D.A.R.E. (Drug abuse resistance education) : perceptions of teachers, principals, and school resource officers

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Lethbridge, Alta. : University of Lethbridge, Faculty of Education, 2002
Dedication

To my father

James Gallie Fisher
(1935-1999)

His life was an intense palette of genuine optimism and critical appraisals.

He provided me with the inspiration to complete this study.
This study employs interviews to measure the perceptions of sixteen teachers, nine school principals, and seven School Resource Officers on the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program, offered to grade six students in one small (population approximately 70,000) city in western Canada. Perceptions in three areas are examined: curricular content, program delivery, and efficacy.

Subjects overwhelmingly viewed the curricular content favourably. Similarly, there was strong agreement that the program was well delivered. The efficacy of the program was judged less positively; however, this did not mitigate the subjects’ strong desire to continue implementation of the program. These results are consistent with the research literature on DARE which documents the popularity of the program, but acknowledges that it appears to have limited effects upon reducing student drug use.

The results of this study are used to examine five options for delivering an in-school program for preventing or reducing drug abuse and violence among students. The options explored range from retaining the DARE program in its current form, to eliminating it, reforming it, implementing an alternative program, or designing an entirely new drug and violence prevention program. The conclusion drawn is that the DARE program should be withdrawn and replaced with an entirely new drug and violence prevention program and curriculum specific to community realities and needs.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) is delivered exclusively by uniformed police officers and ultimately seeks to prevent or reduce drug and violence involvement in youths. The program has been in Lethbridge Schools since the 1992-93 school year. The focus of this study is to measure the perceptions of teachers, school principals, and School Resource Officers (SROs) in Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada, on this international program.

While studies of the program are numerous, the vast majority were undertaken in the United States. Until now, a study of the Lethbridge program had not been undertaken. This study utilizes interviews to measure the perceptions of the DARE program held by teachers, school principals and SROs. The data gathered identifies areas of strength and concern, and makes recommendations for improving the program.

Impetus for the Study

Schools, whether by choice or default, have become increasingly involved in providing more than traditional educational essentials. The demands that have been levied upon schools have taxed teachers, principals, and students alike. Schools are pushed and pulled as they are called upon as agents for political, societal, economical, and behavioural change. We must find efficient, effective, and ethical ways to respond to these new demands as schools continue to expand the curriculum and still fulfil their traditional academic preparation roles.

I have been a police officer for twelve years, with a little more than three years served in the role of SRO and certified DARE Instructor. In the course of my duties as a patrol officer and a SRO, I often heard the message that education is the key to prevention. DARE is founded precisely on this principle, and also serves as an entry
point for police involvement in schools. Today, police are in schools and more than ever serve as role models, legal resources, and enforcers of laws.

Studying teachers', school principals', and SROs' perceptions of the DARE program is one way of examining a rapidly growing educational component that involves police as educators. Beyond this, DARE is the single largest formalized police-school educational partnership in existence today, providing programming in more than fifty countries worldwide (Appendix A). DARE also is one of the most popular police prevention programs, with seemingly endless support from the community. Finally, DARE has yet to be formally studied in Lethbridge.

My fascination with the DARE program began in earnest during my initial DARE training in Washington State during the fall of 1996, where I was co-recipient of the honour of top DARE officer in the class. Before this training, I generally accepted the notion that the police were experts when it came to dealing with drugs and therefore should not have any problems in the transition to being instructors on the subject. However, my attitude changed during my DARE training and I no longer believe that the transition is so easy. I have also become more reflective in terms of appraising the role of police in schools, and no longer take for granted the role the police have now come to occupy in schools, specifically as educators of youth. I now wrestle with the level of involvement police have come to assume as educators and believe this needs to be reconciled on an ongoing basis.

I had formulated tentative opinions regarding the nature, value, strengths, and areas for improvement of the DARE program, the largest of all police in-school education programs. This was perhaps the greatest impetus for this study. I needed to further examine the program that I had become so connected with, a program that has such unconditional school, police and public support.
Regardless of whether one agrees or disagrees with the need for police in schools, there is no questioning communities' desires to prevent drug abuse and violence among their youth. Perhaps that is why law enforcement officials, educators and service groups all rally around the extremely popular and resilient DARE program. DARE seems to have at least partially fulfilled this apparent public need to prevent humans from harming themselves. There seems to be no end in sight for the program.

Since this appears to be the case, I felt it was incumbent upon me to look more closely at the program. It directly affects the community, students, and the police. The only question initially was how to approach this study. Two major avenues were considered. First, surveying students was considered. Second, the idea of exploring base line data with respect to teen drug use, before and after completing of DARE, was entertained. These two approaches have obvious merit but, like all studies, also have some limitations.

I quickly realized that I had reservations about talking to students (some of whom could possibly have been in my own DARE classes) to obtain candid feedback about the program. Perhaps I was underestimating students, but there were studies that solicit student input. The findings of these studies generally offer overwhelming support for the program and the officers implementing it. However, the data invariably takes the form of anecdotal comments and I am troubled by the implicit bias in the questions that tend to be asked.

Secondly, a more quantitative study would prove to be a challenge in my situation. Baseline data regarding drug use trends among youth in Lethbridge before the DARE program was implemented had not been compiled. While I could have gone...
outside the community and drawn some conclusions from studies conducted in other cities, I was much more interested in examining the program with which I had been so intimately involved for a good part of my career as a police officer.

After consultation with my thesis supervisor, the solution became clear and exciting. I would conduct in-depth interviews with those directly involved with the DARE program in which I had participated in. These interviews would produce a richness of data not commonly associated with the likes of surveys or questionnaires. Police instructors, classroom teachers, and school principals would be the subjects in a study comprehensively exploring the issues surrounding the specific areas of curricular content, delivery strategies, and perceived effectiveness. I realized that such a study of DARE in Lethbridge would offer a rich opportunity to explore the expertise of some very diverse, yet connected, stakeholders in the DARE program. My hope is to contribute to the existing literature while producing productive recommendations for the DARE program and stimulating future study. As Dewey pointed out: 

"...every new traveller may get for his own journey the benefits of the results of others' exploration without the waste of energy and loss of time involved in their wanderings—wanderings which he himself would be obliged to repeat were it not for just the assistance of the objective and generalized records of their performances. That which we call a science or study puts the net product of past experience in the form which makes it most available for the future" (Dewey, 1956, p.20).

Overview of the DARE Program

The DARE program began in 1983 in Los Angeles as part of a collaborative effort between the Los Angeles Unified School Districts and the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD). The program came at a time when the LAPD was driving through crack houses in tanks and Nancy Reagan was reaching out to inner city youth in a kinder, gentler way with a “Just say no” message. The program was the creation of now retired police chief of Daryl Gates. Gates was greatly assisted in this creation by personnel from the Los Angeles Unified School Districts and, in particular, Ruth Rich.
The program took hold in California and quickly spread across America. It is currently directed by a body known as DARE America.

DARE America oversees almost all aspects of program delivery to more than 75% of all U.S. school districts. It also assists with quality control for over 50 countries that now deliver the DARE program. Critics have often viewed this intense quality control as almost ‘cult like’. Having experienced the training first hand, I can certainly attest that DARE America is very cognizant of quality control. Some police officers who are no longer practicing DARE officers reflect on their DARE training as more indoctrination than instruction. However, all agree that they emerged with a complete understanding of the program and the importance of maintaining the program’s integrity.

The DARE program essentially began with a Grade 5/6 “core” curriculum designed to “prevent or reduce drug abuse and violence among children and youth” (DARE Officer’s Guide, 1994, p. vii). DARE has since expanded to include a K-4 curriculum, a junior and senior high curriculum, a special education curriculum, and a parent program. The grade 5/6 or “core” curriculum is the focus of this study. The “core” curriculum is the only component currently being delivered in Lethbridge, and the only one which has ever been offered (with the exception of a one-time piloted session of the “parent” program to twelve Lethbridge residents in the summer of 1999, with which I assisted).

The core curriculum is designed to be delivered in one weekly lesson, 45 to 60 minutes in duration, over the course of 17 consecutive weeks to grade five or six students. According to DARE Canada (http://www.powertm.com/dare.htm) the DARE core curriculum has five main objectives. These objectives are consistent with DARE America and are as follows:
1. To provide the skills for recognizing and resisting social pressures to experiment with tobacco, alcohol and drugs.

2. To help enhance self-esteem.

3. To teach positive alternatives to substance use.

4. To develop skills in risk assessment and decision-making.

5. To build interpersonal and communication skills

Interestingly, none of these objectives deal with violence prevention or reduction. Further, each of the lessons is designed with a specific concept, purpose and objective clearly stated in the DARE Officer’s Guide (1994, see Appendix B). The specific elements, teaching methods, and key lesson procedures of these lessons will be elaborated throughout this study.

DARE in Lethbridge

The DARE program in Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada, began in the spring of 1993 and was delivered by a single DARE trained SRO from the Lethbridge Police Force. The program was piloted in six schools from both Lethbridge School District Number 51 (public) and the Holy Spirit Roman Catholic Separate Regional Division Number 4 (separate). This was the first attempt at delivery of the DARE program in the province of Alberta, and among the first in all of Canada. By the fall of 1993, twelve schools were receiving the program, which was still being delivered by a single SRO.

In the fall of 1994, every grade six class in the city was participating in the program. The program was still being delivered by one uniformed SRO and would remain so until the spring of 1995, when a second SRO member would become DARE trained and join the program. A third SRO received DARE training and joined in program delivery in the fall of 1995.
Teaching the DARE program and the subsequent 'spin offs' in service requests from schools accounted for the bulk of the officers' time. By January of 1997, the SRO program needed to be expanded to facilitate duties beyond the educational component of the DARE program. These spin offs, in terms of service requests, are part of the massive appeal of DARE. Once the program is implemented, schools are assured of the presence of a uniformed police officer on a regular basis for at least seventeen weeks. This police presence and expansion of services would become known as the ALERT program (Assisted Learning Environment Response Team).

The ALERT program was originally designed in 1995 and 1996 by Constable Merle Fuller, on behalf of the Lethbridge Police Service. Constable Fuller’s document addressed the need to redefine service delivery to at risk youth and served as a proposal to the Alberta Ministry of Children’s Services. The ALERT program called for a “proactive, holistic approach focused on intervention, education and networked community resources” (Lethbridge Police Service, 1996, p.3). The proposal suggested looking beyond overt behaviours to the source of the behavioural problems. It sought to achieve a directional change in the behaviours of students before they formally entered either the criminal justice or child welfare systems.

The ALERT program essentially consists of assigning a police officer to each of Lethbridge’s junior high schools. The plan calls for members of the Lethbridge Police Service and the Chinook Health Region (registered nurses) to join both Lethbridge school divisions in a concerted effort at service delivery. The police officers are responsible for elementary schools that feed into the junior high schools as well as sharing one of the three corresponding high schools with a second SRO. Specific police
Responsibilities are grouped into the following four categories: education, liaison, investigation, and counselling. Police do not act alone in these efforts but formally enlist the support of both Lethbridge school divisions, the local regional health authority (CHR), as well as informal support from a variety of community agencies. Despite this increased breadth of services, the DARE program remained very much intact in Lethbridge. It was the cornerstone of ALERT's educational component.

By the start of the ALERT program in 1997, six Lethbridge Police Service officers were trained in the DARE program and certified as instructors. These officers provided program delivery to eighteen elementary schools and some thirty-five grade six classes in both the public and separate systems. To date the ALERT program and its DARE educational component remain unchanged and, like their acronyms, firmly in place and recognizable.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature on the DARE program is extensive, diverse, and comprised almost entirely of research conducted in the United States of America. That literature can usefully be grouped into three themes, with corresponding sub-themes. One theme is curriculum and delivery. Within this theme, there is a focus on content and design. A second theme is that of efficacy. This theme accounts for the majority of the literature on the DARE program. Sub-themes within efficacy include student drug use, student knowledge about drugs, and student attitudes toward drugs. Popularity of the DARE program—among students, teachers, school principals and police—is the final theme.

This chapter will address each of these themes by offering a summary of findings. Concluding remarks based on the literature that has been reviewed will summarize the section.

Curriculum and Delivery

The DARE program represents a collaborative effort on the part of police and schools to deliver a curriculum that was jointly designed by educators and law enforcement officials. It is a drug and violence prevention program, the delivery of which is characterized by cooperative learning strategies, decision-making models, and a form of role-play.

Some of the literature focuses more on outcomes than specific strategies. Studies by Berg (1997) and Donnemeyer (1998) found that teachers perceived the revised 1994 DARE curriculum extremely favourably. In particular, teachers felt that role-play made the lesson effective, with concepts being reinforced almost immediately (Berg, 1997). The level of student comprehension was also cited as “favourable” in Green’s (1992) qualitative study of teaching strategies. Journals, kept on two Knoxville officers over a three-month period, suggested an increased student comprehension that resulted from the
quality of the officers' presentations. These presentations employed cognitive teaching strategies that included an information-processing model.

On the other hand, a five year study by Clayton, Cattarello and Johnstone (1996) suggests that the DARE program's curricular effects were short lived. Furthermore, the lessons learned decayed over time, thus suggesting a need for a more "robust" program that extends beyond the "core" curriculum for grade 5/6 students. Rosenbaum, Flewelling, Bailey, Ringwalt, and Wilkinson's (1994) longitudinal study also suggested that DARE had no long term effects upon student drug use.

The need for more than a 'one shot' prevention program is strongly supported in the literature (Berg, 1997; Clayton, Cattarello & Johnstone, 1996; Donnermeyer & Davis 1998; Dukes, Stein & Ullman, 1997; Gorman, 1998; Hansen & McNeal, 1997; Silva, 1994; Wysong, Aniskiewicz & Wright, 1994). This conclusion is also supported by a DARE America study conducted in Wisconsin (1998) which suggests there is a need for ongoing programming that runs from K-12 (http://www.dare-america.com/index2.htm%991231).

Hansen and McNeal (1997) were less supportive, concluding that DARE needs curriculum enhancements, particularly those that have the potential to actually "mediate substance use and other problem behaviours." A less program-specific recommendation by Beck (1998) suggests that any drug prevention curriculum that is too rigid and contains strictly a "just say no" message is flawed when compared to more flexible knowledge-based programs that consider a broad range of contextual differences.

Others advocate a more inclusive approach. Central here is the recommendation for parental involvement. Berg (1997) and Blasik and Belsito (1993) suggest that this is
an underutilised and important key to program success. This is a valid criticism, as the only component of the DARE program that involves parents is when parents sign a letter granting permission for their child’s participation. This occurs in the very first lesson, and is the last time that parents participate in the program until the graduation ceremony. One has to recognize the influence that parents have on the decisions their children make. Yet this was not the case until DARE America’s president, Glen Levant, produced his 1998 book for parents, *Keeping Kids Drug Free: DARE Official Parent’s Guide*. This book was written to provide the “facts” about drugs that all parents need to know if they hope to talk “honestly and directly” with their kids about drugs. The book is not part of the DARE program package, but apparently can be purchased. There is neither mention nor incorporation of this book in the Lethbridge delivery of the DARE program.

Finally, Donnermeyer’s (1998) study of teachers’ and principals’ perceptions found that the audio-visual material used in the DARE program was the lowest rated program element.

**Efficacy**

In the literature, the question of program efficacy focuses on participants’ incidents of drug use, attitudes toward drugs, and knowledge about drugs. These are the three aspects that are covered in this part of the review of the literature.

First, it must be appreciated that much of the literature does not support the proposition that participation in the Dare program reduces the incidence of drug use among students. Becker, Agopian and Yeh’s study (1992) found that grade five students who received the DARE program core curriculum maintained their existing levels of drug use. Similar results were noted in a five-year longitudinal study by Clayton and colleagues (1996) that showed the DARE program to have limited effects on drug use.
after program completion, beginning in the first year until the fifth year. Dukes, Ullman and Stein (1996), McNeal and Hansen (1995), the Surgeon General (U.S. Department, 2001), and Wysong, Aniskiewicz and Wright (1994) also discovered no significant difference in drug use in students who received the DARE program. Lynam, and a group of researchers (1999) ten year longitudinal study also revealed that DARE had no lasting effect relating to drug use, resistance to peer pressure, and enhancement of self-esteem.

Ennett, Tobler, Ringwalt, and Flewelling’s (1994) meta analysis found that DARE’s short-term effectiveness for reducing or preventing drug use was “small”, and even less than the more interactive programs to which they compared them. Mays’ (1998) study indicated a short-term effectiveness, with grade six student test scores regarding general drug knowledge, improving upon receiving DARE instruction. Unfortunately, Mays’ study did not find a significant difference between DARE and non-DARE students in grade five, six, seven, and eight. Van Burgh, Render, and Moon’s (1995) study of grade eight students who participated in DARE for more than 10 weeks found via a teacher-made questionnaire that results were directly opposite of intended program objectives. In fact students showed a “greater tolerance toward drug and alcohol use by family and friends and had less faith that DARE would help them make wiser choices in the future” (p. 4). Kochis’ (1995) study cited little empirical evidence of success in reducing drug use among DARE participants. Finally, Strusinski and Gomez’s (1996) study of ninth grade Florida students found no significant differences in drug use between students that received the program in grade five and those who did not.

However, more hopeful results are also to be found in the literature. DeJong’s (1987) self-report study of grade seven students who participated in the DARE program in grade six suggests significantly lower use of alcohol, cigarettes, and other drugs. However, this effect was documented only over a one-year period. Less direct evidence of DARE’s effectiveness is provided by Donnemeyer and Davis’ (1998) study. That study revealed cumulatively lower levels of drug involvement for those grade eleven students who participated in various drug prevention programs, which included DARE.
All in all, when efficacy is viewed from the perspective of DARE's success in reducing the incidence of students' drug use, Gorman's observation that we have not yet developed effective techniques that are requisite for school-based drug prevention programming seem to be echoed. Programs continue, however, despite a lack of evidence to support their efficacy (Gorman, 1998). Finally, Sherman, Gottfredson, MacKenzie, Eck, Reuter, and Bushway's (1998) U.S. government-sponsored review found that DARE is not an effective educational tool from a crime prevention perspective.

When efficacy is viewed from the perspective of DARE's ability to improve students' attitudes toward drugs a mixed, but more encouraging, picture emerges. Studies focused more on knowledge-based constructs reveal that DARE produces more favourable attitudes toward anti-drug messages, improved social skills, and more sophisticated general knowledge about drugs (Clayton, Cattarello, and Johnstone (1996); Dukes, Ullman, and Stein, 1995; Harmon, 1993).

A comparison of DARE and non DARE students by Wysong, Aniskiewicz and Wright (1994) noted a decline in positive attitudes toward police, and an unwillingness to condemn friends' consumption of alcohol, in the non DARE group. Both groups of students, however, felt that DARE would have no "lasting" influence on their drug-related attitudes or behaviours. Rosenbaum and Hanson (1998) attest to the notion that attitudes about drug use often change upon reaching adolescence. Furthermore DARE, like many other prevention programs, fosters the notion that any use of drugs is dangerous and constitutes deviant behaviour. However, these views may be inconsistent with students' observations and beliefs. When students observe their classmates
‘experimenting’ with so-called ‘soft drugs’ without any apparent immediate trauma, students may be much less likely to view the information DARE provides as credible.

A study not yet completed is Perry and colleagues (2000) proposed study of 24 Minnesota middle or junior high schools. Students involved in the DARE middle/junior high school curriculum are to be the focus. Although the study does not involve the DARE “core” curriculum, the findings will still be interesting as the program being studied is a modification of DARE developed to combat criticisms of the core curriculum’s ‘one shot’ efforts. The study describes the “DARE PLUS” program as a "safety net" for adolescents because it creates “opportunities” for peers, parents, teachers, police officers, and community members to provide a consistent message about avoiding drugs and violence. This more comprehensive program has hopefully moved toward addressing potential concerns regarding efficacy. Unfortunately the results of the study will not be known for some time.

Popularity

The notion of law enforcement agencies and educators working together to prevent drug abuse and violence with youth is viewed favourably by virtually everyone. Few would disagree with the idea of keeping youth safe from the ills of drug abuse and violence. Unfortunately, according to the literature, DARE is often reported to have little or no effect in this regard. Nevertheless, the program’s popularity is resounding.

Students love the program and the police officers instructing the program, and students generally wish the program could last longer. Such favourable perceptions are reported widely (e.g., Blasik & Belsito, 1993; Curtis, 1999; Fife, 1994; Green, 1992;
Palumbo & Ferguson, 1995; and Wysong, Aniskiewicz & Wright, 1994). Teachers also express positive comments about the officers involved (Berg, 1997; Blasik & Belsito, 1993; Donnermeyer & Wurschmidt, 1997). School principals also note that the program has significant impact and is of high quality (Blasik & Belsito, 1993; Donnermeyer & Wurschmidt, 1997). Police also view the program favourably, or at least the DARE instructors and supervisors do. Both believe that the positive public relations that result from delivering the program are worth the costs incurred (Blasik & Belsito, 1993).

Rohrbach (1996) observes that DARE has a “preponderance” for heavily marketed drug prevention concepts. Van Burgh, Render and Moon (1995) found that, in spite of the negative findings regarding efficacy, the program maintains extremely high levels of school and community support. So much so that promoters are reluctant to re-evaluate or redesign the program.

This reluctance has raised the ire of many opposition groups, most of which can be found on the Internet. Opposition groups are becoming politically active and vocal in guiding school boards’ decisions regarding drug prevention curricula. One can only hope that McNeal and Hansen (1995) are not entirely accurate when they say that it would be better to spend money on effective programs but, “having programs that work will always be less important than having programs that are available” (p.142).

Finally, one of the more germane pieces of research which parallels the Lethbridge study to some degree is Donnermeyer’s (1998) study of teachers’ and principals’ perceptions of DARE officers. The study utilized surveys of the two respondent groups and focused on the instructing officers’ abilities to communicate with students, and students’ attitudes toward police. Few viewed any aspect negatively,
suggestion that DARE benefited from the symbolism politics of the high profile public program. Even more important was the finding that the educators’ perceptions of the officers were directly related to the relationship they shared, not simply the quality of the curriculum. Donnermeyer (1998) also found that younger teachers viewed the officers more favourably than senior teachers, who were more critical of the officers’ performance.

Summary

To date, the research literature on the DARE curriculum has generally reported the program to be extremely popular, but documents limited effects upon drug use. There is greater efficacy with respect to student attitudes toward drugs, awareness about drugs, and positive social outlook or “pro-social” bonding. The literature generally agrees that there is a need for a much more flexible and comprehensive prevention program that extends beyond grade five or six, and which builds upon themes. Greater attention to individual differences and contextual issues would also be supported. Finally there is a need for direct parental involvement in the program.

The bottom line for DARE seems to be the unquestioned popularity of the program. Both critics and proponents alike will acknowledge the popularity of DARE. This begs the question: Does it really matter how effective the program is? One may like to think that it does, but clearly it does not. DARE continues to be the single largest police delivered educational programs in the world today. Police departments devote countless resources (Lethbridge devotes nearly the same amount of human resources to program delivery as it does to a normal patrol shift) yet the literature, although mixed, generally suggests that the program is ineffective in reducing drug use. DARE is a
testament to the popularity of symbolic politics with respect to drug prevention education in an era when many police departments' resources are stretched with respect to uniformed personnel. It remains a model drug prevention program in many stakeholders' views.
Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter identifies the purpose of this study and the research strategy employed. Detailed biographical information on the sample is provided, and the limitations of the study identified.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to ascertain the perceptions of school teachers, school principals, and School Resource Officers involved in the DARE program. Specifically, perceptions on curricular content, program delivery (including teaching strategies), and program efficacy are investigated. The data gathered through interviews is used to identify areas of strength and concern, and to make recommendations for improving the DARE program. [Although DARE suggests that the program has both a drug and violence prevention and or reduction focus, this study will concentrate only on the drug prevention component. The drug aspect is clearly the main focus of the program as supported by the literature, and unless otherwise stated it will be the key focus of this study.]

Research Strategy

The study consists of interviews with sixteen teachers, nine principals, and seven School Resource Officers in Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada. Interviews were conducted during the fall of 2000. Teachers and principals were selected from both the separate and public school districts. Selection was random and stratified.

The total population of principals in Lethbridge schools which offer the DARE program is eighteen. Twelve of these principals are in public schools, six are in separate schools. With one exception, the DARE program in Lethbridge schools is offered only in grade 6. The single exception is a grade 5 offering in one school; that exception is not included in this study.

Teachers were selected from a total population of 35 persons from both the public and separate system. This population represents the total number of current classes receiving the DARE program, and includes 25 public and 10 separate school classes. The
total population for the Lethbridge School Resource Officers involved in the DARE program, past and present, numbers 10, of which I am one. Two of these SROs were not selected to participate, as they were in their first year as a SRO and had not yet completed an entire program of instruction in the schools. Of course, I also excluded myself from the sample.

As a rule, sample size is generally related to the size of the population from which one draws. Smaller populations usually require a 30% sampling ratio for a meaningful examination (Neuman, 1997). The sample ratio for principals in this study is 50%, for teachers it is 46% and for SROs it is 70%. A table of random numbers (Neuman, 1997) was utilized to select the samples for principals and teachers.

The principal and teacher samples are further defined by stratification, to reflect an equal representation for both separate and public school populations within each group. The stratification occurred naturally when the random numbers table was utilized.

Qualitative research techniques were used to interpret, organize, and analyse the data that was obtained from interviews. The interviews were flexible to allow for richness of data, but followed a standard outline to ensure consistency. The interviews were guided by a set of specific questions that can be found in Appendix D. First, the purpose of the study was explained to the interviewees. Next the selection process for subjects was explained, as was my background and the purpose of the study. The subjects were informed that both school districts would have copies of the results made available to them upon completion of the study. Finally, the guarantee of confidentiality was again reinforced. The body of the interview questions includes biographical information as well as questions relating to curricular content program delivery,
perceived efficacy, and any other area of interest the respondents had specific to the program. Interviews were one hour in duration on average. Probing or clarifying questions were used to stimulate expansion of salient points within specific categories of inquiry.

Biographical/professional data obtained on the interviewees includes details such as specific educational duties, years of experience, and years of involvement with the DARE program (see Appendix D). All selected interviewees were sent a letter of consent requesting their participation (see Appendix C).

Professional Profiles of Sample

The following profiles provide an overview of the three interview sample groups, while still respecting the participants' anonymity.

School Resource Officers. The first group of individuals interviewed were School Resource Officers (SROs). The total sample size for the Lethbridge SROs involved in this study is seven. The typical SRO interviewed has an average of 12.14 years of police service, with five being in their eleventh calendar year at the time of the interview. The average number of years of service in the SRO unit was 3.5 years, with the most experienced SRO having five years of experience and the newest member having 1.5 years. All but one are male police officers.

The mean number of DARE programs each police office taught is 29.5. This figure was somewhat skewed by two members who at one time provided instruction to the entire city on their own. The average without these two perhaps more accurately reflects the current SRO reality, with 16.4 serving as an average number of completed DARE classes, with the median number being 23. (I also fall in line with the latter number, now having about 12 years of policing experience with close to four years as a School Resource Officer and having completed 18 programs to date.)
Almost all of the classes were completed in elementary school settings, with one being completed in a combined elementary junior high school. (At the time of the study, I also provided the DARE program to two elementary schools and one combined elementary junior high school.) Mean class size, based on the estimates of all the SROs, is 24.66 students per class.

Six of the seven SROs taught in the public system. Two of these officers had experience in both the public and separate systems, but with a far greater concentration of classes in the public system. One officer taught exclusively in the separate school system. (I taught almost exclusively in the separate system, with the exception of providing occasional shift relief for SROs in the public system.) Overall, the SROs are quite similar in terms of policing experience and SRO experience.

The SROs share a similar educational background. All are graduates of the Law Enforcement Program at Lethbridge Community College. One of the seven completed an undergraduate university degree in a related area after securing employment with the police service. Another was in the process of working toward an undergraduate degree at the time of the study. Another had completed some university course work. Finally, one of the three had completed several graduate level courses and was nearing completion of a graduate program.

*Teachers.* The total sample size for the Lethbridge teachers involved in this study is 16: 12 public and 4 separate. The average number of years of teaching experience is just under 16 years of service, with three and 29 years of service reflecting the lows and the highs for the group. Five of the 16 participants are male, or 31% of the sample. (The
total population for male DARE teachers to draw upon for the study was nine of 35, or 26%.)

All of the participants taught the ‘core’ subjects in their schools, with many also teaching French, music, art, religion, and physical education. All of the teachers were involved in the DARE program by virtue of their assignment to a grade six class. The average teacher had been exposed to 4.7 DARE programs, with one completed program being the least and seven the most. The average teacher also had observed, on average, 3.4 SROs as DARE instructors. The average school size is approximately 365 students, with 489 and 150 being the highest and the lowest number of students.

Principals. The total sample size for the Lethbridge principals involved in this study is nine: six public and three separate. The average principal’s experience was just less than 17 years, with 10 being the least and 21 the most. In addition to administrative experience, the group had on average just under 11 years of teaching experience. Combining teaching and administrative service, the average principal brought more than 27 years of professional experience to this study. An average of seven completed DARE programs were delivered under the administrative tenure of each principal.

Limitations

This study employs the use of interviews to capture perceptions as supported by anecdotal evidence. The possibility of interviewer bias can never be discounted, despite best efforts to maintain continuity in tone, appearance, and expressions. The location of the interviews may have also affected responses, as the majority were conducted during the respondents’ work-day (either during or at the end of the day) and at their place of
work. The study is also limited to the Lethbridge public and separate school systems and obviously reflects this localized perspective.
Chapter 4: Curriculum

This chapter identifies themes which emerged from the interview questions that focused on the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) curriculum. Overall results are provided first, followed in more detail by perspectives from school resource officers, teachers, and principals. Summative opinions about curricular content, most and least important aspects of the curriculum, and proposed changes to the curriculum are identified. References to individual responses are made, with respondents identified by an alpha numeric coding system. School Resource Officers are identified as SI through S7; teachers as T1 through T16 and principals as P1 to P9. A summary of the data on curricular content completes the chapter.

Overall Opinions

In asking for respondent’s “overall opinion of the DARE program’s curricular “ it was discovered that 30 of the 32 respondents, or nearly 94%, said that they found the curricular content to favourable. Terms such as “good,” “great,” and “exceptional” were frequently used in describing their impressions. Such a positive opinion was voiced by each SRO, each teacher, and seven of the nine principals. Their positive comments, however, were not made without some caveats.

Even though all seven of the SROs generally expressed a favourable opinion about the overall content of the DARE curriculum, four believed it was too “crammed.” Specifically, the concern was that there are too many lessons, leaving little time to spend on topics that are believed to be more important. These more important topics were identified as issues, interests, and concerns, which were context specific for individual classrooms. This belief was shared by S1, S2, S4, and S7. In particular, S2 believed that, despite DARE’s suggested drug abuse educational focuses, not enough time was spent on drug education. Specifically, the identification of individual drugs and their
corresponding characteristics and effects was identified as an underdeveloped topic in the program. This same SRO also believed that a greater amount of time should be devoted to identifying concretely the specific pitfalls that lead to drug abuse. As a result, S2 felt that the program is “misleading” as very little time is spent talking about drugs and their effects and more time spent on life skills. The remaining three SROs were less specific on what should be the focus. Rather, they suggested that whatever was agreed upon as worth knowing should be the focus as opposed to paying “lip service” to a predetermined list of topics.

Thirteen of the 16 teachers unconditionally expressed favourable opinions about the overall content of the curriculum. These teachers referred to the overall content of the curriculum as either “good,” “great,” “exceptional,” “excellent” or “wonderful.” The remaining three were generally pleased, but did offer some suggestions for changes. T11 indicated that the content is good, but there needs to be the flexibility to spend more time on topics that may arise spontaneously in individual classes. T13 expressed similar reasons for his/her concerns and believes a total of twelve lessons would be sufficient if organized to allow time for flexibility within the lessons. Finally, T16 believes that the content, even though generally good, needs to be more focused toward community needs. Only two respondents did not endorse the program’s overall curricular content. Both are principals. P2 indicated that he/she was not able to comment on the actual content, as he/she was not familiar with it. P4 “reserved” his/her opinion as he/she had concerns about the efficacy of the program, questioning whether students genuinely internalised the lessons even though they “spout off this, this and this.” P4’s concerns
were based on negative studies that he/she had read on the DARE program’s overall effectiveness, and on his/her personal observations.

In summary, nearly 94% of the total sample regarded the program’s curricular content favourably. Twenty-three percent of this group indicated that, notwithstanding their general support, they had some concerns about the curricular content. All seven of these individuals believed that, in essence, the curriculum was “too full” of material that had to be covered and that it did not allow for flexibility to address individual classroom needs. Fifty-seven percent of the SROs interviewed were of this opinion, while just less than 19% of teachers shared this point of view. None of the principals held this opinion, with seven of nine finding the content favourable and two abstaining for the reasons that were noted above.

I, for the most part, share the concerns expressed by S1, S2, S4, S7 and T11, T13, and T16. Too often there are missed opportunities to explore student concerns if one is driven to get through the curriculum. There needs to be a reconciliation of curricular content and student interest. Clearly not all interviewees believe this to be the case, or at least they did not express this opinion. Perhaps greater flexibility can be offered to those who are interested without compromising the integrity of the program. This would also have to be reconciled against the instructor’s level of experience and ability. This idea will be explored in detail in chapter seven.

**Most important curricular aspects**

There was not a great deal of consensus among interviewees regarding the most important aspect of the curriculum, with the exception of two areas: Lesson Two, “Understanding the Effects of Mind-altering Drugs” and Lesson Six, “Building Self-
Both of these lessons received 31% of the respondents' support. While Lesson Two received ten votes of confidence, none were from SROs. Four principals believed it to be the most important, as did six teachers. The bulk of Lesson Two’s information concerning the harmful effects of drugs is contained in a 12 minute animated video (Land of Decisions and Choices) and two pages in a student workbook entitled DARE Drug Fact Sheet. These two resources can hardly be considered comprehensive, yet they form the foundation for the entire program’s drug information component.

Lesson Six on “Self-Esteem” received positive attention from all three respondent groups. Twenty-five percent of teachers, 22% of principals and 57% of SROs indicated that this was the most important aspect. Of the remaining 15 lessons, none received greater than 12% of the respondents’ support. Ten other lessons received at least one vote of confidence, as well as two other non-content related aspects. Clearly there was not an overwhelming consensus on what was the most important aspect of the curriculum.

The greatest consensus among SROs occurred in the area of self-esteem, where S2, S3, S4, and S7 viewed the lesson on self-esteem as one of the most important curricular aspects. These same SROs were later asked whether the program was meeting its objectives with respect to enhancing students self esteem. Interestingly, only S4 believed that the program was effective in this regard. The other three believed that the program was not meeting the objective and were doubtful it could.

The area of self-esteem also had some appeal to teachers; 25% viewed it as the most important aspect of the curriculum. Teachers T1, T3, T5, and T10 all supported this notion and all believed that the program was successful in meeting DARE Canada’s
curriculum objective number two: “To help enhance self-esteem.” When compared to the four SROs who believed self-esteem was the most important aspect, there is a stark difference as only one of the four believed that the objective was being met. When all of the teachers were asked, 81% believed it was meeting the objective. As for all of the SROs, 71% believed that the program alone did not enhance self-esteem.

Regardless of why the two groups differed so greatly on this concept, we should be aware of some research regarding self-esteem relevant to this study. Ennet, Tobler, Ringwalt, and Flewelling, (1994) found that the DARE program had little effect on students' attitudes on self-esteem. Palumbo and Ferguson's (1995) study into a very similar police-delivered program, GREAT (Gang Resistance Education and Training) offers some interesting insight. The writers suggest that self-esteem is a "fairly stable personality construct" and for any change in this trait to occur would require programs to be in effect for long periods of time (p. 616). As both GREAT and DARE are delivered in only 45 to 50 minute lessons, once per week for eight or 17 weeks, they would not meet this criterion.

Two other areas of minor consensus were found with respect to what SROs believed to be important. Lesson thirteen’s role model component garnered support from S1, S3, and S7. S1, S4, and S7 supported lesson three on consequences. S1, S3, and S7 felt that lesson thirteen provided an opportunity to showcase “believable teenaged examples”, thus modelling the program’s desired message. These same SROs believed that the overall lesson objective could be accomplished with role models other than those found in high school. Family members or others from the community are examples.

DARE indicates that the purpose of lesson thirteen is “to acquaint students with high school students who do not use drugs and to clarify the misconception those drug users are the majority.” (DARE Officer’s Guide, 1994, p.107) The role model lesson is certainly important in legitimising the program’s overall message of “no use.” The question that arises for the three SROs is what should the overall message be regarding
role models? The only consensus was that role models need to be “believable” and “human.” Perhaps the SROs’ definition of believable and human need to be further examined.

As for lesson three on consequences, S1, S4, and S7 did not offer any explanations on why they felt it was the most important lesson. Only S1 suggested that it allowed students to be more “forward thinkers.”

Lesson seven, “Learning Assertiveness”, lesson eight “Managing Stress Without Taking Drugs”, and lesson ten, “Media Influences”, received support from two of the SROs. Surprisingly, lesson ten only received support from four of the 32 interviewees. This is surprising because, in my experience, this lesson seems to generate incredible interest among students. Ten other areas received notice, but not greater than 18% in any one category.

Approximately 38% of all the teachers interviewed felt that the information about drugs and the SROs’ expertise about drugs were the most important aspects of the curriculum. Teachers 5, 6, 7, 9, 14, and 15 all believed that the SROs were the key ingredient in the program’s drug information component. Interestingly, lesson two is the only lesson that deals exclusively with basic information on drugs and their effects. Perhaps the idea that a police presence in the classroom ensures effective drug education is more symbolic than reality (Palumbo & Ferguson, 1995; Wysong, Aniskiewicz & Wright, 1994).

Finally, principals were provided with a table of contents to “refresh” their memory about the curriculum. Like the teachers, principals believed that the information on the effects of drugs was the most important aspect of the curriculum. Fifty percent
were of this opinion. P6 indicated that the SROs “demystified” drugs by providing valuable information on the topic. No other curricular aspect was raised by more than one principal. All total, only six other themes were put forth. One explanation may be that principals do not have an in-depth of knowledge of the DARE curriculum.

Least important curricular aspects

Only 19 respondents felt able to identify anything as a “least important” area of the curriculum. Six principals excused themselves from the question because they felt unable to comment. However, four of these same six still felt they could make “recommendations for change.” Six teachers indicated that nothing in the curriculum could be described as least important, five of whom later made recommendations for change. One police officer, S5, could not identify any element as least important, felt that the program was “excellent and evenly balanced”, and did not recommend any changes when asked.

The two areas where some consensus did emerge were on lesson 14 on gangs, and the role-playing component in lesson five’s “eight ways to say no.” Six of 19 interviewees who commented believed that the lesson on gangs was the least important, as they felt it had little to do with the realities of their communities. Four teachers and two SROs are included in this group. The SROs indicated it just wasn’t a good fit based on the design of the lesson and the reality of the community. If we add P3’s somewhat related comments that were made with respect to changes in the curriculum, there would be seven with concerns regarding lesson fourteen. P3 indicated that he/she observed kids “acting out like gang members” after “the gang lesson.” P3 continued with “this never happens until that unit and for the last couple of years it has” and that students had “no clue about this stuff until DARE brought it up.” Lesson fourteen is clearly the most controversial of all the lessons discussed and could benefit from future study.

The second area where some consensus emerged was around the role-playing in lesson five’s “eight ways to say no.” Only four of 19 respondents were concerned, but all
are SROs. They agreed that lesson five was “mundane” and “unrealistic”, with “little to
no buy in” from students. Furthermore, students were forced to behave like “little
robots” as they were not allowed to find ways to resist peer pressure on their own. The
biggest concern for the officers was that this was not a very realistic scenario with little
ownership by students. Despite this dislike of lesson five, all still agreed that learning
ways to refuse offers to use drugs is critical.

This concern expressed about lesson five is close to my heart. When lesson five
is looked at more closely, we see that the “eight ways” are sufficient examples of ways to
refuse offers to use drugs. The problem occurs when students are forced to use scripted
scenarios to act out, as opposed to devising them on their own. Instructors feel awkward
as a result of this contrived acting and often doubt the efficacy of the practice. Both my
personal experience and research by van Ments (1983) support the above noted
reservations that the SROs report.

There is an unfortunate confusion between role playing and acting. The essential
difference is that acting consists of bringing to life a dramatist’s idea ... in order to
influence and entertain an audience, whereas role play is the experiencing of a problem
under an unfamiliar set of constraints in order that one’s own ideas may emerge and
one’s own understanding increase. (van Ments, 1983, p.19)

There is no doubt that role-play has a place in the DARE program. The
preventive focus of the program will clearly benefit from experiential methods of
instruction. What needs to be discussed is the format. This will be explored in greater
detail in chapter seven.

In closing, very little consensus in respect to identifying the least important
aspects of the DARE curriculum emerged. Two minor themes, related to gangs and role-
play, are noted. Small but equal percentages of teachers and SROs agreed that the gang component was not relevant to their communities. Secondly, SROs had difficulty with the use of role-play in lesson five. Not a single teacher or principal expressed this view.

Changes

All interviewees were asked, "What changes, if any, would you like to see made in the content of the curriculum?" Again, very few dominant themes emerged from this question, but several interesting curricular recommendations were made. The richness of the respondents' experiences in the area of curricula is noteworthy. All of the recommendations are thought provoking, but in the interest of being concise I will only identify changes that were proposed by at least two respondents and tangibly relate to DARE's curriculum content. Of note is the fact that many of the respondents made multiple recommendations while others made none at all.

First, some respondents believed that the program did not require any changes. Seven of the 32 were of this opinion, Teachers 10, 12, 14, and 15, as well as S5. Two principals, P2 and P9, did not offer suggestions, citing their lack of familiarity with the curriculum. The result is that 25 respondents had at least one recommendation for change.

Seven of 25 believed that the program should be condensed to contain just the "essentials." The seven included four SROs, two principals, and one teacher. P1 felt that "17 weeks at 1 hour per week is quite a chunk to devote to one topic, especially health." P1 also believed that we "need to re-examine to see if [DARE] fits" into the new health curriculum that is being proposed, as DARE is not a provincially mandated item. P8 felt that there was too much content and not enough flexibility for the classroom teacher to
focus on the needs of the class versus getting through the program. T13 had a similar
message, stating that the “lessons could be pared down to twelve meaningful lessons.”
Four officers, S1, S4, S6, and S7 also believed the program could be reduced from the
current 17 weeks, as it was “too long a program with not enough focus” on any particular
topic. S4 believed the program could be as effective, if not more so, if it was delivered in
ten lessons.

On the other hand, four of the 25 believed the program should be longer. T1 believed the program’s 17 lessons needed to be stretched out over the year, as “once it’s over there is no more contact with the officer and the kids get attached.” T8 believed that the program needs to be taught over a longer period of time, but did not advocate expanding the curriculum. T11 also wanted more time spent on each of the lesson subjects and the program spread out over the entire year as it was “too crammed.” The lone principal in the group, P4, wanted more time for students to practice the skills that were taught in class. In addition P4 wanted to utilize a more comprehensive role-play technique that was “not just say no” but a personalized model that allows students to “internalise” the material. This is quite similar to the SROs’ (S1, S2, S3, and S7) response to role-play that was discussed in the least important curricular aspects section above.

T7, T8 and S7 had concerns about the “taking a stand essays”, where students promise to be “drug free and avoid violence.” The concern for the teachers was that “if a kid makes mistakes it’s not the end of the world . . . most will break it to smoke or drink and we don’t want them to seem like failures.” Both teachers felt that some discussion on responsible drinking may be more appropriate as “kids need to know life isn’t so great
and you can still be successful.” S7 felt it was “hypocritical” if the promise was not from the heart and that a forced commitment is not from the heart. S7 suggested that students be asked how they really feel as this way they would not feel guilty if they experiment. S7 continued to say that students experiment, and once they make a mistake they think they have lost your respect and may never be “good” again. This may be overstated, but there is certainly merit in the notion of honesty that is put forth by this group.

S1, S3, and S6 also believed that lessons should include an increased focus on community specific violence or violent trends, which may or may not include information on gangs. I will discuss this in the Recommendation section of chapter seven, as a new curriculum was developed in Lethbridge partially as a response to this concern.

T2 and T13 wanted a more updated video. T2 wanted more “hard-hitting shock impact” videos on drugs and alcohol and driving. T13 summed up the video currently used in the DARE program with “it talks down to the kids.” Both T2 and T13 had six programs completed in their classrooms and have had the same video used in lesson two every year.

Summary

Ninety-four percent of all respondents found the curricular content to be favourable. Of the sample of teachers and SROs, 100% were of this opinion. The SRO support, however, came with a caveat as 57% found the program “too crammed” and offering only superficial coverage of the sixteen lesson topics.

There was very little consensus surrounding the most important aspects of the curriculum. The exception was with the SROs and principals. Fifty-seven percent of the
SROs found the lesson on self-esteem to be among the most important of the curricular components. However, 75% of these same SROs believed that the lesson on self-esteem was not meeting the lesson objectives and were doubtful that it could. Self-esteem is a broad construct. Perhaps this breadth makes it difficult to reasonably expect that one lesson for one hour in a student's life will impact their view of self.

Principals, on the other hand, believed that the information on the "harmful effects of drugs" was the most important aspect of the curriculum. Fifty percent shared this opinion. As has already been noted, the information that DARE provides on this topic can hardly be considered comprehensive. It is offered almost exclusively in lesson two and is extremely limited.

The only real consensus regarding "least important curricular aspects" occurred when four of the six SROs who commented indicated that lesson five was "unrealistic." Despite disliking the lesson, all agreed that learning ways to say no to drugs was a vital component of an effective drug prevention program. Unfortunately, the SROs believed that lesson five did not provide an opportunity for students to truly learn how to "just say no" to drugs.

Few dominant themes emerged in terms of proposing "changes to the curriculum." The only major area of consensus emerged in the SRO group, with 50% believing that the program could have a more community-based focus on violence. Chapter seven will extrapolate possible curricular implications from the above results.
This chapter identifies themes that emerged from the interview questions that asked for interviewees’ overall opinion on how the DARE program is delivered. Teachers and SRO’s were the only groups that responded to the questions about program delivery. Principals were all asked if they would like to comment; however, none felt that they were in a position to do so as they felt they had insufficient exposure to the actual delivery of the program.

Overall opinions on the degree of consistency (in content, approach, and teaching skills) between the officers in delivery of the program will be explored first. Most important aspects of the delivery of the program, least important aspects and proposed changes in the delivery of the program will be reported next. Finally, teachers’ satisfaction regarding their level of classroom involvement in the delivery of the DARE program will be documented. The chapter closes with a summary of the findings on program delivery.

Overall opinions

Twenty-three respondents offered their overall opinion on how well the DARE program was delivered. More than 95% felt that the delivery system was at least “good” and at best felt the program was delivered “extremely well.” All sixteen teachers were of this opinion, as were six of the seven SROs.

Six SROs believed the delivery system was “good” or “great,” with four of these citing the presence of uniformed officers as instructors as a key element in their positive opinion. One believed it was “OK”, being unsure whether there were any other similar preventive programs that were better. Despite believing that the program was well
designed, S7 felt that the training for DARE officers doesn’t prepare them well for classroom teaching and “expects you to be a teacher in two weeks.”

Teachers offered some contextual reasons for their endorsement of the delivery system. Nearly half of the teachers suggested that what made the delivery system “good” was the presence of “quality” uniformed officers. Teachers 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16, or 44% of the teacher sample, indicated that the officers truly “are the programs.”

Degree of consistency

Respondents were asked to comment on the degree of consistency, in content, approach, and teaching skills, between the officers who deliver the program. Ninety-five percent indicated that delivery was consistent. One of these teachers was unable to comment because he/she had been exposed to only one instructor. One teacher, T14, believed that delivery was not all that consistent, in fact it was “quite different” between the two different instructors he/she had observed over the course of three years. All seven SROs believed that the program was designed to be delivered consistently, and that it generally was. Only one of the SRO’s had participated in a “team teaching” endeavour with another SRO and believed that consistency was generally achieved.

Not surprisingly, all twenty-three respondents agreed that delivery did vary in terms of instructors’ personalities, even though the program was essentially uniform in terms of content. Five of sixteen teachers also indicated that officers became better with more experience. These five teachers, on average, had observed five different instructors over the course of six years and had themselves been teaching an average of a little more than sixteen years.
These findings are important in evaluating the degree of consistency that is promised in the DARE program and actually practised. The data here indicates that quality control is very much alive in Lethbridge. Lesson one in classroom “A” is highly likely be delivered in a very similar fashion to classroom “Z,” notwithstanding instructor personality differences.

**Most important delivery aspects**

When questions on delivery were posed, I was in essence soliciting opinions about SROs’ teaching abilities. This definition of delivery was explained to all of the respondents. Many opinions on what constitutes “effective teaching” were expressed, and many teaching strategies were identified as “most important” in terms of delivery aspects. However, one general and fairly broad philosophy emerged as dominant among the respondents. Delivery styles that employed interactive, “student centred”, approaches and used “visual aids” were favoured by teachers. In addition, strategies that focused on “relationship” building with students were also viewed as instrumental.

Twenty-two individuals responded to the question on what was the most important delivery aspect of the DARE program (all seven SROs and 15 of 16 teachers). T11 felt that he/she was unable to answer as “it depends on the class.” T11 insisted that even making broadly based comments compromises the importance of making student needs the priority. Nearly 64% (14 of 22—11 of whom were teachers and three who are SROs) of respondents believed that keeping students “interested and active” beyond simply employing a “talking head” or “lecture” approach, was the most important delivery aspect. These comments on delivery strategy were often identified as “student centered” in nature and included suggestions of frequent utilization of “visual aids,”
participatory discussions and any other technique or strategy that employs "hands on" approaches to learning. Overall, a little more than 73% of all teachers were in agreement with this delivery approach, compared to 43% of all the SROs. All who responded agreed that these skills were currently being employed by the SROs who were delivering the lessons.

In a second area of consensus, there was about 40% agreement on the significance of the theme of "relationships", which includes the idea of "belief in the kids and program." Nine respondents agreed that "relationships with the kids" and belief in "the program" were more critical than any teaching strategy that may be incorporated. Six teachers and three SROs shared this belief. In fact, liking the program and having personal contact with "kids" outside of the classroom was also viewed as most important by T7, T8, T10, T12, T13, and T16. S2 and 4, had similar thoughts, with S7 commenting that "time spent on the playground is more important than the time in the classroom." S2 also related "the message is secondary to the relationship." Finally, S4 emphasised that if "you love the kids and have a passion for your purpose" then you will be employing the most important delivery strategy. Respondents generally believed that positive relationships with students were being established by the SROs and felt this should be the focus for SROs who deliver the DARE program in the future. This sentiment, as was noted earlier, is echoed in studies by Berg (1997), Blasik and Belsito (1993), and Donnermeyer and Wurschmidt (1997), among others.

**Least important delivery aspects**

Ten of the 23 respondents, or 43%, believed that the DARE program contained such a complete and comprehensive delivery system that nothing could be described as a "least important" delivery element. Ninety percent of these respondents were teachers. S5 was the lone SRO in agreement and was the same SRO who felt that "nothing" could be identified as far as a "least important aspect of the curriculum."
Among respondents who did identify a least important aspect of delivery, there emerged only two areas of consensus. These focused on what was termed the “canned curriculum” of the DARE program, and the use of role-play as a teaching mechanism.

The greatest consensus was around criticism of the “canned curriculum.” T9 observed that it was “ludicrous to think that kids in ghettos, reserves or small rural cities really need to hear the exact same thing.” Further, T9 indicated that the curriculum not only needed to be tailored to the individual class, but to the region as well. Eighty-three percent of the SROs that commented expressed concerns similar to T9’s. S2, S3, S4, S6 and S7 cited “lack of flexibility” in the lesson plans as the key element in their concerns. S2 felt that the program is “too repetitive.” S3 believed the program was too “rigid.” S4 commented that the program was “too dry”, S6 thought it “unrealistic”, and S7 indicated that more “personalization” as opposed to “regurgitation” was required.

Clearly, lack of program flexibility was a concern to many of the SROs. A significant percentage of SROs clearly feel resentful and handcuffed by the rigidity of the curriculum.

The other area of consensus was around the issue of role-play. T11 indicated “role play can be over used ... depends on the group, if it doesn’t work don’t do it.” Two SROs, S1 and S3, agreed with this perspective, with S3 stating that he/she felt uncomfortable as the scenarios were not believable.

Perhaps there is a connection between the concerns about role play and the concerns about a lack of flexibility in the curriculum. The DARE curriculum often provides students with solutions to the scenarios they act out through role play, as opposed to having students discover solutions on their own. Further, the role play that is
included in the lesson plan is to be followed, regardless of classroom differences. This lack of flexibility is somewhat understandable considering DARE's concern for quality control in the lessons. However, Goldstein (1988) suggests that in order for a young person to make a good choice in any situation he/she must think of more than one way to act. Also, van Ments (1983) offers warnings about the limitations of role play; warnings which lesson five's inflexible lesson plans fail to heed. Tutors lose control over what is learned and the order in which it is learned; simplifications can mislead; uses a large amount of time; uses other resources—people, space, special items; depends on the quality of tutor and student; impact may trigger off withdrawal or defence symptoms; may be seen as too entertaining or frivolous; may dominate learning to the exclusion of solid theory; and facts may depends on what students already know. The concerns about role-play and lack of program flexibility are again reflected in the next section in the discussion on proposed changes to the delivery of the program.

Changes

Twenty respondents (13 teachers and 7 SROs) felt that changes were required to the current program delivery system. The greatest consensus occurred around the need for a more flexible manner for delivery of the lessons. Seven teachers and five SROs, or 60% of the interviewees who responded to this question, believed that the program had to be more adaptable to fit the individual classroom.

The only other areas where any gleam of a minor consensus could be discerned are as follows: T6 and T9 felt that the “program needed to develop an exam.” T16 and S1 suggested utilizing “drug displays” for a more realistic and informative program. T1 and T9 wanted more visual aids for the lesson on media influences. T1 and T9 would like to allow more time for the reading of the “taking a stand essays.”

The three respondents who felt that there was not anything which needed to be changed were teachers. All three were among the four teachers that believed that there was not anything which needed to be changed in the curriculum.
Teacher involvement

Only the teacher sample was asked if they were satisfied with their level of involvement in the DARE program. Only three indicated that they would prefer to be more involved, with more than 81% indicating that the current level of involvement was fine. This is perhaps surprising, as the teacher’s role in the instruction of the DARE program is quite limited. However, the responding teachers saw themselves as either observers, supervisors or, when needed, disciplinarians. Those that saw themselves as observers were quick to point out that they did not view this as an opportunity to “prep or mark”; instead they saw this as an excellent opportunity to observe their students’ interactions more closely.

Summary

More than 95% of teachers and SROs felt that the program was delivered “extremely well.” Nearly half of the teachers believed that the presence of “quality” uniformed officer was the single greatest reason for the successful delivery system. In addition, 81% of the teachers were satisfied with their current level of involvement with the delivery of the DARE program.

Ninety-five percent indicated that delivery was consistent. This is not mitigated by the fact that all 23 agreed that the delivery did indeed vary somewhat. Any differences to be found were attributed to instructors’ personalities, and interviewees felt that the program remained consistent in terms of content. As for the most important delivery aspect, 64% believed keeping students actively involved in lessons was critical and that the program was successful at doing so.
Forty-three percent believed that the DARE program contains such a complete delivery system that nothing could be described as “least important.” Ninety percent of these respondents were teachers. Eighty-three percent of the SROs that commented expressed concerns regarding the limitations of what was described as a “canned curriculum.” Lack of flexibility in the lesson plans was the key element in this concern. The question which arises in response is whether a “canned” curriculum should remain to be the preferred basis for content and instruction. This will be discussed in chapter seven.

When changes to the delivery system were discussed, eight teachers and six of seven SROs, or more than 66% of the total population responding to this question, believed that the program had to be more adaptable to fit individual classrooms.
Chapter 6: Efficacy

This chapter documents the results which emerged from interview questions addressing the efficacy of the DARE program. First, overall results about program effectiveness are communicated, including a breakdown of responses from within the three groups of interviewees: school resource officers, teachers, and principals. Second, opinions on the most effective aspects of the program are documented. This is followed by an examination of respondents’ views on the least effective aspects of the program. Fourth, perceptions on changes which would enhance the program’s effectiveness are detailed. Next, responses to the question of whether or not the program should continue if it were to be found to be ineffective in reducing drug use among teens are recorded and explored. Sixth and seventh, program objectives are addressed and additional insights are recorded. The chapter closes with a summary of the results of the above dimensions of this research.

Overall Opinions

All thirty-two respondents were asked: “Overall what do you think about the program’s effectiveness?” Unless otherwise stated, the term effective was understood by interviewees as applying to DARE’s primary purpose of providing a drug prevention program. Six separate themes emerged. The themes, in respondents’ own words, can be labelled: “very effective”, “effective”, “no one program can reduce drug use,” “believe it is effective”, “effective in establishing meaningful relationships with police”, and “unsure.” T9 and A8 had responses that were categorized as being outside of the themes.
As Table I indicates, six respondents, or 18% of the total sample, felt that, overall, the program is “very effective.” Four of these are teachers, one an SRO, and one a principal. Two of the four teachers who believed the program is very effective qualified their answers somewhat. T2 indicated that it was especially effective in terms of providing valuable information because “even if the kids smoked they did so with knowledge.” (This is obviously contradictory, and I am certain that DARE would not concede that a smoking DARE student is what the program has in mind.) T4 believed the program was also very effective, but only for those students who shared values similar to the DARE program in their homes. The above caveats notwithstanding, 25% of teachers found the program to be “very effective”, compared to 14% of SROs and 11% of principals.

Table 1:

Overall Opinions Regarding DARE Effectiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>SRO Responses</th>
<th>Teacher Response</th>
<th>Principal Response</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Very effective</td>
<td>1 (14%)</td>
<td>4 (25%)</td>
<td>1 (11%)</td>
<td>6 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Effective</td>
<td>3 (43%)</td>
<td>2 (12.5%)</td>
<td>2 (22%)</td>
<td>7 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. No one program can reduce drug use</td>
<td>1 (14%)</td>
<td>3 (18.75%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Want to believe ineffectiveness</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (25%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Establishes meaningful relations with Police/students</td>
<td>2 (29%)</td>
<td>2 (12.5%)</td>
<td>1 (11%)</td>
<td>5 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Unsure</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (44%)</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Other</td>
<td>0 (6%)</td>
<td>1 (6.25%)</td>
<td>1 (11%)</td>
<td>2 (6.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Seven respondents, or 22% of the sample, felt that the program is “effective.” Two are teachers, three are SROs (nearly 43% of the SROs), and two are principals. Those who expressed the opinion that the program was effective specifically emphasized the element of establishing meaningful relationships with police.

Four respondents (13%) indicated that, even though they liked the program, they believed that “no one program” could reduce drug use among teens. Three were teachers and one was a SRO. Four more respondents, all teachers, indicated that they “wanted” to believe the program was effective, but were unable to commit to such a belief at this time. T16 summed it up succinctly indicating he/she wanted to believe it was effective, but was not comfortable with how those conclusions could ever be reached. Finally, four respondents were unsure of how effective the program was in reducing drug use. All four were principals, which represents a little under one-half of the total principal population.

Five respondents, two SROs, two teachers and one principal believed that overall the program was most effective at establishing relationship between the Police and students (not necessarily SROS and students).

In total, approximately 37% of teachers believed that the DARE program was either a “very effective” or “effective” drug prevention program. Fifty-seven percent of the SROs were of this opinion, as were 33% of the principals. The remainder, which is the majority of respondents, did not suggest that the program was ineffective in reducing drug use among teens; however, neither did they express opinions indicating they believed it was effective. That is, 63% of the teachers, 67% of the principals and 43% of the SROs did not indicate that the program was effective when given the opportunity to do so. This is a puzzling discovery, considering the overwhelming support the program
enjoys—especially with respect to curricular content and the delivery system, as this study has documented.

**Most Effective Aspects**

Interviewees were asked what they considered to be the singular most effective aspect of the program. Some respondents gave multiple responses, however, one dominant theme emerged. The consensus was that the program allowed for police to be seen as “regular people”, as “human”, that is, generally just viewed in a more favourable light. Seventeen of the thirty-two respondents, or 53%, held this opinion as their lone position, or included it in their response as the most important aspect. Included in this group are 7 teachers (44% of all teachers), 5 SROs (71% of all SROs), and 5 principals (55% of all school principals).

The next greatest consensus was around the issue of police being viewed as experts, in terms of drug information. Four respondents, three teachers and one principal, offered this opinion. Enhancing student self esteem was identified by three respondents, and two respondents believed that the program’s information about drugs was the most effective aspect. These results are interesting, considering the program is designed as a drug abuse resistance education program. Clearly this supports the assertion that DARE transcends its educational component role and takes on a larger aspect with respect to police-community relations (Berg, 1997; Blasik & Belsito, 1993; Curtis, 1999; Donnerneyer & Wurschmidt, 1997; Fife, 1994; Green, 1992; Pulumbo & Ferguson, 1995; Van Burgh, Render & Moon, 1995; and Wysong, Aniskiewicz & Wright, 1994). No other responses garnered multiple respondent support.
Least Effective Aspects

This question resulted in a considerable breadth of responses. Eighteen different responses were garnered. The result was that very little consensus emerged among the three respondent groups. Each group also had its own unique perspective, with no shared perspectives linking the respondents. Further, each group only identified one theme.

Seven teachers, or 44%, indicated that “nothing” could be described as least effective as the program was complete and effective on all points. Only one other response had more than one teacher (two) in agreement, and that was the belief that the DARE program condemned drug users as bad people as opposed to scrutinizing their behaviour. In short, they felt DARE labelled people more than behaviours.

The greatest consensus among SROs related to the concept that the police and schools can “only do so much.” The DARE program has no control over other areas of students’ lives, most noticeably home life. The feeling was that no single program can be entirely effective, and perhaps drug prevention isn’t really a strictly police and school issue as much as a parental or societal issue. This belief was vocalized by three (nearly 43% of the sample) officers.

Finally 78% of the principals indicated they were uncomfortable identifying any aspect of the program as “least effective” because of their lack of “hands on” experience with the program. Nevertheless 89% offered suggestions on how to increase program efficacy.

Changes

All respondents were asked “What changes, in any aspect, could be made to make the program more effective?” Few themes emerged, however many of the individual suggestions will be later discussed under Recommendations in chapter seven. The themes that did emerge are as follows.
Overall, seven of 32, or just less than 22%, believed that expanding the DARE program into the junior high school grades and possibly beyond would be the single greatest enhancement to the program. SROs led the groups with a 57% consensus. Only about 19% of teachers and 11% of principals shared this belief. It was interesting to discover that the majority of the SRO’s viewed expansion of the program as the key to increasing program effectiveness. The literature does show some support for the notion that a “one shot” program is not the answer (Berg, 1997; Clayton, Cattarello and Johnstone, 1996; DARE America, 1999; Donnemeyer & Davis, 1998; Dukes, Stein & Ullman, 1997; Gorman, 1998; Hansen & McNeal 1997; Silva, 1994; Wysong, Aniskiewicz & Wright, 1994).

Three of the 32 believed that police needed to spend more time in schools with students, apart from regularly scheduled DARE classes. Two of these were teachers and one a principal. Finally, two respondents, both SROs believed that teachers had to take on a more structured role in the class and apply DARE concepts to other parts of the greater grade six curriculum.

If Program is Found to be Ineffective

Perhaps the most interesting and telling question posed was: “If the program was found to be ineffective in reducing drug use amongst teens, would you still be in favour of the program. Why or why not?” Amazingly, almost 88% of the total sample was in favour of keeping the program even if it was found to be ineffective. One hundred percent were teachers, 86% were SROs and nearly 67% were principals.

I suspect this blind faith is the power behind the DARE program. The notion of police and schools working toward keeping students drug free apparently has so much
appeal that DARE is able to defy negative scientific validation. As I have noted in the literature review chapter, research does not seem to support the effectiveness of the DARE program. It may be asked therefore, what is it about this program that ensures its acceptance, indeed its great popularity?

To address the question, it is profitable to begin by examining how each group responded and the reasoning behind the responses. One hundred percent of the teachers endorsed the program, regardless of efficacy. The notion that the program offered a “synergy” of sorts was an overwhelming theme in the responses. Synergy is a powerful idea, and teachers specifically indicated that there is “more to the program than the program.” Thirty-one percent of the teachers also indicated that if the program “saved just one kid from drugs it was worth it.” This emotional appeal is also difficult to argue against. Clearly the question of whether or not DARE should continue, in spite of lack of scientific support for the effectiveness of the program, is not a simple subject.

Three other teachers believed that statistics only “confused” the issue and that their gut feelings were a more accurate assessment instrument. Another voiced the opinion that, since there was no viable alternative to the DARE program to be offered, he/she “had to believe” it worked. Yet another three believed that the relationships that developed between police and students were more important than program effectiveness. Three more believed that other important concepts were learned, even if the program did not reduce drug use. Finally, two teachers believed that this was really the only way for drugs to be discussed with students, as parents did not deal with the subject at home. The following illustrative quotes sum up the teachers’ overall beliefs regarding ineffectiveness:
T2: “This could never be proven as it has affected them... if just one kid stopped smoking it has done its job.”

T3: “Other things influence drug use anyway, so the program doesn’t really matter... expand it even if it doesn’t work.”

T7: “I don’t believe stats. You have to go with what you feel. I want kids to have the knowledge, they need to know this stuff. They are getting something out of this, I believe it, I have to, I have been doing it for 16 weeks for years.”

T11: “Do we say let’s pull sex-ed because kids have sex?”

T12: “The program is bigger than that.”

The SROs were also quite supportive, with almost 86% at least conditionally endorsing the program regardless of effectiveness. Six of the seven SROs answered positively, but four of these six indicated they would support another program if it was better at both reducing drug use among teens and forming positive relationships with police. This notion of relationship was viewed by all six as the focal point of the program and was central to their support of the program. One officer indicated that the program was “not the greatest”, but thought it a good program overall, even if it didn’t reduce drug use. Curiously, another two added that you “cannot measure success by who does and does not stay drug free.” One SRO continued, even if the program “saved one youth from using” it was worth it. Again, the primary rational for the six in favour of keeping the DARE program was that it built positive relationships with police.

In reflecting on the interviews, I wish I could somehow capture the energy and emotion that was present during the conversations with those respondents who unconditionally supported the program. Their support was passionate, and illustrative to
the author of why the DARE program to date has remained largely unchanged and remains extremely popular in spite of a lack of clear scientific documentation of its effectiveness.

The lone dissenter among the SROs was S6. He/she suggested that if the program wasn’t effective in reducing drug use then “we should get rid of it” as it would be a waste of “money and resources.” S6 further added that “we should focus our efforts on finding something that does work.” After all, police can build relationships in any program that they are part of.

Principals were not as supportive as SROs were of continuing the DARE program if it was found to be ineffective, although just more than 66% were still in favour. P6 believed that “there are other things happening here besides stats” and that “we need to reinforce and strengthen the beliefs of those who will not use [drugs].” P7 shared his/her belief that more than program efficacy needs to be focussed on as “there are a lot of side benefits, kids interacting with police, positive relationships, honesty.” These “spinoffs” seem to have both teachers and principals feeling quite satisfied with the program.

The above data on support for the DARE program, even if it were to be found ineffective, strongly corresponds with the data on support for the curricular content of the program. (One hundred percent of all teachers and SROs found the content favourable, as did 78% of principals.) Simply put, there is obvious appreciation in Lethbridge for the DARE program. Whether or not the program is effective is clearly a secondary, if not outrightly irrelevant, concern.

Program Objectives

Teachers and SROs were also asked about the program’s objectives. Principals were not asked because they have a very limited role with respect to direct teaching of the program. The DARE core
curriculum has five main objectives: (1) Provide the skills for recognizing and resisting social pressures to experiment with tobacco, alcohol and drugs; (2) help enhance self-esteem; (3) teach positive alternatives to substance use; (4) develop skills in risk assessment and decision-making; (5) and build interpersonal and communication skills.

Table 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>SROs</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To provide the skills for recognizing and resisting social pressures to experiment with tobacco, alcohol and drugs.</td>
<td>57% (4)</td>
<td>100% (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To help enhance self-esteem.</td>
<td>29% (2)</td>
<td>94% (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To teach positive alternatives to substance use.</td>
<td>43% (3)</td>
<td>100% (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To develop skills in risk assessment and decision making.</td>
<td>29% (2)</td>
<td>94% (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To build interpersonal and communication skills.</td>
<td>14% (1)</td>
<td>94% (15)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SROs and teachers were asked if the program was meeting each of the above objectives. Table 2 clearly indicates that the first objective saw all sixteen teachers, 100%, indicating that this was successfully being met. Only 57% of the SRO’s felt the same way. Teachers also believed that the second objective was successfully met, with almost 94% in agreement. Again SROs were less supportive, with only 29% believing the program helped enhance self-esteem. The third objective also had a 100% vote of confidence from teachers, but only 43% of the SROs agreed. Ninety-four percent of teachers believed that the fourth and fifth objectives were successfully being accomplished, compared to, respectively, 29% and 14% of the SROs.
The differences here seem to be critical – even more startling when you see them in Table form.

I could not locate any studies examining teachers' and SROs' perceptions on whether or not DARE's core curriculum objectives are being attained. However, in this study there is a discrepancy between the two groups. No less than 94% of the teachers believed that any one of the five objectives was being met, compared to no greater than 57% of the SROs at best and 14% at worst. There are some plausible explanations for the large discrepancy between the two groups.

First, SROs may be so close to the program that they have become overly critical, whereas teachers may be more positive because of their limited role in program delivery. Another possibility is that teachers are so supportive of the program that they see very few, if any, weaknesses in the actual program. Perhaps the fact that SROs, as has been noted, are uncomfortable with some of the objectives may result in them being overly critical. On the other hand, it just may be that SROs are more in tune with the program—and the program is indeed falling short in terms of reaching its objectives. Clearly this is a question worthy of future study.

Additional insights

Finally all respondents were asked: “Do you have anything else that you would like to add that you have not had an opportunity to speak about?” This question came at the end of the scripted question component. One key observation came out from this question. Almost 44% of the respondents indicated that the “people” or the “police” was what “made the program.” It was further suggested that DARE need not be the particular program that was offered by police, as long as the police offered something that was
“legitimate” in terms of educational content. Twenty-five percent of teachers and more than 28% of SROs voluntarily offered such a comment.

As a result of this discovery, I decided to add one more question. Unfortunately, by this time the principals were the only group that I had yet to interview. I therefore only asked principals the following question: “Do the police need to specifically offer the DARE program?” Eighty-nine percent of the principals indicated that there was nothing particularly special about DARE, and that any program that was deemed effective would be fine as well. P4 was particularly displeased about the rhetoric surrounding DARE and went so far as to say “kids can sure spout it off, but not transfer it to real life.” In addition, nearly 78% of the principals routinely confused the ALERT program (which is unique to Lethbridge and part of the educational component which includes DARE) and DARE itself.

Unfortunately, not all of the respondent groups were asked this question and this is one of the shortcomings in this study. Nevertheless, it is clear that principals simply wanted police in their schools, period. Providing an educational component as a part of SROs overall school responsibilities was viewed as a bonus. I believe that the SROs and teachers would have overwhelmingly echoed this sentiment, but this belief cannot be substantiated by data collected. Should this assumption be accurate, then police could essentially deliver any “acme drug prevention program.”

Summary

A little less than 41% of the respondents believed that the DARE program was either a “very effective” or “effective” drug prevention program. Included in this group were 57% of SROs, 37% of teachers, and 33% of principals. The remaining respondents (63% of the teachers, 67% of the principals and 43% of the SROs) did not suggest that the program was either effective or ineffective. Despite
resounding support in other areas of the study, overwhelming support was not articulated regarding program efficacy.

Police were viewed as "regular people", and generally in a favourable light. This was considered to be the singular most effective aspect of the program by 53% of the respondents. Included in this group are 44% of all teachers, 71% of all SROs and 55% of all school principals.

There was very little consensus among the three respondent groups with respect to the "least effective aspects of the program." In fact, the greatest consensus was around the belief that "nothing" was least effective. Seven teachers or 44%, indicated that "nothing" could be described as least effective as the program was complete and effective on all points. Almost 43% of the SROs believed that the police and schools "could only do so much." Thus, the least effective aspect was the perceived inability of the DARE program to control other significant and influential areas of students' lives, most noticeably home life. These SROs believed that no single program could be entirely effective and that drug prevention wasn't really a police and school issue as much as a parental and/or societal issue. Seventy-eight percent of the principals were uncomfortable identifying any aspects in which the program was "least effective." No major themes emerged in terms of changes to enhance effectiveness. The handful of individual or minor multiple themes which were identified will be examined in chapter seven.

Nearly 88% of all respondent were in favour of retaining the program, even if it was found to be ineffective. One hundred percent of these were teachers, 86% were SROs and nearly 67% were principals. This finding speaks to the complex role that
DARE plays in schools, and clearly shows that DARE has a synergy far exceeding the program’s limitations.

Five curricular objectives were also examined (as seen in Table 2). Finally, an open-ended question asking for “additional comments” found nearly 44% agreeing that it was “the people”, meaning the police officers, who “made the program” and that DARE need not be the specific program offered as long as the “police offered something” that was “legitimate” in terms of educational content. Twenty-five percent of these were teachers and more than 28% SROs. Principals were directly asked if the police needed to specifically offer the DARE program. Eighty-nine percent indicated that any program that was deemed effective would be “fine.”
Chapter 7: Conclusion

This final chapter begins with a review of the focus of this study of the DARE program in Lethbridge, and the sample. This is followed by a brief general summary of the research literature, which is in turn followed by a review of this study’s findings in the areas of curricular content, program delivery, and program efficacy of the DARE program. Next, recommendations, from both respondents and myself, are compiled. Ideas for future study conclude the chapter.

Lethbridge Study

The DARE program was implemented in Lethbridge, Alberta, in 1993. By 1997, six SROs were trained in the DARE program and certified as instructors. These officers provided program delivery to all of Lethbridge’s 18 elementary schools. A total of 35 grade six classes, in both the public and separate school systems, were involved. To this day, all grade six students in Lethbridge are receiving the DARE program, and it is still delivered by a total of six SROs.

This research project began in the winter of 1999 and spring of 2000, with the drafting of a thesis proposal. Thirty-two interviews with respondents were conducted in the Spring and Summer of 2000. Results of these interviews were processed during 2001. The study consists of recorded interviews with sixteen teachers, nine school principals and seven school resource officers. Teachers and principals were selected from both the separate and public school districts using a random numbers table. Selection was random and stratified. The total population for principals in Lethbridge is eighteen (12 public and six separate schools). Teachers were selected from a total population of 35 persons from both the public and separate system (25 public and 10 separate). The total population of the Lethbridge SROs involved, past and present, in the
DARE program numbered 10 – this number includes myself. Two SROs who were in their first year, and myself, were excluded from the sample.

The three areas of the DARE program this study examined are curricular content, program delivery, and efficacy. Respondents were also able to comment on any other issues relating to DARE. All interviews were recorded and approximately one hour in duration.

In terms of biographical profiles, the typical SRO interviewed had an average of 12.14 years of police service. The average number of years of service in the SRO unit was 3.5 and officers had completed nearly 30 DARE programs on average.

The teachers involved had an average of just less than sixteen years of service, with three and 29 years of service reflecting the extremes. All of the teachers taught all of the “core” subjects, with many teaching additional subjects. All of the respondents were assigned to participate in the DARE program by virtue of their position as grade six teachers, and all viewed their participation as optional. The average teacher had been exposed to 4.7 programs and 3.4 DARE instructors. The average school size was 365 students, with estimated class sizes of 25 students in the grade six classes, in which DARE is offered.

Principal had on average 17 years of administrative experience, with an additional 11 years of direct classroom or “teaching experience.” An average of seven completed DARE programs were delivered under their tenures as administrations.

Literature

A review of the literature found that the DARE program was generally quite popular. The majority of the literature suggests that DARE has a limited effect upon
stopping student drug use, particularly as time passes. There is, however, a greater efficacy with respect to student attitudes and awareness about drugs as a result of exposure to the program. The literature also suggests that a more flexible and comprehensive prevention program that extends beyond grade five or six is required. Finally, the literature suggests that there is a need for direct parental involvement in the program, something that DARE does not provide in its core curriculum.

In summary, the literature that was examined generally agrees on six key points:

1. DARE has a limited effect on reducing student drug use.
2. However, DARE has greater efficacy with respect to student attitudes toward and awareness of drugs.
3. A more flexible program than DARE’s current core curriculum is desirable.
4. A more comprehensive program extending beyond grade five or six is desirable.
5. Direct parental involvement in the program is desirable, but is currently absent.
6. The DARE program is extremely popular.

Curriculum

Ninety-four percent of the respondents viewed the curricular content favourably; one hundred percent of the teachers and SROs were of this opinion. The SRO support, however, was conditional. Fifty-seven percent found the program “too crammed” and offering only superficial coverage of the sixteen lesson topics.

There was very little consensus among teachers surrounding the most important aspects of the curriculum. The exception was within the SRO and principal samples. Fifty-seven percent of the SROs
found the lesson on self-esteem to be among the most important of the curricular aspects. Seventy-five percent of these same SROs also believed that the self-esteem lesson was not meeting the lesson objectives. The principals believed that information on the “harmful effects of drugs” was the most important aspect of the curriculum with 50% sharing this opinion.

The only consensus regarding “least important curricular aspects” occurred with more than 66% of the SROs indicating that lesson five was “unrealistic.” Despite disliking the lesson all agreed that learning “ways to say no to drugs” was vital. Unfortunately, the SROs believed that lesson five did not provide an opportunity for students to truly learn to “just say no” to drugs.

Few dominant themes emerged respecting “changes to the curriculum” with the only major area of consensus in the SRO group. Fifty percent of the SROs believed that the program could have a more community-based focus on violence as opposed to an “Americanised” focus.

**Delivery**

Only teachers and SROs were interviewed on the topic of program delivery. More than 95% of teachers and SRO’s felt that the program was delivered “extremely well.” Nearly half of the teachers believed that “quality” uniformed officers were the reason for the success. A majority of the teachers were also satisfied with their current level of involvement with the delivery of the DARE program and most indicated that the delivery was consistent. Where minor variations did occur, these were only in terms of instructors’ personalities. As for the most important delivery aspect, 64% of teachers believed keeping the students actively involved was critical and that the program was successful at doing so.
Forty-three percent of the respondents believed that the DARE program contained such a complete delivery system that nothing could be described as "least important." Ninety percent of these respondents were teachers, while 83% of the SROs had concerns regarding the limitations of "a canned curriculum."

When changes to the delivery system were discussed, eight teachers and six of seven SROs believed that the program had to be more adaptable to fit the individual classrooms.

These findings are also consistent with the literature in two regards:

1. Teachers liked the program delivery and the officers and viewed the SROs as key components to program success. This is supported in almost all the literature that examined teachers' perceptions.

2. The SROs desired a more flexible delivery system, which is supported throughout the literature and specifically by Beck (1998). Beck suggests that any drug prevention curriculum that is too rigid and contains strictly a "just say no" message is flawed when compared to more flexible, knowledge-based, programs that consider a broad range of contextual differences. A more flexible system was desired by 66% of all teachers including all five, or 100%, of the male teachers.

**Efficacy**

A little more than 40% of the respondents believed that the DARE program was either a "very effective" or "effective" drug prevention program. The remaining respondents did not suggest that the program was either effective or ineffective in reducing drug use among teens. That police were viewed in a positive light as "regular people", was identified as the singular most effective aspect of the program by just over half of the respondents. Included in this group were 44% of all teachers, 71% of all SROs, and 55% of all school principals.
There was very little consensus with respect to “least effective aspects of the program.” In fact, the greatest consensus surrounded the belief that “nothing” could be described as least effective. Seven teachers, or 44%, indicated that “nothing” could be described as least effective as the program was complete and effective on all points. Almost 43% of the SROs believed that the police and schools “can only do so much.” Thus, the least effective aspect was the inability of the DARE program to control the other areas of students’ lives, most noticeably home life. These SROs believed that no single program could be entirely effective and that drug prevention wasn’t really a police and school issue as much as a parental or societal issue. Seventy-eight percent of the principals were uncomfortable identifying any aspects in which the program was “least effective.” No major themes emerged in terms of changes to enhance effectiveness. Several individual or minor multiple themes developed and will be examined in the Recommendations section of this chapter.

Nearly 88% of all respondent were in favour of keeping the program, even if it was found to be ineffective. This finding speaks to the complex role that DARE plays in schools, and clearly shows that DARE has a synergy far exceeding the program description.

Finally an open-ended question asking for “additional comments” found nearly 44% suggesting that “the people made the program”—that is, the police officers delivering it—and that DARE need not be the program that was offered by police as long as the “police offered something” that was legitimate in terms of educational content. Principals were directly asked if the police needed to specifically offer the DARE program. Eighty-nine percent of the principals indicated that any program that was deemed effective would be “fine.”

**Summary**

In conclusion, the major findings regarding curriculum, delivery, and efficacy total sixteen and are listed in order as follows:

1. Fully 100% of the teachers and 94% of the respondents viewed the curriculum favourably.
2. Ninety-five percent of the teachers believed the SROs were delivering the program effectively.

3. Ninety-five percent of teachers indicated that the program delivery was consistent among SROs.

4. No less than 94% of the teachers believed that any one of the five program objectives was being met. This is in contrast to no greater than 57% of the SROs at best and 14% at worst.

5. Eighty-nine percent of the principals indicated that DARE need not be the specific program that was delivered in their schools. Other programs, if they had similar goals and would be delivered by police officers, were seen as interchangeable with the DARE program. Twenty-five percent of the teachers and 28% of the SROs volunteered this, but were not directly asked the question like the principal sample was.

6. Eighty-eight percent of all respondent were in favour of keeping the program, even if it was found to be ineffective. One hundred percent of these were teachers, 86% were SROs, and 67% were principals.

7. Eight-five percent of the SROs, and more than 66% of the combined sample, believed that the program had to be more adaptable to fit individual classrooms.

8. Eighty-one percent of the teachers were satisfied with their current level of involvement in the delivery of the DARE program.

9. Seventy-eight percent of the principals were uncomfortable identifying any aspects of the program as “least effective.”
10. Sixty-six percent of the SROs disliked lesson five—"ways to say no"—indicating it was unrealistic.

11. Sixty-four percent of teachers believed keeping students actively involved in the lessons was critical, and that the DARE program was successful in doing so.

12. Fifty-seven percent of the SROs found the program “too crammed”, resulting in “only offering superficial content.”

13. Fifty-seven percent of the SROs viewed the lesson on self-esteem as the single most important curricular aspect, yet 75% of these same SROs believed that this lesson was not meeting the intended objectives.

14. Fifty-three percent of the respondents believed that the singular most effective aspect of the program was that police were viewed positively, as “regular people.” Included in this group were 44% of all teachers, 71% of all SROs, and 55% of all school principals.

15. Fifty percent of the SROs believed that the program could have a more community-based focus on violence, as opposed to the “American standardized” focus.

16. Only forty-one percent of the respondents believed that the DARE program was either a “very effective” or “effective” drug prevention program. Included in this group were 57% of the SROs, 37% of the teachers, and 33% of the principals.

Recommendations
This section discusses recommendations under two categories. First examined is the range of recommendations made by individual respondents. The majority of recommendations made by the respondents are in direct response to the question “What changes if any would you make to make the program more effective?” Other comments relating to recommendations that were volunteered during the entire interview are also included.

Next, I propose specific and detailed recommendations based on the research literature (chapter two) and the results of this research project (chapters four, five, and six). These recommendations consist of outlining five possible options which are context specific to the DARE program and its delivery in Lethbridge – the site of this research study. Nevertheless, these recommendations have broad application and relevance for the DARE program, nationally and internationally.

**Respondents’ Recommendation.** All total, twenty unique recommendations were offered by the participants. There were some areas in which respondents from the three stakeholders groups were in agreement, and many recommendations that were unique to individuals and groups. The recommendations of the respondents begin below with the SROs, followed by teachers, and finally principals. Respondents are recorded in parentheses for each corresponding recommendation.

The SROs had five recommendations to enhance the DARE program. These will be presented in descending order according to popularity.

1. Implement a follow up component for middle school students, which may or may not be DARE (S1, S2, S3, S5, S6, T3).
2. Introduce a more flexible, and less “watered down”, curriculum (S1, S4, S7, P4).
3. Increase Teacher involvement and DARE messages into other subjects (S1, S7, T1).
4. Encourage a more tolerant philosophy toward mistakes than DARE currently offers; focus on “behaviour” not condemnation of the individual (S4, T10, T11).

5. Incorporate a summer camp for students with a DARE curricular component (S4).

Teachers made six unique recommendations, ten in total. Two garnered multiple support among teachers and two were similar to recommendations made by SROs.

1. Involve students’ parents in a meaningful way—i.e., a homework component—as parents are completely excluded in the current program (T3, T9, P1, P7).

2. Increase police presence/involvement, through SROs or other officers (T6, T8, A2).

3. Incorporate testimonials from individuals with past drug related problems (T4). Also incorporated should be more hard hitting, and “worldly, real life stories” from drug dealers and addicts (T9, P6).

4. SROs need to be better prepared for weekly lessons and yearly scheduling (T2, T14).

5. Make DARE mandatory for all students (T7).

6. Award successful students with a token memento beyond a simple certificate (T1).

Principals had eleven recommendations, nine of which were unique to the principals and are listed below. Three of these were previously suggested by teachers, as was one by the SROs. This will conclude the respondents’ contributions, with a total of 20 separate recommendations.
1. SROs require more training in teaching and classroom management and it is important to ensure that all SROs have similar competencies (p. 3, p. 4).

2. Ensure the program begins in the fall and not after Christmas break (p. 1).

3. Ensure the program is completed prior to Christmas break (p. 5).

4. Enhance the role-playing scenarios to ensure that kids internalise the message, not simply “spout it off” as is the case currently (p. 4). (This is consistent with 66% of the SROs, who also had difficulties with lesson five’s role-play, stating it was unrealistic).

5. Alter the program to reflect the needs of aboriginal students, as DARE depicts “American demographics” (p. 5). (This is also consistent with the finding that 85% of the SROs and more than 66% of all respondents believed that the program had to be more adaptable to fit individual classroom needs).

6. Concentrate on “why” people chose or chose not to take drugs and “understand what makes people strong or what is in their character to do it.” (p. 6).

7. Increase the technological aspect. “Whip up a video... get a computer game” (p. 7).

8. Promote the DARE program more by way of media and “paraphernalia” like bumper stickers (p. 7).

9. Encourage the Lethbridge Police Service to make the SRO assignment a “high profile position for city police officers and a positive career move.” Make the position as attractive as possible to get the best possible people and not those simply “putting in time.” (p. 8)
Author's Recommendations. The literature, although mixed to some degree, largely suggests that DARE is not an effective drug prevention program. I have not found reasons to doubt this conclusion, but it must be recognized that measuring the effectiveness of the program is a difficult task. It is difficult to come to conclusions regarding DARE, or any other specific anti-drug program, because of the influences of the varied sources and forms of anti-drug information that a student is exposed to (Zagumny & Thompson, 1997). Nevertheless, it must be noted that the preponderance of research finds the DARE program ineffective in reducing drug use among teens.

On the other hand, it is rather amazing to note the overwhelming support the DARE program enjoys, regardless of the program’s effectiveness. This finding was perhaps the greatest catalyst for my recommendations. Before undertaking this study, I did not fully appreciate or put into perspective the fact that DARE has a tremendous synergy, regardless of its educational value. This synergy results in a program of incredible popularity among educators and police. Nevertheless, I am quite astounded that a program that is human resource intensive and requires 17 weeks of precious classroom time is so popular, in view of the fact that it cannot demonstrate its effectiveness in attaining its objectives. Yes, there are benefits that are difficult to measure, but could we not achieve the same thing and have a program that is demonstrably effective? Perhaps even a program that is equally ineffective, but less of a strain on school and police resources is an alternative worth considering.

Pursuing this research was a fruitful heuristic exercise for myself, in that it raised many questions for me about the complexity behind the issue of drug education and any reforms I may presume to propose. What do the stakeholders truly hope to achieve in any
drug resistance education program? Does any single drug prevention program really work? What roles do and should police have in public schools? Who should be responsible for youth drug education? Is drug resistance education the sole domain of schools? Should drug education be done in isolation from the parents? These questions, the answers to which are obviously beyond the scope of this single research endeavour, provided me with a sustained passion for my research. They also nurtured my belief in the value of making concise recommendations directed, first, toward the specific context of DARE education in Lethbridge and, next, on the DARE program generally.

In view of the results of this research, the question of whether or not the schools of Lethbridge and the Lethbridge Police Service will or should maintain their commitment to delivering a program that is widely reported to be ineffective must be asked. I believe that one of the goals of schools and police who participate in DARE is to try to keep our children safe. I also believe that both agencies have a responsibility to teach students how to make decisions that will ensure they are safe not only today, but also in the future. Helping students make decisions to ensure their safety goes well beyond the need to be safe from drugs; it includes all decisions that may compromise their well-being. We must be honest about our endeavour to do so, especially about the methods that we employ toward this end. Thus we must address the issue of whether or not the DARE program is appropriate and desirable for Lethbridge. If so, do we continue delivering it unchanged and unhindered by evaluation? If not, do we attempt to implement program reform to reflect the perspectives of this study, or any other study for that matter? Should we abandon DARE altogether and look for a replacement, fully recognizing that there may not be any one program that is a panacea? Would we then
still desire police participation in program delivery? Does a more effective program even exist, or will one ever?

The Lethbridge Police Service does not have an infinite amount of human resources and has, over the past seven years, attempted a wide variety of service delivery strategies in efforts to foster positive police-community relations. The schools of Lethbridge do not have an infinite amount of classroom instruction time, nor do they have an overwhelmingly flexible provincially mandated curriculum. Neither organization has an unlimited budget. Within these complex parameters, I have delineated a number of specific recommendations. Certainly acceptance of any or all of these recommendations is contingent upon some difficult choices being made. Therefore I have grouped my recommendations into the following five options, from which any one, or a combination of, options may be selected:

1. Keep DARE in its current form.
2. Eliminate DARE completely from Lethbridge classrooms.
3. Reform DARE, with the approval of the DARE governing bodies, on the basis of this study and other research.
4. Implement a more effective drug and violence prevention program.
5. Design an entirely new drug and violence prevention program that may or may not include police and is tailored to the needs of the Lethbridge community.

Should the first option, keeping DARE in its current form, be accepted, then we need to be prepared to answer the criticisms surrounding DARE. I have noted that DARE is extremely popular worldwide. However, what was not communicated earlier is
that DARE is slowly experiencing a decline in popularity with school districts in many US states. This decline is in direct response to anti-DARE groups presenting the less than flattering research on DARE’s efficacy to media and school boards. These groups have stimulated interesting debates and forced people close to the program to ask themselves difficult questions. If the decision is to keep DARE in Lethbridge in its current form, we need to be aware that these debates will inevitably find their way into our community.

The second option, eliminating DARE, would certainly be negatively received by large parts of the community—especially as delivery of the DARE program is intertwined with police presence in school. Many observers would equate removing DARE with removing police from Lethbridge’s schools. There would no doubt be political fallout for both educators and police, especially in these times of highly publicized incidents of school violence. Therefore, removing the program is not such a simple proposition, and there would be a need to be specific about the rationale for removal.

Stakeholders would need to understand that DARE is a small part of Lethbridge Police Service’s commitment to schools. It was an important “door opener” that gave police in Lethbridge credibility early on in their SRO program and later opened the door for ALERT. Consideration also needs to be given to what role DARE should play in the Lethbridge ALERT program. The original ALERT proposal suggested a 25% educational component that D.A.R.E. largely consumed. Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) was the second largest component but was eliminated in 2000 and replaced with C-Smart. The ALERT coordinating committee should be prepared to re-
evaluate the rationale surrounding the education component prior to making any
decisions regarding DARE. Perhaps the issue of community-specific content should also
be included in this debate. Furthermore, removing DARE does not necessarily mean that
the education component must suffer. Nevertheless, these are only a few of the issues to
be considered, not to mention that the literature alone makes for a solid enough case to
eliminate DARE.

The third option, reforming DARE, sounds like a straightforward proposition.
However, despite assurances from the governing body that curricular revisions are
welcomed and currently underway, one must recognize that DARE has undergone only
two significant curricular reforms since its inception. Any reform independent of DARE
America is unauthorized and will be regarded with great concern and scrutiny by this
quality control conscientious institution.

However, if redesigning the program is the option the Lethbridge community
decides to choose, this research study could serve as a starting point for such a reform.
The following suggestions could begin the dialogue. These fifteen suggestions constitute
an outline for reform of DARE’s “core” curriculum and are drawn from the overall
findings of this research study as well as from individual respondent’s requests and
suggestions:

1. Begin the program with a pre-test to allow for accumulation of baseline data
for later assessment of program effectiveness.

2. Add as a component to the first lesson—Introduction—an invitation to parents
to participate, as well as outlining a formula that would ensure that all
subsequent lessons also allowed for parental participation.
3. Alter lesson two—Understanding the Effects of Mind-altering Drugs. This lesson currently includes an outdated and often criticized stereotype-laden animated video titled “Land of Decisions and Choices.” A loosely detailed “drug fact sheet” that offers minimal, one-dimensional, insight into the “harmful effects of drugs” is also a component. A more recent and stimulating video reflecting the visual aid needs of this study’s respondents, and a more in-depth and unbiased fact sheet, are among the changes that would improve the lesson by making it more interesting for students and more informative for them. It should be kept in mind with all of the lessons that a more flexible and less “crammed” program was desired by 57% of the SROs and all of the male teachers. Interestingly, and perhaps not so easily addressed, the SROs complained that despite the crammed curricula it was often “watered down.”


5. Combine concepts from lessons four, twelve, and sixteen—Changing Beliefs about Drug Use, Saying “Yes” to Positive Alternatives, and Having Positive Role Models. The concepts of appropriate peer modelling and keeping involved in positive activities are key themes that assist in the prevention of drug use and should be highlighted.

6. Entirely revamp lesson five—Learning Resistance Techniques: Ways to say ‘No’. The unrealistic role-play scenarios in this lesson are the ire of 66% of
the SRO's. While there is no doubt that role-play does have a place in the
DARE program, the problem is that lesson five does not really utilize role-
play. It is, rather, scripted mimicry. The preventive focus of the program will
clearly benefit with truly experiential methods of instruction. Goldstein's
(1988) work on pro-social competencies indicates that, in order for young
people to make good choices in any situation, they must think of more than
one way to act. By no longer limiting students' choices and allowing them to
improvise and to discover the most appropriate responses, we will be ensuring
that they are successful when tested in real-life situations. Genuine role-play
allows for this growth, and it is an easy and natural fit for the DARE program.
Unfortunately, there is confusion between role-playing and acting (van Ments,
1983) and lesson five is very bad cabaret indeed.

7. Combine lessons six and seven—Building Self-esteem, and Learning
Assertiveness—a Response Style. Although I recommend combing concepts,
it is not without a caveat. Ninety-four percent of teachers believed that DARE
was meeting its program objectives in the area of promoting self-esteem.
SROs were less supportive, with only 28% believing the program helped
enhance self-esteem. Self-esteem is a difficult construct to measure, although
no one doubts the significant role it plays in influencing young people's
decisions. SROs doubted the adequacy of having but one lesson on such a key
subject.
8. Remove lesson eight—Managing Stress Without Taking Drugs. The lesson offers an important concept, but one that is more adequately dealt with by health curricula.

9. Combine lessons nine and fourteen—Reducing Violence and Resisting Gang and Group Violence. The emphasis should be on more community-specific trends and concerns, as opposed to the content drawn from large urban centres in the United States that is in place.

10. Lesson ten—Combating Media Influences on Drug Use and Violence—should be incorporated throughout all the lessons and instructors should reinforce this with current media examples on an ongoing basis.

11. Lesson fifteen serves as a review and if it remained would set the stage for a post-test.

12. Remove lesson sixteen—Taking a Stand. This is a forced choice lesson where students must “be sure to express” and take a stand on how they feel about the program, what they learned, what could help them stay drug free and avoid violence, and why they think it is important to be drug free and avoid violence. Instead students could use this time to discuss these topics, and to generate ideas to present at a culminating ceremony. This would facilitate comprehension.

14. Keep lesson seventeen—Culmination. It is very important to recognize and celebrate the achievements of students and the collaborative efforts of stakeholders. Especially important is the involvement of parents. Previously
this was their first involvement, coming at the conclusion of the seventeen-week program. If, as suggested in the first recommendation above, parents are involved from the beginning, the culminating lesson would be much more meaningful for them and their children. However, care by the police should be taken to avoid blatantly self-promoting agendas.

15. Conduct program evaluations. Regular feedback on the program from teachers, students, SROs, and parents is highly desirable. SROs’ classroom practices would also benefit from an evaluation by educators. Considerations need to be made to ensure this process occurs with enough regularity and formality to make the exercise meaningful, but not cumbersome as teacher workloads are already quite prohibitive.

16. Conduct an investigation to determine if six SROs are required to deliver this revamped curriculum. Perhaps the changes would warrant greater representation. Consideration should also be given to follow-up programming.

The fourth option is to implement a drug and violence prevention program which is more effective than the DARE program. From the research and literature review which was conducted for this study, it is clear to me that the search for an encompassing, proven effective, drug prevention program is, to say the least, elusive. There is no convincing evidence that a single, markedly superior, program exists. Nevertheless, one needs to be careful not to dismiss the exercise as completely futile. It is crucial for schools and police agencies to keep abreast of the literature in the cause of identifying programs with the greatest efficacy.
A fifth and final option is to design a new drug and violence prevention program. This may be viable for Lethbridge. Now that this study has collected perceptions and suggestions from three major stakeholder groups, the data can serve as a beginning for designing a community specific program. There is also precedent in Lethbridge for designing a new program.

A unique Lethbridge program titled C-SMART (Communication-Culture-Community, Students Managing Anger Respectfully Together) is a program that was designed by a variety of Lethbridge stakeholders. This project was undertaken in the year 2000 by members within the ALERT partnership. I have experience in the design of this program, being involved in researching and designing it, as well as being the main advocate for the program from the police contingent. I also assisted in overall curriculum development. The program quickly took hold in Lethbridge schools, and reflects all of the identified Lethbridge stakeholders' visions for a violence prevention curriculum for grade seven students.

C-SMART is designed to be presented over eight weeks to grade seven students and includes a testing component upon program completion (see Appendix E for an outline of lessons, purpose and presenters). C-SMART also utilizes SROs to deliver the lessons, however team teaching strategies include participation from school counsellors, Native Liaison Workers, school public health nurses, and classroom teachers from both public and separate school districts.

The C-SMART program seems to address some of the concerns that were uncovered in this study of the Lethbridge DARE program. Above all, C-SMART's curriculum is flexible, allowing for more community specific content. Too often there are missed opportunities to explore student concerns if one is driven to get through the curriculum. I believe C-Smart does this successfully, and any locally designed
program could also achieve this. To date all grade seven students in Lethbridge receive the C-Smart program. Unfortunately no evaluation or study of the program has been undertaken.

In weighing the above five options, I advocate the following. Cease delivery of the DARE program in Lethbridge schools. Replace DARE with a drug and violence prevention program and curriculum unique to the community of Lethbridge.

I believe that DARE is not a good fit for the Lethbridge community, based both upon published concerns about the program’s efficacy (reducing drug use among participants) and the nature of respondents’ feedback in this study, which suggests that DARE is inflexible and not tailored to our specific community needs. However, it is important to recognize that there is satisfaction with the police in schools, delivering a topic that many teachers are not comfortable in addressing. It is also recognized that the curricular content is viewed favourably by the respondents; the same curriculum that respondents overwhelmingly endorsed even if it didn’t work. However, this study also suggests that the specific content DARE offers is not a key issue. Instead, what was valued by respondents is the police presence in schools itself. Thus the DARE program in Lethbridge is more “symbolic” than effective. However, I am not prepared to endorse symbolism over substance. While this study suggests that the stakeholders would strongly support any endeavour held out as preventive programming, I believe that we can achieve this continued support and deliver a meaningful program at the same time.

Further, I do not believe (although I would be quite happy to be proven wrong) that the DARE governing bodies, either in the United States or Canada, would allow for changes to the DARE curriculum which this study identifies as being desirable. If changes to suit local circumstance and needs were allowed, this would go a long way toward quelling local concerns. I also recognize that DARE is an extremely popular
program but, again, the evidence is that any police delivered program would enjoy
similar support—particularly, one suspects, if it were marketed as rigorously as DARE. I
am also cognizant of the fact that DARE very positively enhances relations between
Lethbridge schools, the community, and the Lethbridge Police Service. However, again,
it is also valid to conclude that this benefit could be achieved from the introduction of
another police delivered program with similar aims. After all, 89% of the principals
declared that DARE did not have to be the program that police delivered; but they did
want a program. I therefore conclude that there is nothing so unique about DARE that
could not be better achieved with another program. Furthermore, the commitment of the
Lethbridge Police Service to the students of Lethbridge as demonstrated by our ALERT
program initiative is far greater than any single program, regardless of the number of
promotional bumper stickers, licence plate holders or T-shirts celebrating DARE to be
seen in the city.

It is important to investigate whether or not there is a better drug and violence
prevention program available and whether the Lethbridge Police Service is in a position
to offer it. We must also consider that we may be faced with the reality that there really
is no such thing as an effective drug and/or violence prevention curriculum. Considering
the number of variables that affect efficacy, we may be foolish to even believe that one
single, generic, program could. Regardless, the research is invaluable when future
developers design a program that accurately and effectively reflects the needs of the
Lethbridge community.

The continuing “war on drugs” has not been a resounding success and perhaps it
is time to rethink our strategies. Indeed, there is evidence that Canada has begun to
retreat from the battle somewhat. Canadians have committed great resources to standardized in-school drug prevention programs such as DARE, yet documentation of successes is not in great evidence. In Canada simple marihuana possession (less than 30 grams) no longer leads to a criminal record, and most often results in a disposition of a very small fine. The Association of Canadian Police Chiefs endorsed this move and further wanted the processing of simple marihuana possession removed from the courts altogether, by issuing a ticket to offenders. (To be fair, the Canadian Chiefs of Police recognized that the efforts of police were failing when the decisions of the courts were taken into consideration.) Canada’s Fraser Institute (2001) issued a policy report calling prohibition a “complete failure” and suggested that removing drug prohibition is the only way to assess whether the harmful side effects of prohibition outweigh the benefits. On March 16, 2001, the Senate re-established the “Special Senate Committee on Illegal Drugs.” The Committee’s mandate is to examine the government’s “current laws, policies and international obligations, and the policies adopted by other countries” with respect to cannabis (Senate Committee, 2002). The report is expected to be tabled in August of 2002 and will no doubt have implications for future preventive programming.

We now must move forward from past mistakes and from DARE; to lead and not follow. The author proposes this without any hint of disrespect for the valuable role DARE has played in the past; it did indeed provide a noble, even revolutionary, in-school drug prevention program. We must acknowledge that DARE has been the leader in police delivered educational programs, right from the effective and economical two week training of the officers to the extremely easy to follow (all be it rigid and seemingly ineffective) curriculum. Because of its popular success, and the attendant scrutiny that popularity attracted, DARE has ironically demystified police educational programming and offered us an opportunity to develop a more community specific program. DARE was the pioneer of police delivered educational programs and, despite questionable efficacy, it has paved the way for a positive police presence in schools and forever
changed the way police are viewed by the community. DARE is the most popular police education program ever developed, and probably will remain so in the foreseeable future. However, popularity does not always mean substance.

The scrutiny that DARE has received may one day be viewed as a necessary agent for change, and DARE’s past success is in no small way directly related to the success that future community specific, police delivered, in-school, programs may achieve. And, there is every reason to believe that such innovate programs would be well received by major stakeholders. Stakeholders view police delivered programs favourably and are more comfortable having “experts” delivering them. Many teachers are uncomfortable with their level of expertise as it pertains to drugs, thus paving the way for police.

Schools would be in favour of a more effective program, provided dedicated officers are consistently in their schools. Police would support the program, providing it was human resource friendly and held out to be effective. Parents would support any police/school educational endeavour that respects individual privacy and is designed at keeping their children safe from drugs and violence. Certainly, both schools and police would benefit from any program that promotes the image of a healthy partnership between schools, police, students, and the community. Furthermore, media, community and government influences nurture a receptive climate for keeping a police presence in schools. Intense and ongoing media portrayal of school violence ensures that police will be part of schools, as will increasing pressure on schools from government, media and the community to provide more than traditional educational staples.

When police are included in designing a program, they must ensure that they understand the “prevailing educational climate” and that the program is tailored correspondingly. There also needs to be an allowance made for curricular expansion,
from grades six through twelve. Schools are also no longer afforded the luxury of being purely traditional, academic, institutions and this really has become the entry point for consensus as it relates to police involvement in schools (Fisher, 1999). Police must share this responsibility with schools, but neither party need exclusively rely on the other. There are too many stakeholders in education, most particularly parents, to make this a closed system. Future program success will only result when attempts at mitigating intervening variables are made and there is no more mitigating variable in a child’s life than his/her family. Educators and police can only do so much and they need not take on the role of sole provider of values. The child’s first experience with values is a result of “family atmosphere” and is influenced by economic, racial, religious, and social realities (Dreikurs, 1964). DARE unfortunately did not account for this reality, and any other prevention program that does not understand the importance of parental support is ill conceived.

Finally, any future program must not be ideological or dogmatic in its approach. The bedrock criterion is that the program must be pro-truth. It must be based on the understanding that students need to have information that is accurate, age specific, and supported by the majority of Canadians’ family values, yet is true to the ideals of liberal education by fully exploring issues around drug use. Clearly, future curriculum designers have many difficult issues to address, but the author believes taking on these challenges is preferable to the alternative of continuing to offer one dimensional programming.

Summary

Respondents made 41 recommendations in total, with 21 unique suggestions among them. These recommendations were in addition to the ones collected under the headings of curriculum, delivery and efficacy and are a direct result of the question “what changes if any would you make to make the program
more effective.” No overwhelming endorsement for any one recommendation was noted, with the most popular of the recommendations garnering less than 15% support. I also offered five possible options based upon this research study and attached recommendations specific to each option. The conclusions drawn from these scenarios were to cease delivery of the DARE program in Lethbridge schools and to replace DARE with a drug and violence prevention program and curriculum specific to the community realities and needs of Lethbridge.
References


Project: Creating community partnerships to prevent drug use and violence.

*Journal of School Health, 70*(3), 84.


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1. **Introduction**

   **Concept:** Preventing drug abuse among children and youth is a collaborative responsibility.

   **Purpose:** To introduce the DARE program to students.

   **Objective:** Students will become acquainted with DARE officer assigned to the school and will be able to define their roles and responsibilities as DARE students.

2. **Understanding the Effects of Mind-altering Drugs**

   **Concept:** Drugs are substances that change the way the mind and body work. Drugs that act on the brain and nervous system to change (alter) feelings and behaviors are called mind-altering drugs.

   **Purpose:** To help students to develop knowledge of basic drug facts and the harmful effects of mind-altering drugs if misused.

   **Objective:** Students will understand basic facts about mind-altering drugs and the harmful effects that may result from the misuse of these drugs.

3. **Considering Consequences**

   **Concept:** Considering the consequences that may result from the use of drugs can be helpful in deciding to be drug-free.

   **Purpose:** To help students understand there are many consequences that may result from the use of drugs.
Objective: Students will be able to identify consequences of using and choosing not to use tobacco, alcohol and marihuana.

4. Changing Beliefs about Drug Use

Concept: Changing students' beliefs about the extent of drug use can help them resist pressure and say no to drug offers.

Purpose: To make students aware of the actual extent of drug use among adolescents and of the kinds of peer pressure they may face to take drugs.

Objective: Students will be able to identify the major sources and kinds of pressure and to compare their estimates of the extent of drug use among adolescents with estimates reported in national surveys.

5. Learning Resistance Techniques - Ways to SAY "NO"

Concept: There are effective ways to say no in response to different kinds of peer pressure to use drugs.

Purpose: To help students learn and practice effective ways to respond to different kinds of peer pressure to use drugs.

Objective: Students will be able to demonstrate effective ways to say no in responses to different kinds of peer pressure to use drugs.

6. Building Self-esteem

Concept: Developing positive attitudes about one's own abilities and achievements is important in building self-esteem.

Purpose: To help students understand that self-esteem, the way a person feels about himself or herself, results from positive and negative feelings and experiences.

Objective: Students will recognize positive qualities about themselves.
7. **Learning Assertiveness - a Response Style**

**Concept:** Assertiveness (standing up for yourself) is a response style that enables a person to state his or her own rights without loss of self-esteem.

**Purpose:** To teach assertiveness as a technique for refusing offers to use drugs or other situations where it would be helpful.

**Objective:** Students will be able to respond assertively in refusing offers to use drugs.

8. **Managing Stress Without Taking Drugs**

**Concept:** Stress refers to physical and mental strain felt about a situation or an event. The reactions that stress triggers in the body, mind, and emotions can be helpful under certain conditions but may be harmful if uncontrolled.

**Purpose:** To help students recognize stress encountered in their daily living and to suggest ways to deal with it other than by taking drugs.

**Objective:** Students will be able to identify stressors in their lives.

9. **Reducing Violence**

**Concept:** Reducing violence involved finding mutually acceptable ways to resolve disagreements without resorting to destructive acts.

**Purpose:** To help students recognize that destructive acts of violence are inappropriate ways to deal with anger and to resolve disagreements.

**Objective:** Students will be able to identify non-violent ways to deal with anger and disagreements.

10. **Combating Media Influences on Drug Use and Violence**

**Concept:** The media can influence the way people think, feel, and act about drug use and violence.
Purpose: To help students develop the understanding and skills needed to analyze how the media can influence the way people think, feel, and act about drug use and violence.

Objective: Students will be able to recognize media influence in presentations about tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use and in the presentations about violence that encourage or discourage drug use or violence.

11. Making Decisions about Risky Behaviors

Concept: Decision-making skills help people evaluate the risks involved in a situation, the choices available to them, and the consequences of these choices.

Purpose: To help students apply the decision-making process in evaluating the consequences of various kinds of risk-taking behavior, including that of using drugs, tagging, and using weapons.

Objective: Students will be able to apply decision-making skills in evaluating the risks in the situations involving using drugs, tagging, and using weapons.

12. Saying "Yes" to Positive Alternatives

Concept: Activities that students find interesting and rewarding can serve as positive alternatives to substance abuse.

Purpose: To help students find activities that are interesting and rewarding alternatives to drug use.

Objective: Students will identify and participate in positive alternatives activities which they may find interesting and in which they can achieve success.

13. Having Positive Role Models

Concept: High school student leaders who do not use drugs can serve as positive role models and help influence younger students not to use drugs.
Purpose: To acquaint students with high school students who do not use drugs and to clarify the misconception that drug users are the majority.

Objective: Students will identify ways that successful high school students use to avoid the use of drugs by participating in a variety of positive activities.

14. Resisting Gang and Group Violence

Concept: The negative consequences resulting from gang and group violence affect all members of the community.

Purpose: To help students recognize the negative consequences of gang and group violence and to help them resist becoming involved.

Objective: Students will be able to identify the negative consequences of gang and group violence and will suggest ways to avoid becoming involved.

15. Summarizing DARE Lessons

Concept: Drug Abuse Resistance Education involves learning about ways to say no to pressures or influences to use drugs and learning ways to avoid violence.

Purpose: To help students summarize and assess what they learned from participating in the DARE program.

Objective: Students will respond appropriately as a team to questions involving drug use and violence.

16. Taking a Stand

Concept: Taking a stand means giving the appropriate response when you are pressured to use drugs or act violently.

Purpose: To help students respond effectively when they are pressured to use drugs.

Objective: Students will take a positive stand to be drug-free and to avoid violence by putting their commitment in writing and reading it aloud.
17. **DARE Culmination**

**Concept:** Encouraging students to make pledges publicly in the presence of their family members, teachers, and peers can increase their personal commitment to stay drug-free and violence-free.

**Purpose:** To provide an appropriate DARE culminating activity to recognize individual achievement of all participants and reinforces the values and skills they have all learned.

**Objective:** Students will participate in an appropriate DARE culminating activity which recognizes individual achievement of all participants and reinforces the values and skills they have learned.
Appendix C

Sample Consent Letter

DATE:
NAME:
POSITION:
LOCATION:

Dear ________________:

I am currently enrolled in the Master of Education program at the University of Lethbridge and am conducting research for a thesis entitled: **DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education): Perceptions of teachers, school principals and school resource officers.**

The intent of this thesis is to measure the perceptions of teachers, school principals, and school resource officers in Lethbridge about the DARE program which has been in Lethbridge Schools since the 1991-92 school year. The study focuses on the DARE program’s curricular content; delivery; and perceived efficacy. A study of the Lethbridge program has not yet been undertaken and I anticipate that both educators and School Resource Officers will benefit from the study.

I would very much like you to be part of this study by participating in an interview session. This would require your participation in a tape-recorded interview lasting approximately 45 minutes.

All information will be handled in a confidential and professional manner. You have the right to withdraw from the study, without prejudice. Furthermore, all names, locations,
and any other identifying information will **not** be included in any discussion or analysis of the results.

I very much appreciate your assistance in this study. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at work or at home. You may also contact the supervisor of my thesis, Dr. Kas Mazurek, University of Lethbridge, at 329-2462 and/or any members of the Faculty of Education Human Research Committee if you wish additional information. The chair for this committee is Dr. Richard Butt, telephone 329-2434. Please feel free to contact me anytime by phone at 330-5018 (work) or 380-6040 (home).

Yours sincerely,

Jamie Fisher

If you chose to do so, please indicate your willingness to participate in the study by signing this letter in the space provided below. I will contact you to confirm your participation.

I, ____________________________, agree to participate in this study.

Participant Signature__________________ Date ___________
Appendix D

Interview Questions

Biographical/Professional Interview Questions: School Resource Officers

1. Number of years of Police experience

2. Number of years experience as school resource officer

3. Number of completed DARE programs

4. Number of DARE programs taught in public or separate schools

5. Elementary or middle school or combined

6. Average DARE class size

7. Previous Instruction/Teaching experience

8. Educational background
Biographical/Professional Interview Questions: Teachers

9. Years of teaching experience

10. Subject(s) taught

11. Is participation in the DARE program optional or assigned?

12. Number of DARE programs completed in your classes

13. Public or separate school

14. Elementary or middle school or combined

15. Average DARE class size

16. Number of different DARE instructors observed in the classroom

17. Number of students in school at time of DARE program
Biographical/Professional Interview Questions: School Principals

18. Principal or associate principal

19. Years of administrative experience

20. Years of teaching experience

21. Number of DARE programs completed in your school

22. How did the DARE program come to be part of your school’s regular programming?

23. Public or separate school

24. Elementary or middle school or combined

25. Number of students in school

26. Average DARE class size
Interview Questions: Curriculum

27. The respondent’s overall opinion on the content of the DARE curriculum

28. Most important aspects of the curriculum/Why?

29. Least important aspect/Why?

30. Changes respondent would like to see made in the content of the curriculum if any
Interview Questions: Delivery

31. The respondent’s overall opinion on how the DARE program is delivered

32. Degree of consistency (content, approach, and teaching skills) between the officers in delivery of the program

33. Most important aspects of the delivery of the program/Why?

34. Least important aspect/Why?

35. Changes respondent would like to see made in the delivery of the program if any
Interview Questions: Efficacy

36. The respondent's overall opinion on how effective the program is

37. Aspects in which program is most effective

38. Evidence of effectiveness

39. Aspects in which the program is least effective

40. What changes, in any aspect, could be made to make the program more effective

41. If the program was found to be ineffective in reducing drug use amongst teens would you still be in favour of the program. Why or why not?

42. Anything else that you would like to add that you have not had an opportunity to speak about?
43. (Teachers) Are you satisfied with your level of involvement?

44. (Principals) Does it have to be the DARE program? “Do the police need to specifically offer the DARE program?”
C-SMART Lessons, Purpose and Presenters

1. **What is Conflict**
   
   **Purpose:** This lesson will introduce students to the idea of constructive and destructive conflict and enable students to create a framework with which to think about how conflict affects people. It will introduce the series of “ALERT” lessons designed to teach students conflict resolution skills.
   
   **Presenter:** School Resource Officer

2. **Communication and Conflict**
   
   **Purpose:** This lesson will enable students to identify effective communication skills for use in negative situations.
   
   **Presenter:** School Resource Officer

3. **Relationships and Conflict**
   
   **Purpose:** This lesson will enable students to identify the importance of ongoing relationships. It will give students an opportunity to examine how individual reactions to specific conflicts often determine the quality of future relationships.
   
   **Presenter:** School Resource Officer and School Counsellor

4. **Alternatives to youth violence: Intimidation**
   
   **Purpose:** To provide students with skills and strategies to effectively recognize and deal with intimidation.
   
   **Presenter:** School Resource Officer

5. **Alternatives to youth violence: Weapons and Gangs**
Purpose: To assist in understanding the implications of being involved with weapons and or gangs and to aid students in recognizing that only a small percentage of youth are involved in violent activity.

Presenter: School Resource Officer

6. Cultural Diversity and Awareness

Purpose: This lesson will help students understand that cultural heritage is an important part of an individual’s personality. It will demonstrate to students that prejudice that is based on cultural identity is harmful and undermines the conflict resolution process.

Presenter: School Resource Officer and Native Liaison Worker

7. Community Resources

Purpose: To inform students of community resources

Presenter: School Resource Officer and School Public Health Nurse

8. C-Smart Review and Test

Purpose: To test student comprehension regarding program concepts

Presenter: School Resource Officer