that fires a powder-driven projectile, but one reported seeing a BB gun..

11. The School Resource Officer. 67% of students knew their School Resource Officer (SRO) by name and reported having had a conversation with him. 50% reported having at least one conversation with the SRO. 42% reported that they would feel “comfortable” or “very comfortable” discussing problems they were having in school related to bullying or fighting. 58% reported that the SRO had spoken in their class about violence or school safety.

2001 Teacher and Staff Survey

In June 2001, we administered a 3-page survey to all teachers, administrators, and staff members present on the day the survey was administered. We received 69 completed surveys. Of the 67

respondents identifying their position, 52 were teachers (nearly 78%) and the remainder were guidance counselors, administrators, or other staff members.

Exhibit 9 demonstrates the severity of various problems within Thurston Middle School from the perspective of those responding to the teacher and staff survey. The seven most severe problems in decreasing order of severity are: (1) student tardiness, (2) bullying by students, (3) pushing/shoving among students, (4) verbal abuse of teachers by students, (5) students threatening others, (6) vandalism of school property, and (7) hitting and fighting among students.

–SEE EXHIBIT 9–

The majority of staff members report feeling safe both at school and in the neighborhood around the school. Interestingly, they report higher levels of perceived safety in the neighborhood around the school than inside the school itself. While 52% of the respondents “always feel safe” at school, 78% always feel safe in the neighborhood around the school. If we combine the “always feel safe” and “more safe than unsafe” responses, the proportions of respondents expressing general feelings of safety at school (about 96%) and in the surrounding neighborhood (nearly 99%) are similar. Therefore, almost none of the staff members report feeling generally unsafe in or near the school, but the level of perceived safety is higher outside than inside.

When asked what parts of the school are unsafe, the respondents named the hallways (29 responses) and restrooms (11 responses) the most often. Some of the “other” areas that respondents described as unsafe included bus stops, the cafeteria (4 responses), locker rooms, outside on school grounds, stairways, and school exits and entrances.

–SEE EXHIBIT 10–

Exhibit 10 illustrates the percentage of teachers and staff members of who have seen various forms of verbal and physical altercations. More than 85% have seen students yell at teachers or teachers yell at students. Just under 9% of respondents have seen a student hit a teacher. None of the respondents reports having seen a teacher hit a student. This is the one area of greatest disparity between teachers/staff and students, since 11% of students reported seeing a teacher hit a student. Just over three-quarters have seen a student hit another student. When asked about how often they have seen students hit other students, the respondents’ answers ranged from zero to responses such as “more than I can count” and “every day.” If we include only those responses listing an actual quantity, the mean number of times respondents have seen students hit other students over the past year is approximately 2.8.¹⁴ This is roughly consistent with the mean of 3 reported by the students.

The final element of the 2001 teacher and staff survey that we examine here are the responses to

¹⁴ This average should be considered an approximation for at least three reasons. First, many of the respondents provided non-numeric replies to this survey question. Second, some provided a range rather than a single quantity. In this instance, we used the middle value of the range to compute the overall mean. Finally, those respondents who did not see a student hit another student in the past year did not reply to this question.

a question asking what solutions the respondents recommend about the problem of assaults in school. In the 2002 teacher and staff survey, responses to the question about what should be done about assaults were once again fairly consistent. Many felt strongly that punishment or consequences for misbehavior (32.7%) need to be more swift, severe, or certain. For instance, one teacher noted: “There are absolutely no consequences in this school. It is pathetic. Threat of litigation rules the school.” Another stated that:

“nationally, administrators need to stand firm and suspend or expel violent students regardless of the threat of parental litigation. School systems need to shoulder the cost of outplacement instead of trying to save money and housing disruptive, dangerous students where they don’t belong.”

A handful suggested the need for a “no tolerance” or “zero tolerance” policy for assaults. Once again, a number of the responses suggested that supervision and punishment at Thurston are inconsistent.

Two of the next three most frequent themes included mediation (20%) and a variety of specific programs, policies, or other remedies (20%) for dealing with aggressive behavior. Some of these specific suggestions included after school detention, suspension, awareness programs, counseling and even exclusion from activities. Mediation encompassed ideas for a mediation club and meetings with staff, students, and parents. Teachers and staff expressed a desire for more training (18.2%), including conflict management and resolution training for both staff and students. More than half of the responses included these three themes (mediation 20%, special programs 20% and training 18.2%) for a total of 58.2%.

Only one of the responses suggested intervention by the School Resource Officer, with one other response suggesting the need for the problem to be referred to the police more generally. Overall, neither teachers nor students in the 2001 survey appear to view the School Resource Officer as an integral remedy to the disciplinary problems within the school.

–SEE EXHIBIT 11–

Summary of Baseline Data

Overall, the baseline data suggest that Thurston is not a school in trouble. Students report positive relationships with teachers and staff. The majority of students, teachers, and staff report feeling safe both inside the school and outside on the school grounds. No student reported either carrying or seeing a gun at school.¹⁵ There is not a problem with serious violence.

At the same time, like most schools, the baseline data demonstrate that Thurston does face its share of problems that need to be addressed. Bullying, threats, and intimidation are issues faced by a number of students. Theft and vandalism of student property were recurrent concerns echoed in student surveys. Teasing, name-calling, and disrespect were problems that emerged from virtually every data source.

¹⁵ One student reported seeing a BB gun and another a starting pistol.

The baseline data also confirm that students are useful informants (we use this term in a research sense, not in a police sense) about the conditions they face and potential remedies for dealing with those conditions. Many students complained about the conditions in the bathrooms, conditions which led to both revulsion and fear. Teachers confirmed much of what the students reported. Overall it appears that some of the answers to improving feelings of safety at Thurston can be found by closely examining the results of surveys like the ones presented in this section.

Part 2: Longitudinal Data

We attempted to use four forms of longitudinal data to test the effect of the School-Based Partnerships program on bullying, threats, and intimidation in Thurston Middle School:

- ☐ The Vice Principal's Disciplinary Log
- ☐ Bus Driver Disciplinary Referral Records
- ☐ Waves 1 & 2 of student surveys
- ☐ Waves 1 & 2 of teacher and staff surveys

Unfortunately, some of these data sources did not work as well as we had hoped. Missing data, selection bias, inadequate record keeping, and the tragic terrorist incidents of September 11, 2001 all played a role in reducing the value of these four data sources as evaluation tools. We now examine each source in detail.

Vice Principal's Disciplinary Log

The Vice Principal is the school's primary disciplinarian and he routinely maintains a log that lists the name of each student referred to him for disciplinary problems, the nature of the problem, and the means by which the problem was resolved or addressed. These incidents tend to be the more serious incidents that occur within the school, since teachers (particularly veteran teachers) often handle less serious incidents on their own. The log consists of various forms (with some different formats included) and some handwritten notes. When we told the Vice Principal of our difficulty in obtaining longitudinal data and our interest in observing patterns of misbehavior over time, he welcomed us to use his logs. He did caution us, however, that some of the older files might be incomplete because he had purged some of them. It was not readily apparent from simply inspecting the files quickly whether they would be suitable for a longitudinal analysis.

Because the files were available in so many different formats and contained such diverse information, we created a simple coding sheet useful for extracting relevant information from every file. Research assistants then coded every record. The coders were not required to make any judgments or assessments other than whether the relevant data was present on the form; therefore we are not concerned with reliability issues such as inter-rater reliability. Overall, we coded 362 records covering incidents occurring from the Fall 1998 to the Spring 2002 semesters. As Exhibit 12 shows, the records are incomplete from Fall 1998 through Fall 2000. The records appear to be complete from Spring 2001 forward.

–SEE EXHIBIT 12–

The incomplete records certainly make it unfeasible to conduct a careful time-series analysis; the series is simply too short. We can conduct some simple before-after analyses, though these constitute an admittedly weak form of evaluation. From Spring 2001 to Spring 2002, the number of incidents that we classified as falling within the domain of bullying, threatening, or intimidating behavior decreased from 28 to 18. Stated differently, 28.6% of the 98 incidents in the Vice Principal's disciplinary log for the Spring semester of 2001 were classified as bullying, threatening, or intimidating episodes. In the Spring 2002 semester, these episodes constituted only 16.8% of the 107 incidents recorded in the Vice Principal's log.

In addition, a handful of other lessons can be extracted from this data source as well. First, the Vice Principal's disciplinary records show clear evidence of repeat "offenders," although the nature of the offenses is often minor. The 362 incidents were committed or caused by only 144 students. The number of incidents per student ranges from 1 to 22. Six students were responsible for more than 25% of the incidents (a total of 93), while twenty students were responsible for 50% of the incidents (a total of 181).

The student appearing the most times in the Vice Principal's disciplinary log was referred 22 times over a 13-month period. Since this period included a summer, these 22 incidents actually occurred during about 10 school months, for an approximate average of 2.2 times per month. Five of these referrals were for issues related to bullying, threats, or intimidation. Twelve of the incidents resulted in a lunch detention; other consequences included conferences and out-of-school suspension. Although the "offenses" were largely minor, this student represents a middle-school version of a repeat offender requiring a unique set of responses.

Second, although we chose not to classify all forms of misbehavior within the disciplinary log, we did classify every incident according to whether it constituted bullying, threatening, or intimidating behavior. Overall, 101 (27.9%) of the 362 entries constituted such behavior. In the 2001-2002 school year, the only year for which complete data were available, 31 such incidents were referred to the Vice Principal (constituting 17.3% of the 179 incidents reported during the year).

Third, the nature of the sanctions imposed by the Vice Principal is also evident from the disciplinary log. Although multiple sanctions are common, we selected from each incident the most severe sanction. When students received multiple forms of detention for instance, we coded the most severe sanction as after-school detention, followed by an office suspension, followed by a lunch detention. In the rare instance in which a student received an in-school and out-of-school suspension, we chose the latter. Exhibit 13 illustrates the relative frequency of various sanction types. After-school detentions constitute the most frequent sanction (31.8%), followed by lunch detentions (18.5%) and office detentions (12.7%). Out-of-school suspensions were used in 9.9% of cases, while bus suspensions (0.8%) were imposed rarely.

–SEE EXHIBIT 13–

Although the Vice Principal's disciplinary log is a valuable source of descriptive information about repeat offenders, the nature of offenses, and the nature of sanctions imposed for those

offenses, it has limited utility as an evaluative tool. We had hoped that it would be a platform from which to develop a time-series database of offending and misbehavior. Due to missing data and incomplete records, a fine-grained time series analysis was not possible. There was sufficient information, however, to conduct a simple before-after analysis of bullying, threatening, and intimidating behavior. This analysis suggests that the number of such episodes decreased from Spring of 2001 to Spring of 2002.

Bus Driver Disciplinary Referrals

Thurston Middle School has a form that bus drivers can complete and submit to the Vice Principal when they experience a disciplinary problem on the bus. The evaluation team received 69 such forms dating from October 1999 to May 2002. Once again, we created a simple coding sheet useful for extracting relevant information from the form; research assistants then coded every record. The coders were not required to make any judgments or assessments other than whether the relevant data was present on the form; therefore we are not concerned with reliability issues such as inter-rater reliability. Overall, we coded 69 records covering incidents occurring from the Fall 1999 to the Spring 2002 semesters.

–SEE EXHIBIT 14–

As Exhibit 14 shows, the records appear to be collected or filled out sporadically. For instance, during the Fall 2000 semester, 21 referrals were submitted, while during the very next semester, only one referral was submitted. We have no way of knowing whether this large fluctuation is the product of differences in reporting practices, lost or misfiled records, or a change in personnel or policies. We suspect strongly that a fluctuation this large cannot be validly interpreted as a substantial improvement in student behavior on the buses. Drivers appear to fill out the forms episodically or sporadically. For instance, one driver completed six disciplinary notices in two days. Another filed eight such notices in a two-week period. Some drivers appear to complete the referral forms much more often than others, suggesting that the reporting decision depends on the nature of the driver as well as the incident. Overall, we decided after careful analysis of the bus driver forms that they were too unreliable to serve as evidence on the impact of the School Based Partnerships program.

Student Survey, Waves 1 & 2

The wave 2 student survey was administered one year after the first wave. The wave 2 survey was only one page long and contained 7 substantive questions that also appeared on the first survey. The seven questions are listed in Exhibit 15, together with descriptive statistics for both waves. In addition, Exhibit 15 contains the findings of significance tests used to test the null hypothesis that there were no changes in the responses to these questions across the two waves. Overall, this simple before-after analysis found no significant changes from wave 1 to wave 2 on six of the seven questions.

–SEE EXHIBIT 15–

The one question demonstrating a significant difference between waves was: “If you had a problem in school related to bullying or fighting, how comfortable would you feel discussing it

with your SRO?” The proportion of students who responded that they would feel comfortable discussing such a problem with the School Resource Officer decreased significantly from Spring 2001 to Spring 2002. In the first survey, 42.2% reported that they would feel comfortable or very comfortable discussing with the SRO problems they were having in school related to bullying or fighting; in the second survey, this percentage dropped to 26.8% - more than a 15% drop. Exhibit 16 illustrates that the drops occurred in all three grades, though the steepest drop clearly occurred among sixth graders. This is one of the most policy relevant findings in this study, and one that the SRO can begin to address immediately

–SEE EXHIBIT 16–

Teacher and Staff Survey, Waves 1 & 2

In addition to the data sources we have just reviewed, we also hoped to compare the two waves of teacher and staff surveys to determine whether there was evidence of change between Spring 2001 and Spring 2002. Unfortunately, three factors limited the utility of such an approach. First, while the first wave of teacher and staff surveys produced 69 responses, the second wave produced only 33 responses. Second, while the second wave was being administered, the teachers involved in the School-Based Partnership program were out of town and therefore were not included among the respondents. Third, while eleven staff members completed the first wave surveys, the second wave contained responses from only two staff members. Ordinarily, surveys with low response rates can sometimes be useful if it can be demonstrated that the survey respondents are representative of the universe of potential respondents. In this case, such a case can clearly not be made. The wave two sample differs from the wave one sample in at least two important ways. This condition is known as sample selection bias. Given the presence of such bias in the wave two sample, it would be irresponsible to compare the two samples in an effort to make inferences about change. Even if we found evidence of change between the two waves, we could not rule out the possibility that any differences might simply be a product of pre-existing differences between the samples. For this reason, we were unable to make comparisons between the first and second waves of the teacher and staff survey.

Part 3: Summary and Recommendations

Assessing the impact of the School-Based Partnerships program was in many ways like trying to find a needle in a haystack. We arrived after the program was implemented, therefore we were not able to collect our own baseline data; we had no control school; portions of the Response phase had still not been implemented at the time this evaluation report was written; numerous other programs were implemented by the new principal during the evaluation period; and the tragic terrorist incidents of September 11, which was during the study period, have had a ripple effect on American society, especially our children. All of these circumstances limit our capacity to attribute changes in bullying, threats, and intimidation during the study period to the School Based Partnerships project. Furthermore, simply measuring those changes for descriptive purposes was difficult because we encountered numerous problems with both the survey data and school records.

In spite of these problems, we were able to generate a handful of definitive findings about changes in Thurston from Spring 2001 to Spring 2002.

- ∃ The number of incidents of bullying, threatening, and intimidating behavior appearing in the Vice Principal's disciplinary records decreased from 28 to 18.
- ∃ The number of students reporting that they were bullied or teased until they felt unsafe did not change significantly.
- ∃ The number of students reporting that they were hit, kicked, punched, tripped or pinched did not change significantly.
- ∃ The number of times students reported having a conversation with the School Resource Officer did not change significantly.
- ∃ The number of students reporting that they would feel comfortable discussing problems with the School Resource Officer decreased significantly.
- ∃ The number of students who know the School Resource Officer's name increased slightly, but the change was not statistically significant.
- ∃ The number of students reporting that the School Resource Officer spoke in their class about violence or school safety did not change significantly.

Combining these findings with the baseline data presented in the full report, it appears that there is some cause for celebration and some cause for consternation. There are some victories, some defeats, and numerous ties.

V. CONCLUSION

The majority of Americans view community policing as a solution to problems of crime and disorder in schools. In a 1999 telephone survey of a nationally representative sample of more than 500 registered voters, 81% supported a proposal to establish community policing in schools “as a way of identifying early warning signals and preventing discipline problems or safety hazards from erupting into greater tragedies” (Democratic Leadership Council, 1999). This report provides the details of a process and impact evaluation of one such program implemented in Westwood, Massachusetts.

The School Based Partnerships project in Westwood produced a number of benefits for the police and the school. Police officers and teachers developed new relationships and began the process of collaborating to improve the health and safety of the school. Students were exposed to police officers in new and collaborative circumstances that enabled them to develop positive relationships. Furthermore, it provided impetus for multi-agency planning and enhanced the already positive relationships existing between the police department and the school district. We have mixed evidence about changes in bullying. Although the number of reported incidents decreased, the surveys of students found no changes.

We close with a handful of recommendations. First, the number of students reporting that they would feel comfortable discussing problems with the School Resource Officer decreased significantly, a change that appears to have occurred mostly with the sixth graders. That finding is policy relevant and deserves some attention. Second, incomplete records on disciplinary infractions within the school hampered much of the evaluation. Other schools have developed standardized databases for recording and tracking incidents of misconduct. Such a system would be useful for observing patterns in disciplinary infractions and trying to evaluate whether certain programs are effective at reducing incidents of misconduct. Third, given the positive findings from police officers, teachers, and students, we encourage the police department and school officials to continue their collaborative efforts. However, since some of the evidence suggests that these efforts may not have reduced certain forms of misconduct, we encourage all stakeholders to continue experimenting with new methods.

Overall, Westwood, Massachusetts is a safe community with safe schools. Thurston Middle School is typical of many suburban middle schools. Recent years have prompted widespread concerns throughout the nation about the threat of “random” violence occurring in such schools. While conducting criminological research in smaller “low base rate” communities like Westwood can be challenging for evaluators, it is useful and important for learning more about school safety throughout the nation. We applaud the Westwood community for allowing such an evaluation to take place.

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Exhibit 1:

Selected Demographic, Social and Economic Characteristics

	Westwood		Massachusetts		United States	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
% Black	0.3%	0.5%	5.0%	5.4%	12.1%	12.3%
% White	98.1%	96.0%	89.8%	84.5%	80.3%	75.1%
% Other Race	1.6%	3.5%	5.2%	10.1%	7.7%	12.6%
% Owner Occupied Housing Units	86.6%	89.2%	59.3%	61.7%	64.2%	66.2%
% Renter Occupied Housing Units	13.4%	10.8%	40.7%	38.3%	35.8%	33.8%
% Living in Same Home as 5 Years Ago	76.6%	70.1%	58.4%	58.5%	53.3%	54.1%
% Households with Single Mother Families	2.4%	2.5%	7.0%	6.7%	7.6%	7.2%
Median Household Income	\$58,559	\$87,394	\$36,952	\$50,502	\$30,056	\$41,994
Median Family Income	\$67,317	\$103,242	\$44,367	\$61,664	\$35,225	\$50,046
% Persons Below Poverty Level	2.3%	2.5%	8.9%	9.3%	13.1%	12.4%
% Families Below Poverty Level	1.5%	1.3%	6.7%	6.7%	10.0%	9.2%
% Unemployed	3.3%	1.6%	4.5%	3.0%	4.1%	3.7%
% HS Graduate or Above	92.5%	94.5%	80%	84.8%	75.2%	80.4%
% Bachelor's Degree or Above	46.1%	57.4%	27.2%	33.2%	20.3%	24.4%

Exhibit 2:

Official Crime Statistics, 2000¹⁶

# Homicides	0
# Rapes	0
# Robberies	0
# Assaults	21
# Burglaries	13
# Larcenies	98
# Motor Vehicle Thefts	6
Violent Crime per Capita ^a	1.5
Property Crime per Capita ^a	8.3
Total Index Crimes per Capita ^a	9.8
% of Offenses Cleared by Arrest	31.2%
a. Expressed per 1,000 people	

¹⁶ Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reports, 2000.

Exhibit 3:

Characteristics of the Westwood Police Department, 2000¹⁷

Category	Number
# Sworn Officers	28
# Civilian Employees	7
# Total Employees	35
Sworn Officers per Capita ^a	1.98
Percent Civilian	20.0%
# Calls for Service	16,628
Motor Vehicle Accidents	578
Arrests	167
Traffic Citations Issued	1,889
Parking Tickets Issued	52
False Burglary Alarms	2,328
Cases Referred to District Court	301
Criminal Cases Referred for Follow-Up	142
a. Expressed per 1,000 population.	

¹⁷ Source: Westwood Police Department, 2000 Annual Report.

Exhibit 4:

1999 Student Survey: What Makes Thurston a Safe School?

Rank	Reason	# Replies	%
1	Staff and Administrative Support	95	23.9%
2	Teacher Supervision	55	13.9%
3	Trustworthy/Caring Teachers	52	13.1%
4	Guidance Counselor Support	36	9.1%
5	School Rules/Handbook	35	8.8%
6	Good Values/Respect	34	8.6%
7	School/Town Size	28	7.1%
8	Awareness of Issues and Problems	22	5.5%
9	No Violence at Thurston	22	5.5%
10	Communication	22	5.5%
11	Nothing Makes Me Feel Safe Here - NOT SAFE	21	5.3%
12	Safety Precautions (yellow line, fire alarms, locked doors etc.)	19	4.8%
13	Nice People and Kids	18	4.5%
14	Consequences	17	4.3%
15	Parental Support	15	3.8%
16	Locks on Lockers and Doors	14	3.5%
17	Community Support	12	3.0%
18	Supervision	10	2.5%
19	No weapons	10	2.5%

Exhibit 5:

1999 Student Survey: What Can be Done to Make Thurston Safer?

Rank	Reason	# Replies	%
1	Provide more certain/severe/consistent consequences for infractions	57	14.0
2	Control access to building / Lock windows and exterior doors	45	11.1
3	Teachers should monitor hallways/ regulate hallway traffic	41	10.1
4	Implement security technologies: Metal detectors, cameras, & alarms	40	9.8
5	Nothing; School is already safe	36	8.9
6	Improve relationships and tolerance for diversity among students	35	8.6
7	Provide locks for lockers	27	6.6
8	Improve bathrooms (install smoke alarms, prevent smoking, clean bathrooms, ensure that supplies like towels and toilet paper are stocked)	23	5.7
9	Teachers need to be more alert about what is happening around them	22	5.4
10	Expand after-school activities (sports/dances)	22	5.4
11	Create a student council	21	5.2
12	Lock classroom doors	20	4.9
13	Teachers, staff, and bus drivers must take teasing and bullying more seriously	16	3.9
14	Identify at-risk kids / Provide outreach for kids needing assistance	15	3.7
15	Enhance information sharing on safety issues through assemblies or classroom discussions	15	3.7
16	Improve student / teacher relationships	13	3.2
17	Uniforms / Dress code	11	2.7
18	More police/guards	9	2.2
19	School should provide safe storage for valuables or students shouldn't bring them to school	8	2.0
20	Don't know	8	2.0

Exhibit 6:

2001 Student Survey: How Safe do you Feel?

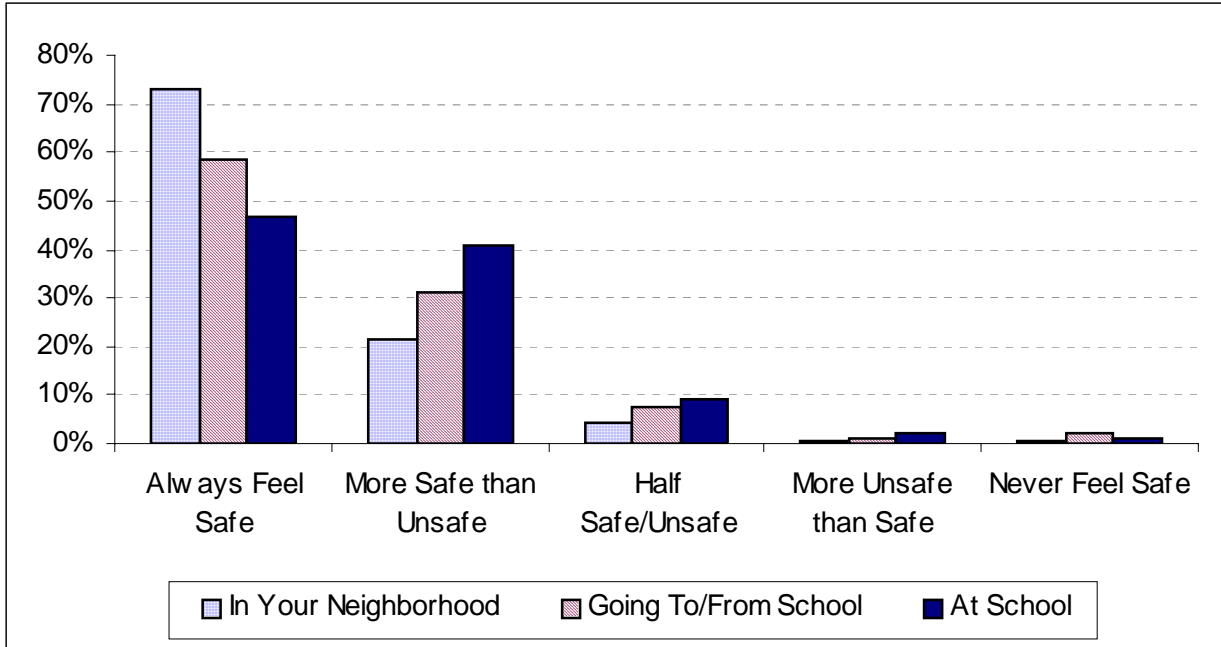


Exhibit 7:

2001 Student Survey: Have you Ever Seen...?

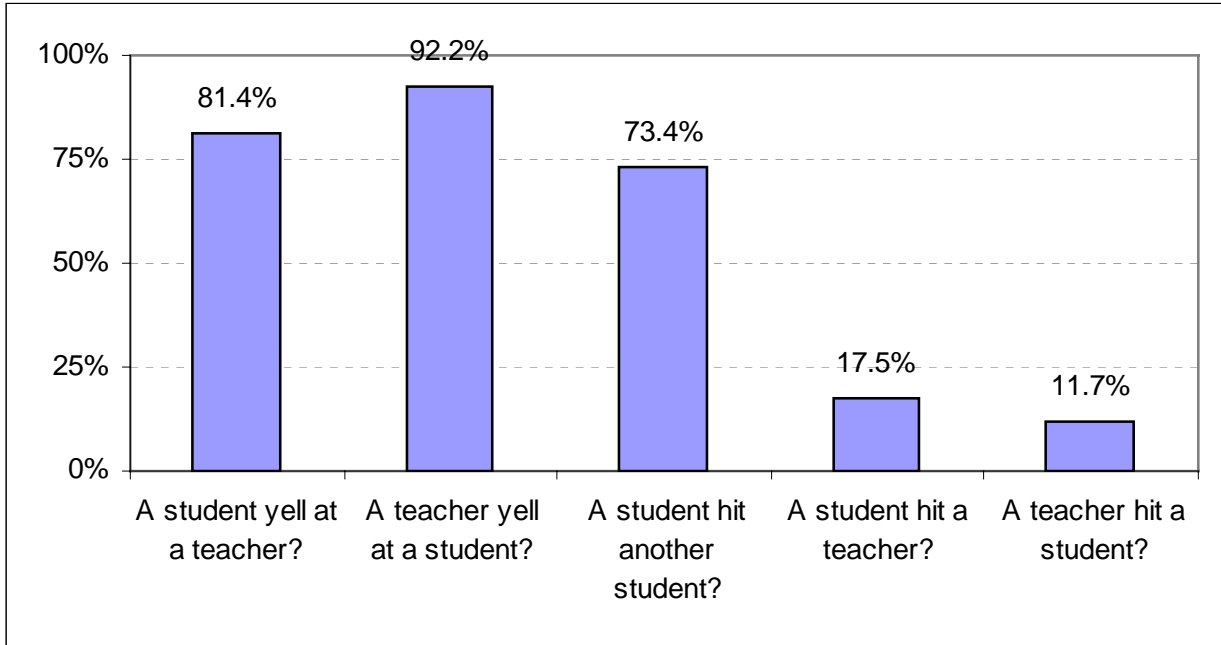


Exhibit 8:

2001 Student Survey: What Would You Do If...?

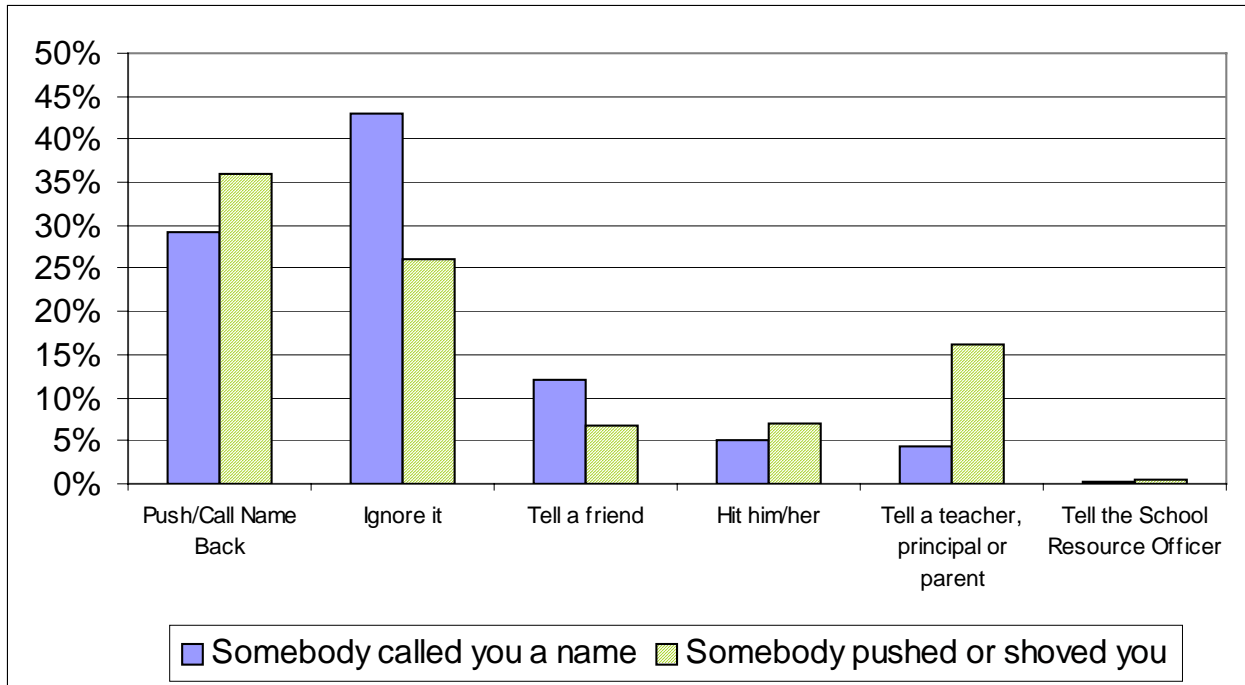


Exhibit 9:

Teacher Survey, 2001: What are the Problems at Thurston?

Problem Type	Serious Problem (3)	Moderate Problem (2)	Minor Problem (1)	Not a problem (0)	Mean Score (0-3)
Student tardiness	9.5%	55.5%	30.2%	4.8%	1.70
Student absenteeism / cutting class	0.0%	24.2%	47.0%	28.8%	0.95
Pushing /shoving among students	5.9%	38.2%	52.9%	2.9%	1.47
Bullying by students	11.9%	40.3%	43.3%	4.5%	1.60
Hitting and fighting among students	0.0%	17.6%	64.7%	17.6%	1.00
Students threatening others	4.7%	20.3%	54.7%	20.3%	1.09
Robbery or theft of items over \$10	1.5%	12.1%	45.5%	40.9%	0.74
Vandalism of school property	1.5%	22.4%	50.7%	25.4%	1.00
Vandalism of personal property (e.g., car)	1.5%	6.2%	24.6%	67.7%	0.42
Student alcohol use	0.0%	12.9%	24.2%	62.9%	0.50
Student drug use	0.0%	13.1%	21.3%	65.6%	0.48
Student tobacco use	0.0%	8.1%	27.4%	64.5%	0.44
Student possession of weapons	0.0%	0.0%	23.8%	76.2%	0.24
Trespassing	0.0%	6.2%	32.3%	61.5%	0.45
Verbal abuse of teachers by students	2.9%	27.9%	44.1%	25.0%	1.09
Teacher absenteeism	0.0%	20.9%	32.8%	46.3%	0.75
Teacher alcohol or drug use	0.0%	0.0%	12.1%	87.9%	0.12
Gangs	0.0%	0.0%	11.9%	88.1%	0.12

Exhibit 10:

2001 Teacher Survey: Have you Ever Seen...?

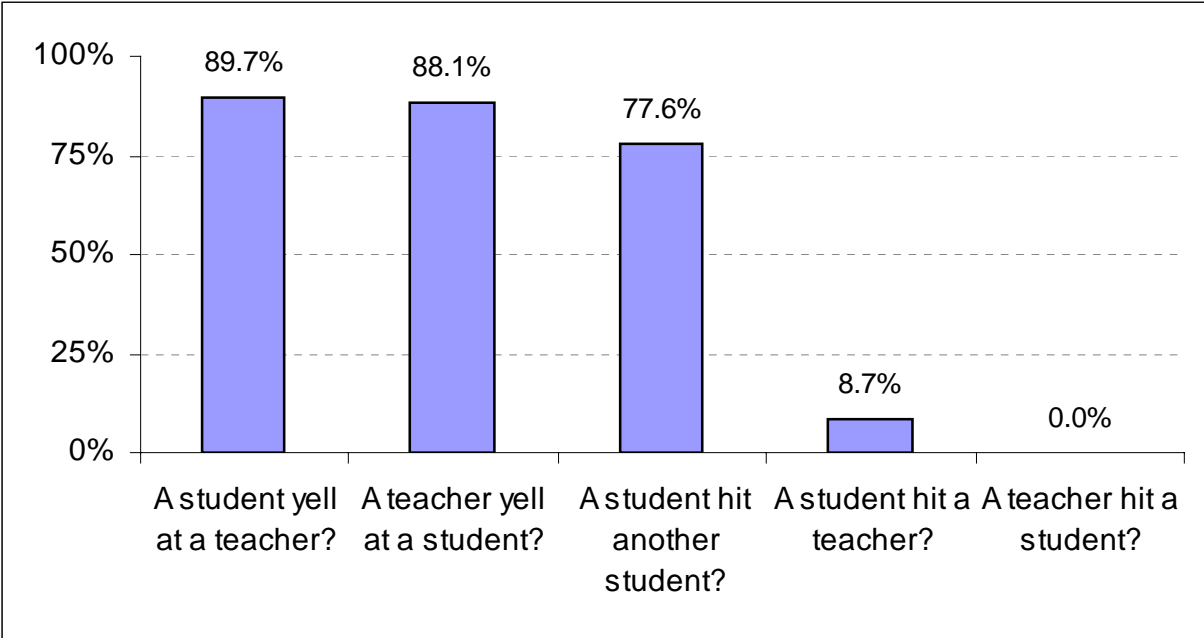


Exhibit 11:

2001 Teacher Survey: Recommended Solutions for the Problem of Assaults in School

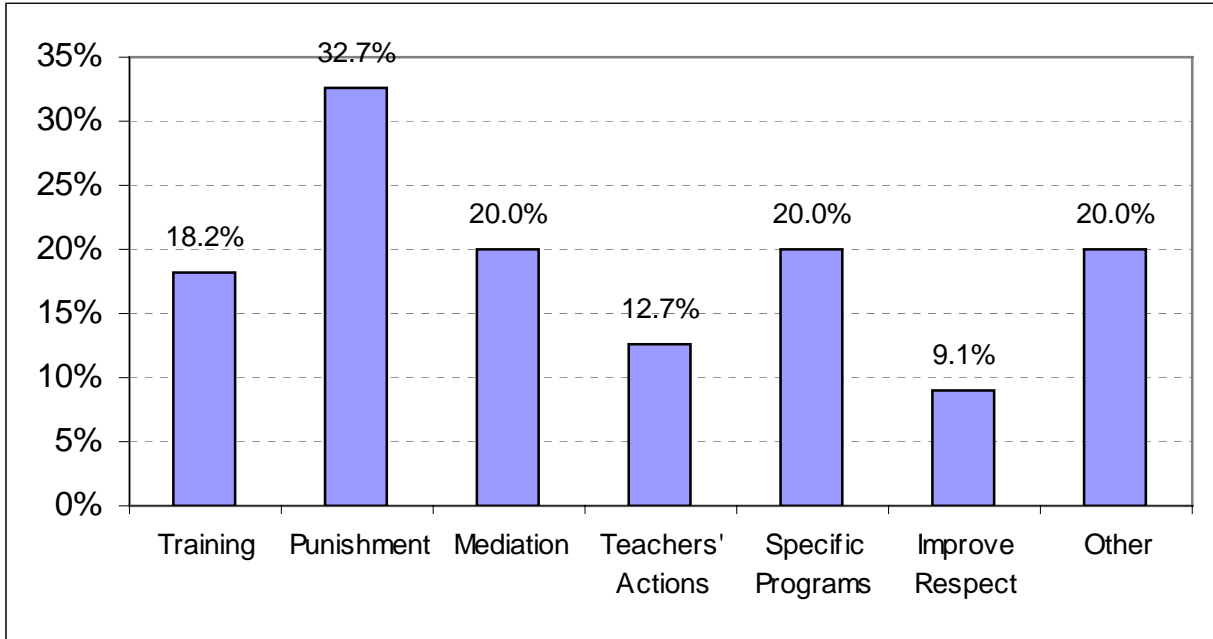


Exhibit 12:

Vice Principal's Disciplinary Log

Semester	# Incidents	Percent
Fall 1998	5	1.4%
Spring 1999	7	1.9%
Fall 1999	14	3.9%
Spring 2000	25	6.9%
Fall 2000	31	8.6%
Spring 2001	98	27.1%
Fall 2001	72	19.9%
Spring 2002	107	29.6%
Unknown	3	0.8%

Exhibit 13:

Punishments and Sanctions Listed in the Vice Principal's Disciplinary Log

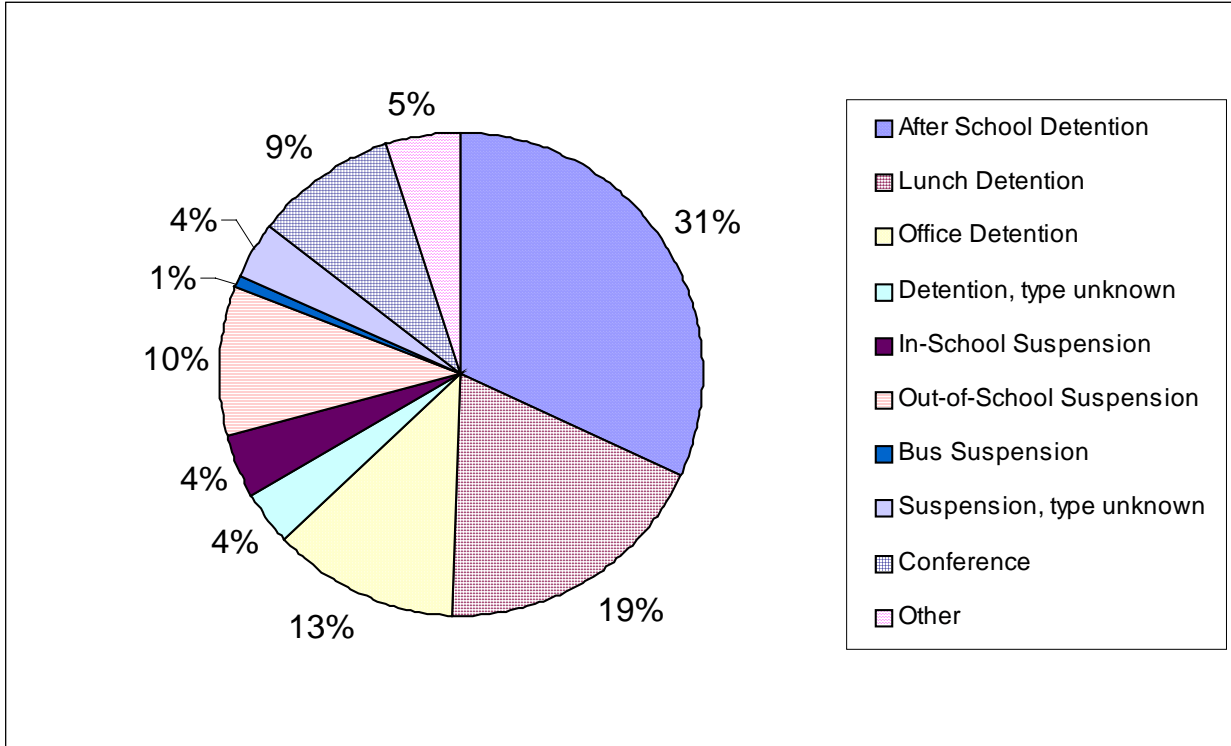


Exhibit 14:

Bus Drivers' Disciplinary Referrals

Semester	# Incidents	Percent
Fall 1999	17	24.6%
Spring 2000	9	13.0%
Fall 2000	21	30.4%
Spring 2001	1	1.4%
Fall 2001	9	13.0%
Spring 2002	12	17.4%

Exhibit 15:

Differences in Student Surveys, Waves 1 & 2

Question	Measure	Wave 1	Wave 2	Significant Change?
Do you know your School Resource Officer's name?	% Yes	62%	65%	N
Have you ever been bullied or teased to the point you felt unsafe or unwelcome at school?	% Yes	26%	23%	N
Have you ever been hit, kicked, punched, tripped, pinched, or something like that during the school year?	% Yes	51%	51%	N
If yes, how often?	Scale mean (range = 1 to 4)	2.55	2.64	N
How many times have you had a conversation with your SRO?	Scale mean (range = 1 to 5)	2.38	2.22	N
If you had a problem in school related to bullying or fighting, how comfortable would you feel discussing it with your SRO?	Scale mean (range = 1 to 5)	3.20	2.99	Y (-)
Has the SRO spoken in your class about violence or school safety?	% Yes	60%	62%	N

Exhibit 16:

% Students Comfortable in Discussing Problems with SRO

