



NATIONAL CRIME
PREVENTION CENTRE

TOGETHER WE LIGHT THE WAY PROJECT

The Together We Light The Way project was a school-based prevention model implemented in the Durham District School Board Region to respond to the specific needs of children who may engage in anti-social behaviours.

It focused on children aged 4 to 14 who were at risk of school failure and anti-social behaviour. It was implemented in four school communities. The project aimed to build resiliency and responsibility in young children by addressing risk factors associated with crime, such as poor social skills, low self-esteem, weak school attachment, poverty, unstable family environments and negative peer influences.



There were six program components:

- **Respect:** Teaching of morals and values to children
- **Parent rap:** Ensuring the involvement of parents
- **Healthy snack and breakfast:** Ensuring the children ate healthy and nutritious food
- **Experimental learning:** Providing the older children with employment skills
- **Circles of love:** Reading together and early literacy
- **Triple S:** Reward and recognition of academic achievement and volunteerism in the community.

Project assessment

A process and outcome evaluation was conducted. Data was collected from all four pilot schools once or twice a year over a three-year period.

The target population for the evaluation included the entire school population that totaled approximately 1,995 students. Interviews were conducted with school principals, staff and parents and the evaluation included pre and post testing of students through a series of standardized instruments.

The students and parents were a highly mobile population, resulting in a high attrition rate from the first to third year of the project. In addition, the evaluation design did not include control or comparison groups, making it difficult to attribute changes directly to the project.

Key findings

The process evaluation revealed:

- There was a high level of staff turnover, presenting challenges to the continuity and leadership of the project in each school.
- It was helpful to have experienced staff members and students who were familiar with the project explain the main premises and goals to new teachers and partners.
- The use of a language of respect was very important to the success of the project.
- Parents, businesses and community partners were directly involved in the implementation of the project, strengthening the success of the project overall.

The outcome evaluation indicated:

- There was an increase in community involvement within the schools and an overall increase in the respectful behaviour of students.
- Significant progress was made in the development of students' non-violent responses to anger.
- There were modest signs of improvement with respect to enhanced learning, employability skills, values, behaviours, attitudes towards school and the creation of productive partnerships.



- Opinions of the teachers in the pilot schools were mixed with respect to how much progress had been made in increasing student resiliency, academic achievement and parental involvement.

Lessons learned

A number of valuable lessons were learned in the project:

- Goal setting activities helped students articulate their needs for learning and development.
- The use of a common language of respect was important when building a culture of respect in the school and community.
- The inclusion of parents, business and community partners had a positive impact on the behaviour of students.
- The project showed considerable potential for addressing many of the risk factors associated with crime and anti-social behaviours among children and youth at-risk.
- User-friendly data collection methods and assessment tools helped teachers and administrators make informed decisions about the project/students. They recommended these methods for similar projects.

Conclusion

It is well known that there are significant links between youth and adult offending behaviour. This knowledge justifies using interventions to target the specific risk factors associated with crime and anti-social behaviour in young children.

Together We Light the Way is a promising model to prevent crime and anti-social behaviours among young children in schools.

Models such as the Together We Light the Way are more successful when they combine a variety of partners and approaches and simultaneously target multiple risk factors associated with crime.

For more information or to receive a copy of the final evaluation report please contact the National Crime Prevention Centre at 1-877-302-6272, or visit our website at: www.publicsafety.gc.ca/ncpc