

LRE in Non-School Settings

While the most common site for law-related education programs has been the public school, LRE has also been offered in a number of other settings, including community programs (such as after-school programs, 4-H clubs, and the like) and the juvenile justice system (in diversion programs, detention centers, and juvenile correction facilities). To date, the research on non-school applications of LRE is sparse, as this section reveals. The studies reported here suffered from some of the same flaws as the studies that looked at impacts of LRE in school settings. However, the fact that virtually all of the studies reported some positive impacts—whether on knowledge, attitudes, behavior, or risk factors—suggests that LRE does hold promise for use in settings outside of schools. More and more rigorous research is needed to more clearly identify LRE's impacts in juvenile justice and community-based programs.

South Carolina Department of Youth Services. (1986). *Juveniles and the Law Diversion Program: Preliminary Evaluation Report*. Unpublished Report. Columbia, SC: South Carolina Department of Youth Services, Planning and Information Section.

The South Carolina Department of Youth Services evaluated the effects of a juvenile diversion program for youth entering the state's juvenile justice system. The program was developed to provide an LRE alternative for first time juvenile property/public order offenders who otherwise would risk judicial processing. The evaluation of the program showed (1) measurable gains in knowledge of legal concepts; (2) a measurable improvement in recidivism (defined as a new referral to court following program completion) rates among program students—7 percent overall compared to the nine-month rate of 36 percent for children in all diversion programs combined; and (3) a modest reduction in prosecution rates for property/public order offenders in target counties.

Buzzell, T., and R. Wright. (1992). *Law-Related Education in Juvenile Corrections: Evaluation Results from the Iowa State Training School*. Unpublished Paper. Des Moines, IA: Iowa Center for Law-Related Education, Drake University.

In an evaluation of an LRE program instituted at the Iowa State Training School for Boys (a secure facility for adjudicated juvenile offenders), Buzzell and Wright found that instruction in LRE positively influenced risk factors commonly correlated with delinquent behavior. The results suggested that LRE could play a positive role in juvenile correctional programs.

Fox, J., K. Minor, and W. Pelkey. (1993). *The Relationship Between Law-Related Education Diversion and Juvenile Offenders= Social- and Self-Perceptions*. Unpublished Paper. Richmond, KY: Eastern Kentucky University.

This study focused on an LRE diversion alternative in Kentucky's Designated Court Worker Program. All delinquents and status offenders, age 12 to 17, who meet the general criteria for diversion are eligible to participate in the LRE option. The main purpose of the LRE diversion program is to teach attitudes and perceptions that are inconsistent with delinquent behavior. The study obtained data on the juveniles' perceptions of themselves, their parents, neighbors, best friends, judges, teachers, and police. Comparing these offenders' perceptions with those of a quasi-experimental control group of high school students revealed favorable outcomes correlated with LRE participation. Of especial note was the change among the divertees' perceptions of police. The recidivism rate of the juvenile divertees after one year was also low.

Buzzell, T. (1994). *An Evaluation of Teens, Crime and the Community in a Juvenile Diversion Setting*. Unpublished Paper. Washington, DC: National Crime Prevention Council

Buzzell's study sought to determine the impact of a *Teens, Crime, and the Community* program implemented as a community-based educational intervention for selected juveniles who had frequently appeared before the County Juvenile Court. The evaluation was designed to measure changes in student knowledge of the law and rule-based concepts and to assess whether students incorporated any of the pro-social skills taught in TCC into their behavior patterns. The evaluation suggested that TCC participants exhibited a greater understanding of (1) the purposes of law and the processes of justice; (2) empathy for crime victims; (3) links between law and behavior; and (4) the consequences of behavior. The study also indicated that participating juveniles learned a number of important pro-social skills, including (1) conflict management; (2) problem solving in groups; (3) confidence in conversations with adults; and (4) for some, the use of skills for developing alternatives and thinking about the consequences of certain actions and choices in conflict-laden situations.

Wright, R., T. Buzzell, S. Wright, and F. Gay. (1994). Promoting Cognitive Development Among Young Offenders Through Pre-Trial Intervention. In N. Pallone, ed. *Young Victims, Young Offenders: Current Issues in Policy and Treatment*. New York: Haworth Press.

This study assessed the effectiveness of an intervention program for youthful offenders in Iowa based on a cognitive approach to rehabilitation. The diversion program for selected first-time, low-risk youthful offenders (ages 16 and 17 adjudicated as adults and 18 and 19 year olds) included seven components, including LRE. The study examined the impact of the intervention on (1) attitudes toward the criminal justice process; (2) sense of personal accomplishment and ability; and (3) sensitivity to the views of others. The strongest result was an increase in positive attitudes toward the criminal justice system (e.g., police, courts, and probation officers). The researchers also found that there were negative changes in the other two areas of examination (i.e., sense of personal accomplishment and sensitivity to the views of others).

Gannon, C. (2000). *Fresh Lifelines for Youth Executive Summary*. Unpublished Report. San Jose, CA: Fresh Lifelines for Youth Project.

The Fresh Lifelines for Youth project (FLY) is a diversion program for youth at risk or involved in the juvenile justice system. Youth ages 12-17 are referred to the program by a probation officer, neighborhood accountability board, juvenile court, or school officials. The program seeks to increase students' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavior with respect to the legal system. Its components include an LRE course (two hours weekly for 15 weeks), a mentoring program, and helping young people connect with social services they and their families need. Evaluation instruments were completed by 40 youth who have gone through the program. The results suggest that the program has a positive impact on youth's behavior, their knowledge of the law, and their thinking about moral and legal dilemmas. In addition, the youth participating overwhelmingly enjoyed the program and felt they benefited from their participation.

Wells, J.B., K. I. Minor, and J.W. Fox. (2000). *A Descriptive Study of Kentucky's 1998-99 Teen Court Program*. Unpublished Report. Richmond, KY: Eastern Kentucky University.

The researchers collected data from participants in the Kentucky Teen Court program during the 1998-1999 year; data collected included pre/posttests of knowledge and attitudes among teen court volunteers and defendants. Exit evaluations were also conducted with these participants, their parents, and site coordinators and judges. Information on teen court subjects and sentences was collected, and field observations were conducted. The researchers also collected and analyzed data on recidivism for defendants sentenced in the preceding four years of Teen Court.

Among the findings reported by the researchers are increased knowledge among volunteers, but no changes in attitudes toward teen court for the group, who had relatively positive attitudes prior to participation. Defendants' attitudes toward teen court were more moderate and were lower after participation than before. However, in the exit evaluations, defendants and their parents were generally positive about the teen attorneys, the way in which they were treated, and the sentence. Expressed concerns tended to relate to problems with the process by which the teen courts were operated. Defendants were less positive about police than volunteers, both during the pre- and posttest. The most frequently imposed sentences were community service, letter of apology, jury duty, essay preparation, and workshops. Of the defendants in the previous four years of teen court, roughly two-thirds completed their sentences; approximately 27 percent had at least one subsequent court appearance for a new offense in the year following their sentencing in teen court. Defendants who were male, had prior records, and were sentenced to curfew or received community service were more likely to have a new offense than other defendants.

Ferrante, J., and K. Vise. (2001). *CDW's Use and Evaluation of TCC Lesson Plans*. Highland Heights, KY: Northern Kentucky University, Applied Cultural Studies Program.

The researchers surveyed 71 Kentucky educators who had received training in Teens, Crime, and the Community. Most of those surveyed were court-designated workers who use LRE in a diversion setting. The purpose of the survey was to learn more about these educators' use of the curriculum and their satisfaction.

The most commonly taught topics in the curriculum are shoplifting, alcohol use, and teens and crime; the least used lessons focus on diversity and bias and suspicions and stereotypes. The number of lessons used by educators varies, with about one-fifth of the trained educators not having used any lessons to date and a small number using all 26 lessons; the average is 8.4 lessons. Overall, respondents report that the lessons help them meet instructional needs but that they do make some adaptations in teaching the lessons (the nature of the adaptations was not determined). More than 70 percent of the educators who have taught TCC lessons have made use of community resource persons in connection with the curriculum; 28.6 percent of those educators have implemented youth-led action projects, an important element of the TCC curriculum.

Most respondents rated youth receptiveness to the curriculum as positive or very positive. A number of CDWs reported that particular lessons were especially useful with specific populations; generally, the lessons cited were those dealing with the types of crimes with which the populations had been involved.