

**AT-RISK STUDENTS' EVALUATION OF THE
COURTLINK AUTO CRIME PREVENTION
PROGRAM**

**A Report of a Pilot Project Conducted with Students
Enrolled in an Alternative School in Langley,
British Columbia**

Researchers

Charles K. Curtis and George Meehan

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AT-RISK STUDENTS' EVALUATION OF THE COURTLINK AUTO CRIME PREVENTION PROGRAM

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Purpose of Evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the suitability of a revised and updated *Courtlink Auto Crime Prevention Program* (CACPP) that was piloted with a class of 14 at-risk alternative secondary school students in Langley. The two evaluators sought the students' reactions to and opinions of the program in terms of its possible effect on the attitudes and behaviors of participants, relative to auto crime.

2. Methodology

To conduct this evaluation, the evaluators prepared a four-page survey questionnaire (Appendix A) and two Interview Protocols, the first for the students (Appendix B) and the second for the alternative school classroom teacher (Appendix C). The survey instrument was administered to the students on their completion of the program and a few days later the teacher and all 14 students were interviewed, and all their responses taped.

3. Analysis of Survey Instrument Written Responses

Questionnaires were returned by 12 of the 14 students. Their written responses revealed strong support for the content of CACPP, its topics, activities and materials. The one-day court visit received the highest score, in particular, the watching of an actual case being tried. Other specific program sections that were well rated were the exploration of the consequences of auto crime, the motivation behind committing auto theft, and the need to be better witnesses to crime. Nonetheless, although the students felt that their own attitudes and likely behaviors relative to committing auto crime had been impacted, and perhaps the attitude of those who might steal cars "for fun", they were greatly less certain about the likelihood of CACPP being able to make much of a difference either with youth at-risk who were planning to steal a car for profit, or for youth who had already committed auto crime and might then be given the program.

4. Student One-on-One Interview Responses

All 14 students remarked positively when being asked their overall opinion of CACPP, saying such things as "very good program", "good program", "really liked it", "one of the best things we've done" and "a pretty fun program". As with their written responses, throughout their interviews they identified activities and topics they liked best as the Court Visit, first and foremost. Other segments well liked or from which they felt they'd learned most were: the consequences of auto crime; learning to be a good witness; and understanding the harm in auto theft. When asked what they liked least, only five participants could think of anything at all, the others responding with "nothing I didn't like" or "liked everything". As well, the 14 were hard pressed to think of any changes they'd make to the program, with only six additions being suggested such as "make the course a little longer" and, "have someone come into our class who's committed an auto

crime . . . so's we can ask him questions". Finally, in terms of how the program had impacted their attitudes and possible behaviors, or might those of others, their answers here closely paralleled what they had said in their written responses (see final sentence in the preceding paragraph).

5. Alternative School Teacher's Interview Response

The two evaluators were able to spend 28 minutes interviewing the Alternative School teacher. Her replies to our seven questions were uniformly positive and emphatic, she beginning by saying "I'm really glad I did this program", she finding the course well designed and its array of activities and options allowing her to work CACPP into her social studies, English, and even her math class. She said she covered almost everything, even adding a couple of activities of her own devising. She felt that her 14 students had really taken to the program reacting "a lot more positively than I was expecting them to". She too believed that the court visit was a significant feature of the program with much that "was enlightening", especially the witnesses exercise, she feeling however that the entire program was well received, and saying of her students, "they'll keep this experience in their heads". When asked, finally, if she would teach the program again, her reply was immediate. "Of course I would, and will."

6. Discussion

This section of the evaluation focused on the responses given in the survey questionnaires and during the 15 interviews. It highlighted these findings, discussing their pro and con a little more fully. In short, the analysis of the written responses in the 12 returned questionnaires revealed strong support for most topics and aspects of CACPP, while the replies in the 14 student interviews confirmed much of what the questionnaires had disclosed — as has already been mentioned above.

7. Recommendations

The following recommendations proceed from the analysis and discussion of the information collected through the questionnaires and interviews with the at-risk students and their teacher.

- (a) Advertise the revised *Courtlink Auto Crime Program* as being appropriate, and available for use with at-risk alternative secondary school students.
- (b) Place an even greater emphasis on the Court Visit for at-risk students, increasing the length of time, especially the amount of time actually spent in the courtroom.
- (c) Emphasize "consequences" when CACPP is offered to at-risk students in alternative programs.
- (d) When CACPP is offered in alternative secondary schools, teachers might be advised to invite young adults who had been convicted of auto crime into the classroom as guest speakers.
- (e) Continue to update the topics and materials in CACPP to reflect contemporary crime statistics, new methods of fighting auto crime, and other topics that may be pertinent to the study (i.e. Bait Cars).
- (f) Consider offering a modified *Courtlink Auto Crime Prevention Program* to earlier aged at-risk students, from grades 6 to 8, whose profiles resemble those of the Langley alternative program students in this study.

AT-RISK STUDENTS' EVALUATION OF THE COURTLINK AUTO CRIME PREVENTION PROGRAM

Purpose of Evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the suitability of a revised and updated *Courtlink Auto Crime Prevention Program* (CACPP) that was piloted with a class of 14 students enrolled in an alternative secondary school program for at-risk students in Langley, British Columbia. Specifically, the evaluators sought to examine the opinions of the subjects in the study toward CACPP, and the possible effects of CACPP on their attitudes and behaviors toward auto crime — in particular, the theft of an automobile. The students in the study closely resembled the educational profile of students at “high-risk” for engaging in auto crime (Curtis & Meehan, 2005).

Methodology

To conduct an evaluation of the 13-hour “pilot” of the revised CACPP, the evaluators utilized the “Research Questions” and instruments they had developed for an earlier examination of the program (Curtis & Meehan, 2001). They then devised a four-page survey questionnaire (Appendix A) and a 9-question-interview protocol (Appendix B) in order to obtain student feedback on completion of the program. A 7-question interview protocol (Appendix C) was developed to obtain feedback from the alternative class teacher.

The survey instrument was administered to the students on their completion of the program and, three days later, 14 one-on-one interviews of from six to twelve minutes each were conducted with every one of the participating students by the two evaluators. The same day the classroom teacher’s opinion of CACPP was elicited through the seven

questions asked of her during an interview conducted and recorded by the two evaluators both of whom were present. The survey instrument and the student and teacher interviews provided the data for this Phase 2 evaluation.

The Survey Instrument

The *Courtlink Auto Crime Prevention Program Survey* (Appendix A) consisted of five parts. Part A asked students to consider the importance of each of the ten topics that comprised CACPP to an auto-crime-prevention program, to suggest additional topics that should have been included in CACPP and, finally, to comment on whether the information presented during CACPP was, in their opinion, true and up-to-date. Part B had students assess the usefulness of the several teaching activities used in the program. Part C required students to identify the materials used in CACPP that they enjoyed the most. Part D pertained to the court visit. In response to the items in Part D, students rated the court visit on a continuum that ranged from *I didn't like it* to *It was excellent*. Students were also asked what they liked most about the court visit, what important lesson they learned from this visit, and what changes, if any, they would recommend. Part E concluded the survey with two questions that required students to consider the possible effects CACPP might have on youth who were planning to borrow or steal automobiles.

Interview Protocols

Questions in the protocols developed by the evaluators for the student (Appendix B) and teacher (Appendix C) interviews were intended to elicit general comments concerning the appropriateness of CACPP for at-risk secondary students. As well, students' opinions of the effect of CACPP on their classmates and the program's potential for influencing others who may be thinking about committing auto crimes were intended

outcomes of the interviews.

Analysis of the Survey Instrument Written Responses

Questionnaires were collected from 12 of the 14 students (response rate = 86%) who completed the *Courtlink Auto Crime-Prevention Program*.

Part A: CACPP Content

To assess students' opinions concerning the content validity of CACPP as an auto-crime-prevention program, they were asked to rate each of the 10 topics covered in the program on a continuum that ranged from *Very Important* to *Not Important at All*. Numerical values were assigned to each category, with 4 representing *Very Important* and 1 representing *Not Important at All*. Frequencies of the responses to these categories for each of the 10 items, along with item means and modes (the most frequently occurring value) are given in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Responses of Students' Ratings of the Topics Included in CACPP

<i>TOPIC</i>	<i>Very Important</i>	<i>Important</i>	<i>Not Very Important</i>	<i>Not Important At All</i>
The different kinds of auto crime	2	10		
How auto crime hurts people and the community	2	9	1	
Why young people commit auto crimes	7	4	1	
How auto crime is related to drug use	1	7	4	
The difference between criminal and civil law	3	6	3	
What it feels like to be a victim of an auto crime	4	7	1	
What can happen to a young person who steals or damages an car	8	3	1	
The names and duties of people who work in the courts		4	8	
Negative attitudes that encourage auto crimes and positive attitudes that discourage auto crimes	3	7	2	
How you can help prevent auto crimes	5	5	2	

Table 2: Means and Modes for Students' Ratings of the Topics Included in CACPP.

<i>TOPIC</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mode</i>
The different kinds of auto crime	3.17	3.00
How auto crime hurts people and the community	3.08	3.00
Why young people commit auto crimes	3.50	4.00
How auto crime is related to drug use	2.75	3.00
The difference between criminal and civil law	3.00	3.00
What it feels like to be a victim of an auto crime	3.25	3.00
What can happen to a young person who steals or damages an car	3.58	4.00
The names and duties of people who work in the courts	2.33	2.00
Negative attitudes that encourage auto crimes and positive attitudes that discourage auto crimes	3.08	3.00
How you can help prevent auto crimes	3.25	3.00

The means for students' ratings for 8 of the 10 topics were 3.00 or greater, implying that as a group the students believed that these eight topics were important and should be included in an auto-crime prevention curriculum. The two topics for which the most frequently selected rating was *Very Important* pertained to the consequences of committing an auto crime (8 of 12) and reasons why youth commit auto crime (7 of 12). Mean ratings for importance for *How auto crime is related to drug use* and *The names and duties of people who work in the courts* failed to meet the criterion for *Important*, implying that students considered these topics to be the least important of those studied in CACPP and, perhaps, casting some doubt on the value of including them in auto crime prevention programs offered to at-risk secondary students. In the case of the relationship between auto crime and drug use, this inference would be of questionable validity, since, although the mean rating was 2.75, 7 students rated this topic *Important* and one student assigned it a rating of *Very Important*. Furthermore, no student rated it *Not Important at All*. This

was not the case, however, with study of court personnel. With a mean of 2.33, the most frequently selected rating for *The names and duties of people who work in the courts* was *Not Very Important* (8 of 12).

Following their ratings of the topics in CACPP, students were asked to submit any topics that they believed “should have been included” in the program. The single response to this item suggested that there should have been “more focus on consequences.”

Additional questions in Part A referred to the veracity and up-to-dateness of the content in CACPP. All 12 respondents checked *Yes, I think that most of it was true*, and no student identified a topic for which they thought the “information was too old and needed to be brought up to date.”

Part B: CACPP Activities

In addition to “prescribed activities,” the *Courtlink Auto Crime Prevention Program: Guide for Teachers* describes a number of “optional activities” that teachers may utilize in their classroom. The two optional activities used in this pilot study of CACPP are listed in Table 3, along with students’ judgments of their usefulness.

Table 3: Students’ Assessment of Optional Activities

<i>OPTIONAL ACTIVITY</i>	<i>USEFUL</i>	<i>NOT USEFUL</i>	<i>NOT ANSWERED</i>
Collected newspaper articles on auto crimes	6	4	2
Surveyed other students’ opinions on auto crime	8	2	2

A clear majority of the students who answered this item considered the collection of current newspaper articles on auto crime and surveying students’ opinions on auto crime to be useful activities.

Part C: Materials used with CACPP

From a list of the four kinds of materials selected from the *Guide for Teachers* that were used in their study of auto crime, students were asked to identify the three that they “liked the best.”

Table 4: Students’ Ranking of Materials

<i>MATERIALS</i>	<i>NO. OF TIMES SELECTED</i>	<i>RANK</i>
the diagrams	12	1.5
the newspaper articles	5	4
the victim impact statement	12	1.5
the quizzes	7	3

Diagrams (*People in a Criminal Trial, Criminal vs. Civil Law*, etc.) and the victim impact statement were selected by all 12 students, whereas quizzes and newspaper articles were selected by 58% and 42% respectively.

Part D: The Court Visit

This part of the survey instrument began with an item asking the students to rate the Court Visit by checking one of five statements that ranged from *It was excellent* to *I didn’t like it*.

Table 5: Students’ Rating of the Court Visit

<i>RATING</i>	<i>FREQUENCY</i>
It was <i>excellent</i> . I liked every part of it.	1
It was <i>very good</i> . I liked most parts of it.	9
It was <i>good</i> , though it could probably be improved.	2
It was <i>all right</i> , but it needs to have some changes.	
<i>I didn’t like it</i> .	

As can be seen in Table 5, responses varied from *Good* to *Excellent*, with three-quarters of the students rating the Court Visit as *Very Good*, clearly indicating strong support for this aspect of CACPP.

During the Court Visit, students viewed a courtroom, spoke with a number of court personnel, and played a game that required them to assume the role of a witness to an auto theft in a mock trial. When asked to identify what they liked “best” about the Court Visit, the majority (8 of 12) wrote that they preferred watching a case being tried in the courtroom over the other activities that comprised the Court Visit. Reasons for this choice were that watching a case in court was “interesting” (4 students), “real” (3 respondents), and “cool” (1 student). For the remaining four students, the highlight of the Court Visit was the meeting with a judge, described by one student as being “genuine and open,” and by another as being “interesting and informative.”

There was no consensus on the most important learning resulting from the Court Visit. In fact, five distinct categories emerged from a coding of the students’ responses to an item that asked them to describe the “most important thing” that they had learned from the Court Visit. As might be expected from a program such as CACPP, the category with the largest number of responses pertained to auto crime: four of the 12 students wrote that the most important thing that they had learned from the Court Visit was not to steal automobiles. Closely related to this response was the comment from a single student that the most important learning resulting from the court visit was “what can happen to you if you do auto crimes.” The category with the next largest number of responses (3 of 12) resulted from students watching a short video about being a witness to an auto crime. “What it takes to be a witness” and “the witness stuff” were responses on two survey questionnaires. The third respondent simply stated that as a consequence of watching the video, he or she was now aware that “witnesses aren’t always accurate.” Two respondents focused their comments on the courtroom, with one student stating that “what it’s like in a

courtroom” and the second student identifying “people’s jobs” as the most important thing learned from the Court Visit. For one of the two remaining students, knowing that a passenger in a stolen vehicle can also be charged was the most important learning, while for the other student a changed attitude toward the Crown Counsel was considered to be the most important result of the Court Visit.

Slightly more than half (7 of 12) of the students provided reasons for their choices described in the preceding paragraph. Perhaps the most perceptive reason for a particular choice was given by a student who stated that the most important thing he or she had learned was not to steal automobiles because stealing automobiles “hurts people” and is “not fair.” Less insightful, perhaps, are reasons based on learning something hitherto unknown. For example, two students suggested that learning about testifying as a witness was important to them because neither had any knowledge of witnessing prior to the Court Visit. Describing his reaction when the topic came up following the video, one of the two students wrote that “it got me thinking and paying attention.” Similarly, the two students who found significance in learning about how a court functions and the student who stated that knowing passengers in a stolen car are subject to arrest was the most important thing learned in the court visit justified their choices by saying that the particular information was new to them. The student whose attitude toward Crown Counsels changed as a result of the court visit suggested that this was noteworthy because prior to the court visit “I used to hate them all.”

When asked how they would change CACPP, two students suggested that the program should be made longer. Two students recommended that a Defense Counsel should be included in the program. One student proposed that the Court Visit should occur

“on a day of better cases.” The final student who responded to this question opined that CACPP was “good” and that no changes need be made in the program.

Part E: Effects of CACPP

The last two items in the survey asked the students to consider the effects of the *Courtlink Auto Crime Prevention Program* on young people who were thinking about borrowing a car for joyriding or about stealing a car for money or parts. Students responded to each item by checking one of two dichotomous statements that described what they thought would be the outcome if the young people were to take, or had already taken, CACPP. The second part of each item required the students to explain the reason for their choice.

Item 1 in Part E dealt with borrowing a car for “fun” or “joy-riding.” All 12 students checked one of the two outcome statements and 11 of the 12 students provided reasons for their selection. Frequency data for each of the outcome statements, along with students’ reasons are presented in Table 6. Students’ reasons for their choices are presented as written on the survey questionnaires.

Table 6: Students’ Responses to Item Pertaining to Young People Planning to Borrow an Automobile

Do you think that most young people your age who are planning to borrow a car just for fun or for joy-riding would not likely do so if they took this program?
5 AGREEING = I think that young people would not likely do so if they took this program.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Because the course is a really good program. 2. The program is a bit of an eye opener. 3. I have more empathy now. 4. Because they realize that its wrong. 5. I did learn a lot about auto theft.

Table 6: Students' Responses (cont'd)

Do you think that most young people your age who are planning to borrow a car just for fun or for joy-riding would not likely do so if they took this program?
7 DISAGREEING = I think that most young people would still likely do so even if they took this program.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Because most people that would even bother to steal a car in the first place would do it anyway if they took the program cuz they don't care. 2. Because if they wanted to they are self centered anyway. 3. Because they aint smart or don't care. 4. Cause it didn't show that many consequences of stealing cars. 5. Influence of negative peers and media. 6. They will just think of themselves.

Five of the 12 students responding to this item thought that young people who took CACPP would not likely borrow an automobile [without the owner's permission] for "fun" or "joy-riding." Statements supporting this opinion implied that this was a rational response to what was taught in CACPP. On the other hand, implicit within the statements of students who disagreed with this opinion was the belief that borrowing a car without permission is a self-serving irrational act committed by indifferent persons who are not likely to be influenced by an auto-crime-prevention program.

Nine of the 11 students who responded to Item 2 in Part E supported their choice with brief statements. The data for this item are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Students' Responses to Item pertaining to Young People Planning to Steal an Automobile

<p>Do you think that most young people who are planning to steal a car for money or parts would do so even after they took this Program?</p>
<p>8 AGREEING = I think that they would still plan to steal a car</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The program doesn't give you money a rep or drugs. 2. Because they don't care and they would do it anyway. 3. One program can't change a whole life time. 4. Because they could get money for this car. 5. Same as top one. [Cause it didn't show that many consequences of stealing cars.] 6. Depends on the person 7. Self-centered anyways.
<p>3 DISAGREEING =I think that they would decide not to steal a car.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Same as above. [The program is a bit of an eye opener.] 2. Because most young people don't plan to.

Students' responses to this question revealed only slight support for the assumption that CACPP would influence any young person intending to steal an automobile for gain. Comments from two of the three students who indicated that they believed CACPP would have a positive influence on youth who planned to steal automobiles provided little if any insight into why CACPP might have such an effect. However, several comments from students who believed that CACPP would not inhibit car theft for monetary gain seemed to comprise a reasonable argument in support of this position: Money, drugs, reputation, and notoriety for insensitive youth are strong incentives that will likely resist any school-based program intended to modify them.

Student One-on-One Interview Responses

All 14 students who attended the entire *Courtlink Auto Crime Prevention Program* — nine boys and five girls — were interviewed on Wednesday morning, June 1, 2005. The one-on-one interviews ranged from six to twelve minutes each. The two evaluators, using their prepared student interview protocol, each talked to seven students, asking them the following nine open-ended questions.

Question #1. *What did you think about the Courtlink Program you just finished last week?*

This question elicited a remarkably positive response from all 14 students. Indeed, their verdict was unanimous with their oral responses ranging from such opening statements as: “A very good program”; “A good program”; “I really liked it”; “It was really good, particularly learning about the consequences of auto crime”; “Yeh! A pretty fun program”; “For me, it was a great learning experience”; to this triumphant statement, “It was one of the best things we’ve done in this school.”

Question #2. *What part of this program did you like the best?*

This question underlined and emphasized the Court Visit as the outstanding and most salient feature of the program for 12 of the 14 students interviewed, with three students also including the “Consequences of Auto Crime” segment from their classroom activities as “best liked”. In particular, a number of respondents said they had learned a lot in the court room, “even just sitting there watching a trial”, while two students admitted that this experience differed from their first less than positive visit to a courthouse — when they had been up on charges.

In addition, after the Court Visit, the notion of “liking the best” included such

single items as, “but also knowing how important it is to be a good witness”, “understanding the harm of committing a car steal”, “knowing what can happen to you!”, “getting to participate in a pretend trial”, and “learning about how to witness better”.

In relation to, and in tandem with this courthouse encounter, the LCES officer who set up and facilitated the visit noted in her report that the “success of this particular court visit = very good”. She remarked that “All students were adequately prepared for the court visit.” She wrote that all seven activities during the 5-hour session were viewed by her as either “very good” (four activities) or “good” (three activities). Her additional summary comment was: “The students were well-prepared and retained the learning objectives very well. Some of the students were comfortable to share their court experience in the past and displayed a positive outlook in this type of learning experience. All agreed the mock trial was valuable and effective role play. Follow-up activity planned at school, and teachers welcome such programs in the future.”

Question #3. *Was there anything that you didn't like about the program?*

Interestingly enough, there were only 5 of the 14 students interviewed who could find something that they specifically “didn't like” about the program. One student said that “Some of classroom things were kind of a waste of time -- like the matching exercises”; another student said, “I thought some of the work we did in the classroom was boring, but most of it was OK”; a third student felt that “There was too much down time when nothing was happening”, a fourth said that “collecting newspaper stuff was, you know, kid stuff”, and a fifth felt that “all that about names and duties of court people was away too much”.

However, the more usual answer to this question was “There was nothing I didn't

like”, “I liked everything about the program”, “The whole program was good” and, “I think all the stuff we did was important”.

Question #4. *What was the most important thing you learned during the Courtlink Program?*

Responses to this question ranged over a number of topics, although many constellated around the issue of the consequences of committing an auto crime. One student remarked that “stealing a car is more serious than I thought it was -- it’s no fun to get arrested and have to go to court.” Another said “I learned that even if you’re just a passenger, you can be arrested -- even if you didn’t know the car was stolen.” Another student said, “most important was learning about the consequences, and also what people’s jobs are. I wouldn’t be so confused now if I had to go to court.” Two further responses were, “. . . that even taking your mother’s car without her permission can get you in trouble” and, “When the judge came down to the classroom in the courthouse, he seemed normal, just like anybody else.”

Question #5. *If you could change the program, what would you do?*

Half the students interviewed (7 of 14) felt that no change in the program was necessary whatsoever, these answers being typical responses: “It’s very good as it is, it shouldn’t change”, “Nothing; no complaints”, “I’d change nothing without seeing the whole course again” and, “There’s nothing I can think of changing”. One student agreed, then added, “It’s a great program, it doesn’t need to change -- but it would be better if we could of seen the trial of someone charged with an auto crime.” A similar reply was, “The program is good, so it shouldn’t be changed. Maybe a defense attorney should also be included in the court visit.”

The specific (and similar) changes, or additions, that were suggested were: “Have someone from the Crown come talk to us in our classroom”; “Have someone come into our class who’s committed an auto crime -- to talk to us, and so’s we can ask him questions”, “Have a person just a bit older than us who’s done auto crimes come and talk about the consequences of him stealing cars”; to these three different recommendations: “Make the course a little longer”; “I don’t think we spent enough time on the ‘victims’ thing” and; “Try to get us kids more involved, more of a drama with victim, witnesses, criminal. Set up a courtroom case, a role play.”

Question #6. *Do you think that young people like you, after having taken this program, are less likely to commit auto crimes?*

Most responses here were predicated around the notion that the answer to this question depends upon the individual person. For example, one student responded with, “It all depends. I think most people thinking about stealing a car will change their minds when they learn what the consequences really are.” Other students said, “Yes! I now know what could happen to me, and them, if we do an auto crime”; “It depends on the guy, ‘cause most of us, I think, would be convinced”; “Yes, I think it’s ‘less likely’ because the guy has seen all the consequences . . . making him think twice. He wouldn’t want to end up in the holding cell, waiting for a trial”; and one girl replied, “It’s up to the individual. I don’t know anyone who would steal a car. I think that maybe a person wouldn’t steal a car after going to court and learning about what happens there to people who steal cars”; and finally, “It’s an individual thing. If the person hasn’t already stole a car but is just thinking about it, he’ll probably not do it -- unless he really needs the money.”

Some differing responses were: “Yah, but if the person needs the money for drugs

and stuff then nothing will stop him from stealing a car”; “Not ‘less likely’, if you’ve already made up your mind”; and finally these two answers: “No, not really. It’s like being told by your parents not to smoke, yet you do. It’s your own decision that you make -- even it’s harmful”.

Question #7. *Do you think that young people who have committed auto crime, and who then take this program, would be less likely to commit an auto crime again?*

The responses to this question were relatively unambiguous regarding the likelihood of young people, who have already committed auto crime, being then later possibly helped by this program. One student replied, “If the person is on speed and stuff, and needs money, no program will stop him.” Another said, “I don’t think so, especially if a person is stupid enough to steal cars anyways.” A third student explained that, “Maybe one or two might stop, but for most guys it would have no effect on them at all”, a fourth said, “No way; I don’t think so”, a fifth said “Maybe, but only maybe ‘cause once you start it’s going to be too hard to quit”, and a sixth explained, “Well, maybe they’d stop if they just took cars once or twice for joy-riding, but if they’re stealing for money they’ll probably have to keep doing it.”

Nonetheless, three students suggested slightly more sanguine outcomes. One earnest respondent said, “Yep! Most of the people, if they had to take this program, I think they might change their minds about stealing cars -- or at least think twice.” And the second said, “It might happen, if they’d only just started.” The third participant tempered his comment with “Only maybe, I think, because a program like this needs to start before - - like in Grade 6, way before their minds are decided -- not after, when it’s probably too late.

Question #8. *Without giving us a name, do you know of anyone who took this program with you who might have changed his or her attitude toward stealing or borrowing cars?*

With this question, a number of respondents were very clear. One said, “Yeh, it changed my attitude. I don’t want to get caught stealing a car and have to go to jail.” Another said, “I know a couple of guys in the class who might have been thinking about it, but now that they know what could happen, they likely won’t do it.” A third student said, “We all know what could happen if we steal a car, but some kids never listen. Most kids won’t steal if they know what will happen to them if they get caught!” A fourth respondent said, “I don’t know anybody in this class who’d steal a car, even if they hadn’t of taken this program.” A fifth student felt that it “would probably stop at least one person. Yeh, I know some; yeh, it impacted a few people here.” A further student explained at length that “Maybe, but it’s hard to say. It’s hard to get through to them. See, stealing cars is their way of fun . . . showing somebody that they don’t really give a crap. But it could change their mind, cause, like I said, it changed my mind -- especially what happens to you when you get caught, cause nobody really wants to get caught . . . cause after you take this program, everyone here would know what’s going on.”

On the other hand, three dissentingly different voices explained, “No, I don’t know anyone whose attitude could’ve changed”, and a second said, “Not very likely, but yah, there were a couple of us -- when we found out about the punishments . . . thought maybe it wouldn’t be worth it”, and a third who spoke as though pronouncing a verdict saying, “No, no. Not at all. I’d say there’s no way it would change you if your mind’s made up.”

Question #9. *Think about someone you know who might be thinking about borrowing a car for fun, or stealing a car for money. If this person took this program, would he or she then not likely do so?*

Although a few respondents to this question knew of no one thinking of either borrowing or stealing a car, a number of students were able to identify likely people. One said, "I know some guys who are going to steal cars no matter what they learn in a program", and another explained, "Anyone on drugs will keep on stealing cars. It doesn't matter what they learn on a program." A lengthier reply was, "This program wouldn't change you, because if people are planning to steal cars it's part of their business -- and shipping them out -- and needing money for rock or drugs, and this program sure doesn't give them that . . . it doesn't put a jug in their hand, or any money." Another student replied, "No. Some people just can't learn; and if they are taking drugs they likely need to steal the car for money."

A transition from the foregoing responses to four that were somewhat more optimistic was this reply, "Yeh, very maybe. If it was only for fun they'd probably stop now. But maybe not if they were planning on stealing to get money." A second student said, "I don't know of anyone who might be planning it. But I think that anyone who takes this course will think twice before he steals a car." A third replied, "Well, again it depends on the person. It'd sure make them think more about not doing it." And finally, this interestingly ambiguous but carefully enunciated response: "Personally, I liked everything. It made me think a lot about going out and stealing a car, or leaving stuff in my car that people would want to steal. It taught me quite a bit about what I need to know about stealing cars."

Alternative Program Teacher's Interview Response

When the two evaluators were finished the 14 student interviews, they were able to spend 28 minutes interviewing the alternative program teacher who had conducted the *Courtlink Auto Crime Prevention Program* with her class, she even adding some activities of her own devising -- in particular see her Question #4 response. To lead this session, the evaluators used their prepared "Interview Protocol For Classroom Teacher" (Appendix C).

Question #1. *Do you have any comments you'd like to make about the Courtlink Program?*

The teacher's opening, rapid, salvo was, "Umm, I'm really really glad that I did this program. I did a thing earlier with courts once before about six years ago, with grade sixers. A lot of time, when you're a teacher, you get stuff to teach that you think 'these guys don't know what they're doing', but not with this auto-crime prevention program. I found it was a lot more thorough, a lot more accurate, with lots more suggestions, and I was able to incorporate it into the 'Humanities', and a planning course I teach here, and into multi-grade levels."

Question #2. *Because of the amount of time available to you, you had to make choices about what to teach, and the activities and materials to use. How did you choose?*

Once again, the classroom teacher responded to this question overwhelmingly. "I did cover almost everything. I did run out of time. I'd have liked to have done more stuff on the victims thing." She explained that she selected activities based on her conviction that "auto crime is a self-centered crime. It's an 'I-want-this-thing-right-now-thing', so they get sucked into crime, and the immediate reward, and the consequences are so later --

so you've got to present that." She went on to explain that she and her class had come up with a familiar saying, "it was a teachable moment for me" that they all then used to describe the flaw in auto crime: "Short term gain; long term pain."

Given this, and the positive reaction that her class was having, she explained she decided to expand the program a little, especially around the idea that auto crime was an act of clear irresponsibility -- and also given that one of her youth-care workers had been killed that very month in a speeding accident involving his own car. She said that her main goal became to encourage her students to think about the consequences of auto crime, but the program gave her a lot of leeway. "Well it was a good program! All the activities looked good. I was able to put it into Humanities; and I did a newspaper unit, only reading auto crime stuff, so I was able to use that area for Social Studies and for English, and incorporate auto crime prevention. Working in an alternate school, I have that kind of flexibility. My focus is to teach students to become better people."

Question #3. *How did your students react to the program? What parts did they seem to like? What topics, activities, or materials did they seem to like least?*

Once again, the teacher took hold of this question at some length, beginning her reply with, "They reacted a lot more, more positively than I was expecting them to. I work with a tough group of kids here who've just recently been kicked out of high school, and the majority of their experience . . . has been negative . . . and they see the police and the courts as their enemy. So I wondered just how they'd react to a field trip to the court. So I really tried to sell it to them, saying that this was an opportunity to not be in trouble, to talk to your probation officer about that you've been involved in an auto-crime prevention unit. I didn't force any of them to participate. I made the court visit their choice, come or don't

come, you decide. They all came anyways. But I didn't make the activities in class a choice. I made them do them all. And I supplemented the stuff with some fun things, and I asked them to help me understand."

Amongst much else, the teacher remarked that, in terms of "liking best", the class "really appreciated the courtroom experience, and they liked talking to the judge, who seemed really human to them." Later she added, ". . . and it was an awesome activity when we were all witnesses after watching a video, and it was enlightening that so many of us saw something that we didn't see. And Jan [the LCES court visit facilitator] was really good with us, and I was impressed." There was little she felt that could be categorized as "liked least", but she said, "Maybe speaking to the sheriff . . . they found that a little boring -- not him, but it was too slow paced, and they felt his job sounded boring."

Question #4. *Are there any topics that you think should be added to the program, or any changes that you would recommend?*

The teacher, with this question, centered her response on the court visit. "A good change, maybe, would be more time with the class in court, listening to a case. Like a few days, because a single day like ours is just a 'crap shoot' -- you just don't know what you're going to get that day. But the activity I added would be good too", and then she explained in some hurried detail. "I set up a huge car lot in my classroom, and I gave them all little colored toy cars I'd bought, and I let them come up and choose which car was going to be theirs. I told them that in a week they were going to have to hand back their cars -- and in the same condition -- and there were going to be times when they were going to have to park their car, right in the classroom, over night, and the charge would be 50 bucks, but also 'for keeping your car in good condition' . . . and then I'd elaborate, like

making them do insurance papers for their car, and then I'd incorporate that into their Math 11. A lot of them got quite emotional about this, so I had to say to them that this isn't the \$20,000 car you bought for yourself. This is a toy car that I gave you, and now you care about it? Hey! Like whether it got scratched or wrecked, when you parked it in the classroom -- and yet there are people who drive \$30,000 cars and park them in a lot in a mall or at night, and have to go away from them trusting that no one is going to invade their stuff? And that really had a lot of impact on the kids." Concluding, she added that, with this activity, she was "trying to get them into the idea that they too could be the victim, to change their minds that 'I am the thief' . . . because all of them are 'at risk' kids. But with all of this . . . I had to be really careful about them using accusing language." The teacher said she'd be willing to pass this activity along to anyone who'd like to use it.

Question #5. *How effective or useful do you think the Court Visit was?*

The alternate teacher replied, "But I've already talked to you about that. It was one of the main things I've just told you guys about!" Consequently, we two evaluators gingerly passed on to the next question...

Question #6. *What effect do you think the Courtlink Program had on your students?*

How long do you think this effect will last?

The alternate school teacher's reply to this question was immediate. "I don't think that's a fair question! It depends on the kid, like I already told you. I think it actually had more impact on kids who used to steal . . . because some got more into what they'd done wrong. And it triggered a lot of guilt. But these kids are good, and they'll keep this experience in their heads, and I'll keep reminding them.

Question #7. *Would you teach this program again?*

Once again, the teacher's reply was immediate. "Of course I would, and will. I'd do just about the same as I did this time -- but hope to get more time, or better time maybe, in the court room for a trial that was on auto crime. That'd be great. But good for whoever put this program together."

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to assess the opinions of 14 at-risk students about a modified and up-dated version of the *Courtlink Auto Crime Prevention Program* that had been conducted at their alternative secondary school. To this end, a survey questionnaire was distributed to the 14 students (with 12 responding) on the completion of the program and several days later the students were interviewed by the two evaluators, seven students each. The classroom teacher was also interviewed by the evaluators.

The analysis of the 12 written responses to the questionnaire revealed support for most topics, with especially strong approval of those dealing with the consequences of auto crime and with the motivation of young people who commit auto crime. However, most students considered the names and duties of court personnel to be of little importance. All 12 students agreed that the information present in CACPP was accurate, and no student suggested that it needed to be up-dated. The Court Visit received high marks from all students, even though there was a diversity of opinion about what was the most significant thing learned during it. Most students stated that what they liked "best" about the Court Visit was the opportunity to watch an actual case being tried, although one student's comment implied another case might have been more appropriate.

The 14 student interviews confirmed much of what the completed questionnaires

had disclosed. The students regarded the overall program as “very good” or “good”, remarking that it had been well-liked and that much had been learned. The five-hour visit to the courthouse was the almost unanimous highlight of CACPP. Another part of the program also considered a “best” was the segment on the consequences of auto crime, as well as the activity that was focused on being better witnesses. When asked if there was anything they didn’t like about CACPP, nine of the students could think of nothing they didn’t like, while the remaining five came up with only a single minor complaint each.

When asked on the written questionnaire about the most important thing they had learned from the Court Visit, student responses varied, but four said that they had learned “not to steal automobiles.” During the interviews, student answers constellated around the recognition of the consequences of committing an auto crime, perhaps the reason that underlay the decision not to engage in the theft of an automobile.

When asked what changes they might make to CACPP, 6 of the 12 the students responding to the questionnaire and 7 of the 14 students interviewed could think of no specific changes. Suggestions offered by the remaining students included making the program longer, including a defense attorney in the Court Visit, attending court on a day when a person charged with an auto crime was being tried, and inviting a young person who had been convicted of an auto crime into the classroom to talk with the students.

In terms of the attitudinal and behavioral effects CACPP might have or had on participants, student opinions were more ranging and less certain. While a number of students felt that they, and others like themselves, would probably now be less likely to commit an auto crime, the most frequent comment during the interviews was that, though they could only speak for themselves, they couldn’t say for certain about other people

because it “all depends on the person.” As for themselves, nearly all conceded during the interviews that that CACPP had impacted on their attitude toward auto crime, and this likely meant that they wouldn’t be getting involved in such activity. Several students were able to identify (namelessly) a class member or two whose attitude they felt had also changed for the positive.

When considering others beyond their classroom, however, their answers both in the questionnaire and during the interview were much less hedged. They strongly doubted that people who had already committed auto crime would be less likely to do so after taking CACPP, with the one proviso that perhaps if they only been ‘joy-riding’ they might now stop doing so. But when the prime motivation was stealing cars for profit, almost unanimously they felt that there would most probably be no change in that person’ behavior whatever.

On the other hand, if someone had been only thinking about borrowing a car for fun, or stealing one for money, they opined that CACPP might have some effect unless the person desperately needed money for drugs or the like. Baring that potent motive, students were more optimistic about people now ‘thinking twice’ before engaging in auto crime, and certainly in the circumstance of wanting a car for fun or to meet a simple or temporary transportation need.

The alternative school teacher’s responses to the two evaluator’s questions were positive and consistently upbeat. She felt that CACPP had been well designed, and included “lots of good stuff,” while also permitting her to incorporate an activity or two of her own devising. As well, she had no difficulty fitting it into various aspects of her curriculum, she mentioning social studies, English, and even mathematics. She was

greatly pleased that her students had “reacted a lot more positively” than she was expecting them to, while believing that they would “keep this experience in their heads” for some time. She confirmed what most of the students had said and written: that their day in the court had been a highlight - explaining that it would be great if it could be more than a single day so they could follow a specific case. When asked if she would care to teach the program again, her response was, “Of course I would, and will”, adding that she would spend more hours with it in the classroom as well.

Recommendations

The following recommendations proceed from the analysis of the information collected by the questionnaires and interviews during this examination of at-risk students’ opinions of the revised *Courtlink Auto Crime Prevention Program*.

- 1. Advertise the revised *Courtlink Auto Crime Prevention Program* as being appropriate for use with at-risk alternative secondary school students in those regions of British Columbia experiencing high levels of youth involvement in auto crime.**

The data collected during this study strongly support the conclusion that CACPP is suitable for students in secondary alternative programs in British Columbia. Comments from the students and their alternative class teacher indicated a very high degree of acceptance of the program, including the topics covered and the suggested activities and materials. Such comments from students, some of who held negative attitudes toward schooling and who may have recently experienced problems with the police, are remarkable and are clear evidence of their involvement in the program. Furthermore, teachers of alternative classes considering CACPP for their students should be aware of the

pilot teacher's suggestion that parts of CACPP can readily be incorporated into regular secondary curricula, such as social studies and English.

- 2. Place an even greater emphasis on the Court Visit when CACPP is offered to at-risk alternative secondary students. Increase the length of time of the Court Visit, especially the amount of time actually spent in the courtroom. If at all possible, the Court Visit should be timed to coincide with the trial of a person charged with an auto crime offense, in particular, the theft of an automobile, and it should extend over a period of several days to permit students to better experience how a trial proceeds.**

By all accounts, the Court Visit was the highlight of this pilot study. It was the Court Visit that brought a sense of reality to the program. It was at the courthouse where students saw the justice system at work; and it was during their conversations with court personnel that the consequences of committing an auto crime was brought home to them.

- 3. Emphasize “consequences” when the *Courtlink Auto Crime Prevention Program* is offered to at-risk students in alternative programs.**

Although CACPP covered a number of topics that the students rated “important,” when asked to identify the most important thing they had learned from the program a significant number replied that it was the “consequences of committing an auto crime.” What can happen to a young person involved in auto crime seemed to be far more important to these students than knowing, for example, how auto crime impacts the community or how it feels to be a victim of auto crime. Their concern with “consequences” seemed to bring the study down to a personal level, and it was quite possible that it was this fear of what would happen to them if they stole an automobile that resulted in several

students acknowledging that the program had changed their mind about committing auto crime and, perhaps, the intentions of several of their classmates.

4. When the *Courtlink Auto Crime Prevention Program* is offered in alternative secondary schools, teachers might be advised to invite young adults who had been convicted of auto crime into the classroom as guest speakers.

Several students recommended inviting a young person who had been convicted of an auto crime into the classroom to speak about what happens when a person is charged and convicted of an auto crime. These students suggested that having someone not much older than themselves describe his or her experiences with the police and the court system might be an effective strategy for influencing in a positive way attitudes toward auto crime.

5. Continue to update the topics and materials in the *Courtlink Auto Crime Prevention Program* to reflect contemporary crime statistics, new methods of fighting auto crime, and other topics that may be pertinent to the study.

Although none of the students in the pilot study identified materials that they considered to be outdated, it seems reasonable to recommend that the materials provided in the *Courtlink Auto Crime Prevention Program* be updated periodically, and that teachers be encouraged to search out current and, where available, local sources of information on auto crime when they teach the program. For example, several new methods for fighting auto crime (e.g., the Bait Car program) have been initiated by law enforcement agencies since CACPP was introduced several years ago, and over the past several years, the need to support a drug habit has emerged as a major incentive for youth to commit auto crime.

6. Consider offering a modified *Courtlink Auto Crime Prevention Program* to earlier aged at-risk students, from grades 6 to 8, whose profiles resemble those of the Langley alternative program students in this study.

During the one-on-one interviews, several at-risk students felt that, by the time CACPP got to them, and to young people like themselves, it was probably two or three years too late. Their thought was when they had reached the age of 15 their attitudes, behaviors, preferred habits, and choices had already been fairly well set - especially in terms of involvement with auto crime.

CITATIONS

Curtis, C. K., Meehan, G. (September 2001). *Evaluation of the Courtlink Auto Crime Prevention Program (CACPP) for Senior Elementary and Alternative School Students in British Columbia*. Report submitted to the Law Courts Education Society of British Columbia.

Curtis, C. K., & Meehan, G. (April 2005). *Auto-Crime's "High-Risk Youth": A Profile*. Report submitted to the Law Courts Education Society of British Columbia.

APPENDIX A**COURTLINK AUTO CRIME PREVENTION PROGRAM
SURVEY**

*STUDENT FEEDBACK
APEX SECONDARY SCHOOL*

Over the past few weeks, you have been a participant in the Courtlink Auto Crime Prevention Program at your school. Because all new programs such as this need to be evaluated, we want to find out what a student such as yourself thinks about it. It is therefore very important that you complete this Feedback form, answering the questions as carefully and thoughtfully as you can. Now, because we want your responses to remain anonymous, meaning that we don't want anyone to know how you personally answered each question, we are asking you NOT to sign your name anywhere on this questionnaire.

What Do You Think of the Auto-Crime-Prevention Program?

A. Here is a list of the **topics** you studied during the program. Please tell us whether or not you think the topics are important.

Topic	Very Important	Important	Not Very Important	Not Important At All
1. The different kinds of auto crime	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. Why young people commit auto crimes	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. How auto crime hurts people and the community	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. How auto crime is related to drug use	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. The difference between criminal and civil law	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. What it feels like to be a victim of an auto crime	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. What can happen to a young person who steals or damages an car	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. The names and duties of people who work in the courts	_____	_____	_____	_____
9. Negative attitudes that encourage auto crimes and positive attitudes that discourage auto crimes	_____	_____	_____	_____
10. How you can help prevent auto crimes	_____	_____	_____	_____

Can you think of any topics that **should have been included** in the program.

During the program you were given information about each of the topics. Do you think that **most of this information was true**?

Yes, I think most of it was true. _____

No, I think most of it was not true. _____

Look back to the list of topics on the previous page. Are there any topics that were presented with information that you thought **was not true**. If you think so, please list these topics here. You may use their numbers if you wish.

When it is available, information you are given should be up-to-date. If there are any topics in the program for which you think the information you were given was **too old** and **needed to be brought up to date**, please list the topics here. You may list their numbers if you wish.

B. Here are two activities you did during the program. Please say whether you think they were *useful* or *not useful*.

Activity	Useful	Not Useful
1. Collected newspaper articles on auto crimes	_____	_____
2. Surveyed other students' opinions on auto crime	_____	_____

C. Here are some of the *materials* you might have used at school in your study of auto crime prevention. Place *check* marks by the *three materials* that you liked the best.

- _____ the diagrams (*People in a Criminal Trial, Criminal vs. Civil Law, etc.*)
- _____ the newspaper articles
- _____ the victim impact statement
- _____ the quizzes

D. Here are several questions about the visit to the court in Surrey.

1. How would you **rate** the Court Visit?

- _____ It was excellent. I liked every part of it.
- _____ It was very good. I liked most parts of it.
- _____ It was good, though it could probably be improved.
- _____ It was all right, but it needs to have some changes.
- _____ I didn't like it.

2. What did you like **best** about the Court Visit? _____

Why did you like this the best? _____

3. What is the **most important** thing that you learned from the Court Visit?

Why was this the most important thing that you learned? _____

4. What **changes**, if any, would you make to the Court Visit?

E. Here are two very important questions that we would like you to think about before you answer.

1. Do you think that most young people your age who are planning to **borrow** a car just for **fun** or for **joy-riding** would **not likely** do so if they took this program?

_____ I think that most young people **would not likely do so** if they took this program.

_____ I think that most young people **would still likely do so** even if they took this program.

Please tell why you selected this answer _____

2. Do you think that most young people who are planning to **steal** a car for **money** or **parts would do so** even after they took this program?

_____ I think that they **would still plan to steal** a car.

_____ I think that they **would decide not to steal** a car.

Please tell why you selected this answer _____

Thanks for answering the questions in this survey. Your answers will help us to make the Courtlink program as effective as we can.

APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol For Alternative School Students

1. What did you think about the Courtlink Program you just finished last week?
2. What part of this program did you like best?
3. Was there anything you didn't like about the program?
4. What was the most important thing you learned during the Courtlink Program?
5. If you could change the program, what would you do?
6. Do you think that young people like you, after having taken this program, are less likely to commit auto crime?
7. Do you think that young people who have committed auto crime, and who then take this program, would be less likely to commit an auto crime again?
8. Without giving us a name, do you know of anyone who took this program with you who might have changed his or her attitude toward stealing or borrowing cars?
9. Think about someone you know who might be thinking about borrowing a car for fun, or stealing a car for money. If this person took this program, would he or she then not likely do so?

APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol For Classroom Teacher

1. Do you have any comments you'd like to make about the Courtlink Program?
2. Because of the amount of time available to you, you had to make choices about what to teach, and the activities and materials to use. How did you choose?
3. How did your students react to the program? What parts did they seem to like? What topics, activities, or materials did they seem to like least?
4. Are there any topics that you think should be added to the program, or any changes that you would recommend?
5. How effective or useful do you think the Court Visit was?
6. What effect do you think the Courtlink Program had on your students? How long do you think this effect will last?
7. Would you teach this program again?