Project L.E.A.D.
(Legal Enrichment And Decision-making)

Program Evaluation Report
2002-2004

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Executive Summary

Background
Project L.E.A.D. (Legal Enrichment And Decision-making) is a law-related education program designed by the Office of the District Attorney of Los Angeles County in 1993. Project L.E.A.D. creates classroom experiences that are intended to give students the motivation and skills to avoid risky or illegal behavior (e.g. shoplifting, vandalism, truancy or dropping out of school, and bullying or discriminatory behavior) in the future. The program was implemented at the fifth-grade level with this prevention goal in mind.

In 2002, the Constitutional Rights Foundation (CRF), a national leader in law-related education (LRE), was contracted by the District Attorney's office to revise the Project L.E.A.D. curriculum. To evaluate the potential effect of the revised curriculum, CRF staff hired outside evaluators, Dr. Bernadette Chi and Ellen Middaugh, for a two-year evaluation. Because there are few formal evaluations of LRE programs, it was necessary to conduct considerable pilot work in the first year of the evaluation to better understand the goals and potential outcomes of Project L.E.A.D., to examine program implementation and to design and test data collection instruments.

Methodology
The first year of the evaluation focused on developing and piloting student attitudinal surveys, a content assessment, student focus group protocols and teacher interview protocols. These instruments were revised in the second year and administered to paired classrooms – one classroom that participated in Project L.E.A.D. and when possible, a similar comparison classroom in the same school that did not participate in Project L.E.A.D. The student surveys and content assessments were administered at the beginning and end of the school year. The student focus groups and teacher interviews took place near the end of the school year. Student survey data was analyzed for pre-post changes as well as for comparisons between the Project L.E.A.D. and non-Project L.E.A.D. classrooms. The student focus groups provided qualitative data that enhanced our understanding of the survey data.

Results
The evaluation found the following:

- **Project L.E.A.D. was implemented well across the classrooms. Teachers and students all recommended that the program be made available to more classrooms.**

- **The program provided students the tools and experiences to help assess difficult situations and make appropriate decisions with clearer understanding of the consequences.**

- **Significantly, participation in Project L.E.A.D. appeared to provide an important protective factor that maintained students' positive attitudes about laws and lawyers;**

reinforced the importance of tolerance; increased student understanding of consequences of their decisions; and maintained positive educational and career aspirations. In contrast, comparison students showed declines in many of these survey items at the end of the year.

- Overall, findings from this evaluation suggest that Project L.E.A.D. provides a positive, protective effect during early adolescence, a critical period of youth development.

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Final Report

Many young people face significant challenges in urban communities across the country. While juvenile crime rates have declined from their peak level of a decade ago, violent crime rates remain high and are substantially higher than in most industrial countries (National Institutes of Health, 2004). Gangs represent a significant presence in many urban schools as 32% of students aged 12-18 in urban communities report a gang presence in their schools (DeVoe, Peter, Kaufman, Ruddy, Miler, Planty, Snyder, Duhadt & Rand, 2002). High school drop-out rates in the most heavily affected inner-city areas hover around 50% (Sum & Harrington, 2003). To address these and other risk issues, law-related education (LRE) programs educate youth about the legal system with the goals of influencing young people to be better citizens and of reducing juvenile crime. LRE shares many common goals with other movements such as civic and character education. In particular, proponents of LRE hope that participation in such programs will foster social responsibility in youth (Colville & Clarken, 1992) as well as greater democratic knowledge and interest in participation (Lemming, 1995; Pereira, 1988; Reggio, 2002).

LRE differs from other civic and character education efforts, however, in a few ways. First, LRE focuses on increasing understanding of the legal system and its role in maintaining democratic principles such as liberty, equal rights and the protection of property. This emphasis is based on the belief that learning about the role of laws in maintaining order and promoting the welfare of citizens will create more positive attitudes towards the legal system and legal authorities. Second, LRE emphasizes reducing juvenile delinquency by teaching students to reason through both the social and legal consequences of illegal activities. LRE programs create the "situation and context in which students develop a thoughtfully reasoned belief in the legitimacy of our laws & justice system, and the belief that each student should obey those laws" (Hunter, 1987, p.62).

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The program goals include the following:

- To help students understand the social, personal and legal consequences of common juvenile offenses,
- To build positive relationships between students and legal authorities,
- To reduce prejudice and increase appreciation of diversity, and
- To help students develop positive aspirations as alternatives to criminal activities and knowledge of the choices that will help them achieve those aspirations.

In 2002, the Constitutional Rights Foundation (CRF), a national leader in law-related education, was contracted by the District Attorney's Office to revise the Project L.E.A.D. curriculum. To evaluate the revised curriculum's potential effect, CRF staff hired external evaluators, Dr. Bernadette Chi and Ellen Middaugh, who have extensive experience in evaluating educational programs. Because there are few formal evaluations of LRE programs, it was necessary to design a two-year evaluation process. Considerable pilot work was conducted in the first year of the evaluation to better understand the goals and potential outcomes of the Project L.E.A.D. program, to examine program implementation and to design and test data collection instruments.

The two-year evaluation sought to explore the following questions:

- Is the program being implemented in a consistent manner?
- Are students better able to understand the reasons for laws and the consequences of engaging in illegal behavior as a result of participation in the Project L.E.A.D. program?
- Do students' attitudes about laws and legal authorities change as a result of participation in the Project L.E.A.D. program?
- Do students' attitudes about positive, educational and career aspirations (protective behaviors such as staying in school) change as a result of participation in the Project L.E.A.D. program?

In Year One, pre-post data collection was conducted in four Project L.E.A.D. classrooms to test instruments and protocols. In Year Two, using revised instruments and protocols, data was collected pre-post in six L.E.A.D. classrooms and four comparison classrooms to provide rigorous data collection and analysis for a comprehensive evaluation of the Project L.E.A.D. program.

The schools that participated in this study reflect the demographics of many elementary schools in Los Angeles County's high-crime, low-income communities. The average state Academic Performance Index ranking for these schools is '2' out of a possible '10', indicating low academic performance. The percent of students eligible for the free or reduced lunch program ranges from 76% to 96% at each school. The student populations of these schools also reflect demographic composition of many Los Angeles public schools, as 95% to 99% of the students at each of the schools are Hispanic or African American with Asian and White students making up fewer than 5% of the overall population.

Program Description

Project L.E.A.D. placed volunteer "facilitators" (prosecutors and staff from the District Attorney's office) in fifth-grade classrooms in communities with high rates of juvenile crime, gang activity and high school drop-outs. The facilitators worked with classroom teachers for approximately 20 weeks to implement the curriculum using active learning strategies such as role-play scenarios, field trips and a mock trial to orient students to issues and procedures common to the justice system. For example, students conducted simulations in which they learned about the financial consequences of dropping out of school, the social and legal

consequences of joining gangs, and skills for resisting peer pressure. Many students visited a local juvenile justice detention center where youth await court action or transfer to other juvenile detention facilities. Facilitators met weekly or biweekly with students to discuss many issues relevant to youth including graffiti tagging, joy-riding, drug use, shoplifting, gangs, harassment and truancy.

Project L.E.A.D. is a promising program to evaluate as it includes various characteristics reported by the National Institutes of Health (2004) to be effective in preventing juvenile crime and violence. For example, the program is sustained for one year, follows a cognitive/behavioral strategy, focuses on improving youths' social competency skills and is developmentally appropriate.

In particular, developmental research suggests that several features of the program are important to promote positive behaviors and attitudes in pre-adolescent youth. First, Project L.E.A.D. aims to provide students with positive experiences with legal authorities. Research in legal socialization suggests that early experiences with representatives of the legal system may serve as an important basis for later attitudes toward the legal system (Hess and Torney, 1967; Torney, 1977). While the most common legal authority young people encounter are the police, the L.E.A.D. program exposed students to a variety of legal authorities such as prosecutors, judges and other representatives of the District Attorney's Office. Research suggests that having positive experiences with these representatives may provide students with positive attitudes about the legal system in general.

Another important feature of Project L.E.A.D. is the discussion of laws, the issues that are regulated by laws, and the purposes and workings of the justice system in general. Research suggests that children at the elementary school level tend to hold positive views of the law and legal authorities, but that these views become less positive as children enter adolescence (Furnham, 1991). A growing awareness that laws are not always implemented fairly and an increasing rate of negative encounters with legal authorities are typical hallmarks of adolescence. These trends may be particularly pronounced in disadvantaged communities where young people are more likely to have negative encounters with the police and legal system (Furnham, 1991). While this growing awareness of flaws in the legal system is developmentally appropriate, it is important that young people learn to integrate their emerging critical stance with an understanding of the positive functions of laws and legal authorities. Without this integration, young people may reject laws and legal authority altogether rather than seeing legal authorities as something to hold accountable to the principles of the laws. Thus, a curriculum like Project L.E.A.D. gives early adolescents the opportunity to learn about the ideal purposes of laws and rules and the consequences of breaking laws, serving an important purpose in helping students work through their changing attitudes about laws.

Project L.E.A.D. also engages students in activities thought to encourage reasoning about the kinds of activities that may lead to legal sanctions. A review of programs to reduce recidivism among juvenile offenders suggests that successful programs include strategies that foster reasoning, problem-solving and perspective-taking skills, especially to enable youth to stop and think before acting in order to consider the consequences of their decisions (Wright, 1996).

Finally, the program seeks to build positive assets in students. Research suggests that one of the most effective ways to prevent youth involvement in risky or detrimental activities is to help youth acquire important "developmental assets" (Scales, 1999). Developmental assets describe both the internal competencies and external supports that help youth thrive and maintain healthy lifestyles and attitudes. Among the many assets young people need to thrive are school engagement, achievement motivation, cultural competence, planning and decision-making and resistance skills. They have been found to be important for protecting youth from high-risk behaviors and to promote thriving indicators such as school success, helping others and delaying gratification (Scales, 1999). The Project L.E.A.D. curriculum included a number of activities to help students develop positive competencies, including responsible decision-making, tolerance for diversity, and motivation to succeed in school.

Given the emphasis in LRE on both helping students to understand the legal system and increasing youth support for laws and legal authority, it is surprising how little discussion can be found in the LRE literature regarding youth's understanding and attitudes on these topics. Those who believe there is a need for LRE most typically base this claim on either the relatively high juvenile crime rate or the effectiveness of LRE in reducing recidivism (Pereira, 1995; Wright, 1996). There is little mention or understanding of how young people think about laws, the principles upheld by laws or legal authorities in general. As a result, this evaluation study of the L.E.A.D. program proposes to address a significant gap in the evaluation of LRE programs and to shed greater light on what role LRE may play in positive youth development. The following section describes the evaluation plan and methods in more detail.

Evaluation Plan and Methods

The two-year evaluation of Project L.E.A.D. sought to examine the following questions:

- Is the program being implemented in a consistent manner?
- Are students better able to understand the reasons for laws and the consequences of engaging in illegal behavior as a result of participation in the Project L.E.A.D. program?
- Do students' attitudes about laws and legal authorities change as a result of participation in the Project L.E.A.D. program?
- Do students' attitudes about positive, educational and career aspirations (protective behaviors such as staying in school) change as a result of participation in the Project L.E.A.D. program?

The two-year timeline for the evaluation allowed the evaluators to create and pilot instruments and protocols for students and teachers in Year One in four Project L.E.A.D. classrooms. In Year Two, the formal evaluation was launched using revised instruments and protocols. Complete data sets were collected from four Project L.E.A.D. classrooms and four comparison classrooms to provide rigorous data collection and analysis for a comprehensive evaluation of the Project L.E.A.D. program as described in more detail in the following section.

Data Collection and Analysis.

Sample. Six classrooms with teachers familiar with the L.E.A.D. curriculum were chosen to participate in the first year of the evaluation with the understanding that they would be invited to implement the curriculum again in Year Two. Other teachers teaching similar populations of students in five of the six schools were also selected as comparison classrooms in order to separate the effects of participation in project L.E.A.D. from the effects of students' maturation over the course of the year[1]. A total of eleven classes initially participated in the evaluation study. Due to scheduling conflicts with the year-round school calendar in many Los Angeles County schools, however, some teachers were unable to fully cooperate with the evaluation study which resulted in only partial data for some classrooms. This resulted in complete pre-post student survey and focus group data collected from four Project L.E.A.D. classrooms the first year. The second year, complete sets of data were collected from four Project L.E.A.D. classrooms and four comparison classrooms.[2]

Student Surveys. A student survey was designed to assess changes in student competencies and attitudes identified by the program designers and facilitators based on their previous experiences with the Project L.E.A.D. program. These competencies and attitudes included: 1) resistance to peer pressure and responsible decision-making, 2) attitudes towards rules and laws, 3) attitudes toward legal authorities, 4) belief in importance of school, 5) academic aspirations, 6) appreciation of diversity, and 7) attitudes about bullying. A description of the survey properties and survey items can be found in Appendix A.

In Year Two, four Project L.E.A.D. classrooms (n=74 students) and four comparison classrooms (n=81) were able to provide complete survey sets (total sample size of n=157). Paired samples t-tests were performed to compare the pre and post test scores of both L.E.A.D. students and comparison students on the seven dimensions listed above. Independent samples t-tests were performed on the entire sample to compare the change scores of the L.E.A.D. students to those of the comparison students. The results of these analyses are presented in Appendix B, Table 1.

Teacher interviews suggested that one class had a particularly challenging dynamic this year that could not be attributed to the presence of the L.E.A.D. program, which had been taught at the school by the same facilitator for a number of years. As a result, separate analyses were performed for this class and its in-school comparison class to determine

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[1] An ideal comparison sample would consist of students of the same grade, achievement level and socioeconomic background being taught by the same teacher. However, since this curriculum is implemented in the fifth grade in self-contained classrooms, same-teacher comparison classes were not possible for this evaluation. Comparison classes were chosen from the same school where possible or from a school with similar community context and student demographics when a same school comparison was not feasible (this occurred with one of the Project L.E.A.D. classes).

[2] Of the four sets of classrooms, two Project L.E.A.D. classes were matched with comparison classrooms from the same school and two classes were matched with comparison classrooms from different schools with similar student and community demographics.

whether this difficult classroom context influenced the results of the survey. These findings are presented in Appendix B, Table 2.

Teacher Interviews. Evaluators interviewed Project L.E.A.D. teachers at the end of Year One and Year Two. Questions in Year One focused on how the Project L.E.A.D. curriculum supported their classroom and school goals, successes and challenges in program implementation, and the perceived effects of the programs on students. Questions in Year Two focused on teachers' goals for participating in the L.E.A.D. program, program implementation, perception of the program's impact on students, and perception of the school and community contexts in which the program was implemented. Five L.E.A.D. teachers and three comparison teachers participated in interviews in Year Two.

Student Focus Groups. In Year Two, evaluators interviewed focus groups of four to six students from all six Project L.E.A.D. classrooms and four comparison classrooms to find out more about what they learned from participation in the program. Questions focused on attitudes about laws and legal authorities, ability to negotiate negative peer pressure and reasoning about making good choices. Questions also probed student interest in the curriculum and their suggestions for program improvement.

Content Assessment. Students also completed a short multiple-choice content assessment near the end of the program year to determine how well they mastered concepts that were covered in the curriculum including the roles different people have in the criminal justice system and the differences in charges for offenses. The content assessment was piloted in Year One and revised in Year Two. Students from all six L.E.A.D. classes completed the content assessment in Year Two.

In order to evaluate the outcomes of Project L.E.A.D., it was necessary to first examine the implementation of the program to ensure that the program was successfully implemented, as described in the next section.

Program Implementation

Overall, classroom teachers reported a high degree of satisfaction with the content and structure of the Project L.E.A.D. curriculum and found the program easy to implement and engaging for the students. In particular, teachers felt that the program fit their classroom goals, enhancing connections to academic standards in language arts, math and social studies, as well as providing important opportunities for other areas of student development in preparation for middle school as indicated in the following quote:

> *"California (curriculum) standards have different areas of need from reading to writing to listening and speaking. I feel that the Project L.E.A.D. program allows us to integrate all those areas so that they become effective readers and writers...(and) there was math involved in that one part they had to do on developing a budget when you're having a baby. And they had to do mental math*

as well as application of skills of addition, subtraction, multiplication, division."
(Project L.E.A.D. Teacher)

One Project L.E.A.D. teacher integrated the program with writing activities. Another teacher connected Project L.E.A.D. lessons to social studies and history concepts such as cultural awareness, tolerance and prejudice through the study of the Holocaust, Japanese internment camps and slavery. Another Project L.E.A.D. teacher described the comprehensive nature of the program that provided many benefits to her students:

> *"I like it because it is a civics/social studies integrated program and that it goes into character development as well. It's kind of all encompassing. It addresses a lot of issues that we normally don't get to unless we have a program like that. It provides excellent role models for students, especially fifth grade going into middle school. They're going to be interacting with more adults so this gives them that opportunity as well to interact with more adults." (Project L.E.A.D. Teacher)*

In terms of program implementation, teachers felt that the facilitators from the District Attorney's Office provided content expertise that the teachers felt unable to convey on their own. Teachers also reported significant value in having the same facilitators participate with their classes consistently over several years. They were able to build a working relationship with their facilitators to effectively partner with them and to improve the effectiveness of the program. For example, teachers were able to step in and work with the facilitators to adjust the units when student did not appear to understand the content or vocabulary. Also facilitators who had worked with children in the same school over several years were better able to work with and speak to children in that community. As one teacher observed, "having someone new every year who doesn't know the children doesn't serve us as well."

Regular visits from the same facilitators fostered "rapport" and relationships with the students who gained to benefit from adults who came from different life experiences. As one teacher described, the facilitators offered the opportunity to discuss important personal issues that were relevant to students' daily lives:

> *"The first thing [I like about the program] is the presenters. The presenters come from diverse cultural backgrounds. So they come and they present themselves in a non-threatening way. 'This is who I am. I'm going to tell you something about my family, about my life.' (They shared) experiences within their own family, if things didn't go well, how did they achieve it within their own home. So they brought it from their home here. That's the first thing I noticed that I liked a lot. Second was that they don't talk down to the children. They actually invite them to say something, no matter if it's something they want to hear or not, they allow them to say that." (Project L.E.A.D. Teacher)*

All of the teachers reported their desire to participate in the program again, a strong indicator of program value and success. They also indicated that other teachers at their schools expressed keen interest in participating in the Project L.E.A.D. program.

Overall, focus group discussions with students suggest that they enjoyed the program and appreciated having the facilitators visit their classroom. On a personal level, students liked the facilitators and felt that they were nice, listened to the students and talked about interesting topics. The students appreciated being able to talk about issues that were not typically addressed in class. Students also appreciated the use of active learning strategies in the curriculum. In particular, they liked the role-play activities and found the field trips to be particularly engaging.

Overall, based on feedback from teachers, facilitators and students, Project L.E.A.D. was well implemented in all of the classrooms. As a result, we have confidence that the following findings can be attributed to a strong program that was well implemented.

Findings

Overall, Project L.E.A.D. provided students the tools and experiences to help them assess situations and make appropriate decisions with clearer understanding of the consequences. More specifically, participation in Project L.E.A.D. appeared to provide an important protective factor that maintained students' positive attitudes about laws and lawyers; reinforced the importance of tolerance; increased student understanding of consequences of their decisions; and maintained positive educational and career aspirations. In contrast, comparison students showed declines in many of these survey items at the end of the year. These findings are discussed in more detail in this section of the report.

One of the major emphases of Project L.E.A.D. is its focus on responsible decision-making, even in the face of negative peer pressure. Overall, L.E.A.D. students demonstrated no statistically significant change in their perceived ability to resist peer pressure and make responsible choices. Analysis of changes by item (see Appendix B) suggests that the overall lack of movement on this scale can be explained by the movement of some items in a positive direction and some in a negative direction. For example, students were more likely to agree that they would stay away from people who might get them into trouble but were less likely to agree that they think through good and bad results before making decisions or that they avoid things that might get them into trouble. It is unclear whether these changes reflect changes in attitudes over the course of the year or perhaps a greater awareness by students of their own behavior. One reason for these mixed results may be students' growing awareness of what the curriculum suggested are "good decisions" and the ways in which their own behaviors do not currently measure up. In other words, while students were given a set of goals to aspire to, they may have also been given a more critical view of their own behavior.

To understand the mixed findings from the student surveys, focus group questions were designed to probe students' thinking about decision-making. Overall, as a result of their participation in Project L.E.A.D., students reported that they were generally able to make better, more responsible decisions as reflected in the quotes below:

> *"The Project L.E.A.D. program helps us a lot to understand what's right and what's wrong."*

"It helps us to make right decisions in life."

"The program helps a lot because (other programs) tell us to say no to drugs, but they don't tell us why, and this program does."

"I think it's important to make right choices. Or if you don't make right choices that you could have a lot of consequences."

Teachers also reported that students learned important decision-making skills:

"As far as decision-making and consequences, that's a big issue in this community because we are in high gang area and many of the kids get sucked into the gangs because of the poor choices they make. So the emphasis on the consequences for the choices they make has been reinforced basically during each lesson." (Project L.E.A.D. Teacher)

Students in many of the focus groups described a particular tool (F.I.N.A.L.) taught in the curriculum that they learned to use to evaluate situations, determine their choices and consider the consequences of their actions. One student described it as her favorite part of the Project L.E.A.D. program:

My favorite part was with the F.I.N.A.L. letters… First "F" -- you find out what's going to happen. "I" is identify what it's really called. "N" is name the consequences. "A" is select an alternative. And "L" is if he doesn't want to (choose the alternative), you just leave.

Most students (83% to 86%) were able to answer correctly on the content assessment what the letters in F.I.N.A.L. represented. Students used the tool in the context of discussing complex situations and many students in the focus groups reported that they would be able to apply their learning to real life problems and situations. Many students felt that extending the opportunity to participate in Project L.E.A.D. to more students would be useful as indicated in the following quote:

If every person would do the L.E.A.D. program, I think there would be less problems with drugs and gangs and everything because then everybody would know the consequences and what to do.

Another student observed, *"We'll always use L.E.A.D."*

It was clear from the student focus groups and interviews that many students seemed to understand the main "message" of the Project L.E.A.D. program: it was important to do the right thing and that there are consequences to bad decisions. This finding suggests that students were aware of what the program was trying to do and used the appropriate language and tools to evaluate situations. Students' attention to what constituted "good" and "right" decisions are further illustrated in the findings discussed below, organized by program goal.

Goal #1: Students better understood the personal, social and legal consequences of common juvenile offenses.

Over the course of the school year, students appeared to have gained a better understanding of what laws exist and the consequences of breaking those laws. On the content assessment, Project L.E.A.D. students mastered a great deal of the content, correctly identifying illegal acts, reasons for laws, and components of the legal system an average of 79% of the time.

Furthermore, a greater percentage of the L.E.A.D. students as a whole were able to correctly identify items on the content test at the end of the year than at the beginning of the year by as much as 34%. Overall, students were most likely to make mistakes of overgeneralization (identifying behaviors against the rules as being against the law) or mistakes where vocabulary on the test took a slightly different form than vocabulary used in the classroom. For example, a smaller number of students were able to identify a truant as a person who ditches school. This most likely had to do with the fact that students were taught about the act of "truancy" but were not introduced to the term "truant" and may have been unsure its meaning.

In addition to increased knowledge about the legal system, the focus groups showed a more in-depth understanding of the personal, social and legal consequences of engaging in illegal acts. For example, in response to a scenario regarding a student who shoplifted a candy bar and offered to share it with his friend, Project L.E.A.D. students all identified the act of stealing as a "wrong" or "bad" decision and offered a range of responses regarding negative consequences to the act.

Focus Group Scenario #1:

Samuel and Martin were at the candy store after school. They had just enough money to buy their favorite candy bar and split it. When they got to the store, they found out the owner raised his prices and they didn't have enough to buy the candy bar. Martin left the store first and when Samuel came out to meet him, he told Martin he took the candy bar and offers him half of the candy bar.

Questions for students:
 What do you think Martin should do?
 What do you think about Samuel taking the candy bar? Was that a good decision or a bad decision? Why?
 What could happen to Samuel if the owner finds out he took the candy bar?
 Did you talk about any situations like this in class? What did you talk about?
 Is what Samuel did against the law? Why do you think there's a law about this?
 Do you think it's a good idea to have a law like that? Why?

Students reported a range of responses to the focus group questions that illustrated their ability to reason through the consequences of "bad" decisions. For example, not surprisingly given the age of the students, many students identified the negative and immediate personal consequences for

Samuel, the student who shoplifted, as well as for Martin if he allowed Samuel to keep the stolen candy bar. Students reported that Martin could "get in trouble with the law" and "if the owner finds out and then Martin might get in trouble with Samuel and they might go to Juvenile Hall."

Other students were able to articulate longer-term consequences of the decision to steal. For example, some students suggested that allowing Samuel to steal the candy bar might lead him down the path to committing more serious crimes as indicated by the following quote:

> *If he steals the candy bar, he's going to get used to stealing something little. And then after, next thing you know, he might go steal something bigger.*

Still other students were able to observe that stealing items may cause increases in prices as the store owner would be required to pay for the stolen items, as explained by this student:

> *I think that Samuel shouldn't have stolen the candy bar in the first place because the owner might need to increase the prices.*

Finally, students were able to acknowledge the perspective and feelings of the store owner, demonstrating a certain amount of empathy, as suggested by these students:

> *(Stealing the candy bar) won't be fair to the person that owns the store.*

> *(Stealing is wrong) because then the owner has to pay it out of his own money to get the product so everybody could buy it. And if people keep shoplifting it then he'd have to buy more and he'd have to lose more of his money.*

Although the Project L.E.A.D. curriculum is not solely responsible for students' views on these issues, certain messages were clearly reinforced through the curriculum that encouraged students to think beyond immediate and negative personal consequences to consider other people's perspectives and longer term consequences of their decisions.

Goal #2: Students experienced positive relationships with legal authorities and have positive attitudes toward rules and laws.

Students reported overall positive attitudes about laws and rules at the end of the program. Survey results suggested that students in the L.E.A.D. program maintained their initially positive attitudes about laws and legal authorities (reporting average scores of 3.4 and 3.5 out of 4.0) and reported no significant decline in their attitudes (reporting average scores of 3.3 and 3.6 out of 4.0). The significant decline in attitude seen in the Comparison group suggests that the program had a protective effect for the L.E.A.D. students, helping them maintain a positive view of the role of laws that may have naturally declined with maturation over the course of the year.

In focus groups, students were generally positive about lawyers and the laws they discussed. As indicated in the following quotes, Project L.E.A.D. students recognized that laws were needed to

make communities safer and discouraged individuals from making decisions that may be harmful to themselves or the community:

Interview Question: *Why do you think it's important to have laws in general?*

Students responded by reporting the negative consequences for individuals who break laws:

> *If you don't follow the law, you go to jail.*

> *If you don't follow the law then you might get deported if you're an immigrant.*

Students also believed that having laws was important for providing a framework that promotes the safety of individuals and the smoother functioning of the larger society:

> *Because without laws the whole world would be destruction…People need protection… Everybody won't be feeling safe.*

> *(Laws) help keep us safe.*

> *(Laws) protect people.*

> *(Laws) can make the world better.*

> *I think that it's important to have laws because they give you things to do and they give you punishment if you don't do the right choices.*

The Project L.E.A.D. facilitators were the first lawyers many of the students had encountered. Students and teachers reported their positive feelings about the facilitators and lawyers in general, as indicated in the following quotes:

> *Before Project L.E.A.D. I thought lawyers were not that important. But now I do and the thing I like about them is that they always teach us to do the right thing. And they tell us if you do this you'll get a bad choice and you'll never go to college or you'll never learn.*

> *I want to be a lawyer because I want to be able to help other people.*

In particular, students appreciated their Project L.E.A.D. facilitators because of the opportunity to discuss issues relevant to their lives in a manner they found engaging:

> *He taught us a lot of lessons and not to take drugs or be in gangs.*

> *He talked about all the consequences we would have if we make the wrong choices.*

> *He's fun and we don't always hear the same things over and over.*

Goal #3: Students displayed an understanding of the importance of tolerance and the ramifications of discriminatory behavior.

Survey items suggest that tolerance and appreciation of diversity was an area with great need for intervention as many students were likely to report being teased by peers. The Project L.E.A.D. program again appeared to have a protective effect. Survey data indicated that significant declines in attitudes toward tolerance and diversity were observed in the comparison group and no significant declines were found for the L.E.A.D. group overall. However, one item in particular about teasing suggests that Project L.E.A.D. students were significantly more likely to report teasing at the end of the year, though to a lesser extent than the comparison group.

In general, students reported learning lessons about the importance of avoiding prejudice, as this student articulated:

> *Don't judge a book by its cover. Don't judge people if you don't know them from the inside.*

The focus group discussions around the teasing scenario shed some light on this finding. L.E.A.D. students were quite capable of discussing both personal and social consequences of exclusion and teasing and to identify what they felt would be a positive and inclusive course of action.

Student Focus Group Scenario #2:

In Melanie's school, certain groups of kids don't hang out together. Usually, they ignore each other, but sometimes they get into arguments. Melanie had to work on a project for school with Paul, a kid from her class who was part of the group her friends don't like. They didn't finish their work during class and decided to sit together and finish their project during lunch. While they were working, Melanie's friends came over and made fun of Paul and told Melanie to come sit with them.

Questions for students:

> *What should Melanie do? Should she sit with her friends or stay with Paul? Why?*
> *What do you think would happen if Melanie went with her friends?*
> *Did you talk about any situations like this in class? What did you talk about?*

Students again reported the negative personal and immediate consequences of the students not working together to complete the project. As one student reasoned, "Melanie should still go with Paul because they are doing a project and they have to stick to the project." Other students pointed out that the students should continue to work together despite negative peer pressure because not doing so would create hurt feelings and potentially greater conflict as indicated in the following quotes:

> *She should say, "No. That's mean, to tease him, because he's a human being. What if people treat you like that and you won't like it?"*

I think he feels sad and disappointed because they were making fun of him.

I think she should just leave them behind and she should just hang out with Paul and his friends and try to make new friends.

Like for example if they keep on picking on Paul, Paul might get tired of it and then after he might like start making fun of them and they won't like it. And then they get in a big argument.

One student articulated a more inclusive, yet realistic, course of action:

If Melanie and Paul are like really getting along she should try to convince her friends, like try to persuade them to play with him or if they won't -- like for example if they're in the same class at recess she could play with Paul and then after at lunch she could play with her normal friends. Or if they all get along then she could play with them that whole day, all the times.

Goal #4: Students displayed positive career and educational aspirations and an understanding of choices to help them achieve their aspirations.

Survey findings suggest that Project L.E.A.D. students began the program with very positive attitudes about the importance of education and their own plans for continuing education with scores of 3.8 and 3.9 out of a possible 4.0 on these dimensions (See Table 1 in appendix B). The L.E.A.D. program appeared to have again protected against a decline in students positive attitudes over the course of the year. Project L.E.A.D. students showed no decline in their belief in the importance of school and in their plans for further schooling. Comparison students, however, were much less likely to report a belief in the importance of staying in school or an understanding of the implications of the school for their future employment. Project L.E.A.D. students were also more likely to report plans to attend college than were comparison students, though the relationship was only approaching statistical significance (p<.10).

To explain their reasoning about the importance of education, many of the students in the focus groups described a particular simulation in the curriculum in which students were assigned roles as individuals with different educational levels and learned how their education directly translated into different earnings potential. This simulation proved to be eye-opening to many students. Focus group discussions showed that the classroom activities not only reinforced students' positive attitudes about education but also gave them greater depth of knowledge about how education and income are related – information they may be able to use in making future educational decisions, as described by this student:

I think it's important to stay in school because then you have the best education that you could probably get. And if you go through everything you have to go through then you could find a better job and more people might want to hire you. And there would be less problems with bills and everything.

Another student pointed out the negative personal consequences of missing school:

Because if you ditch school you will be behind on everything they're doing. And also, they could call your parents. And if you're ditching a lot your parents could send you to Juvenile Hall.

In addition, students noted the negative consequences of dropping out of school:

If you drop out of school, you have no job, and you'll probably, like, be in a gang.

When you drop out of school, it would be harder to get a job, so you'll probably sell drugs or steal.

Conclusions & Recommendations

Overall, the Project L.E.A.D. curriculum appeared to be implemented consistently and was well-managed across classrooms. Data from both years of the evaluation indicate that students, teachers and facilitators were very positive about their participation in the program. Students reported finding the program interesting and engaging as they discussed issues that mattered to them and that were not normally addressed at school. Teachers reported that the program fostered needed personal and social development to better prepare students for the transition to middle school and the difficult choices they face in their neighborhoods and communities. Facilitators reported changes in students' awareness of consequences of risky behavior and in students' aspirations and career choices.

In particular, teachers and students all recommended that the program be made available to more classrooms. A multi-year follow up study would be ideal to examine if students' attitudes several years later were still positive. Thus expansion of the program and further evaluation are strongly recommended, especially if the ultimate goal is to reduce juvenile crime.

Data from the second year of the evaluation suggests that the program provided students the tools and experiences to help them assess situations and make appropriate decisions with clearer understanding of the consequences. In particular, participation in Project L.E.A.D. appeared to provide an important protective factor that maintained students' positive attitudes about laws and lawyers; reinforced the importance of tolerance; increased student understanding of consequences of their decisions; and maintained positive educational and career aspirations. In contrast, comparison students showed declines in many of these survey items at the end of the year.

Findings from this evaluation suggest that Project L.E.A.D. provides a positive, protective effect during early adolescence, a critical period of youth development. Students' maintenance of positive attitudes toward laws and greater understanding of the reasons behind laws separates the effect of the L.E.A.D. program from typical youth development or civic education programs. These effects may serve an important function especially in communities where many young people may develop adversarial relationships with the legal system.

Appendix A: Instruments and Measures Used

Project L.E.A.D. Student Attitude Questionnaire

Dimension 1: Resistance to Peer Pressure and Responsible Decision Making ($\alpha=.82, .81$)
- I know how to stay away from people who might get me in trouble.
- I know how to avoid things that might get me in trouble.
- I avoid things that might get me in trouble.
- I stay away from people who might get me in trouble.
- I think about the possible good and bad results before I make decisions.
- I know how to say "no" when someone wants me to do things I know are wrong or dangerous.
- I try to do what I think is right, even if my friends make fun of me.
- I have the power to choose between doing things that will be good for me and doing things that will be bad for me.

Dimension 2: Attitudes toward Rules and Laws ($\alpha=.73, .80$)
- I think we have too many laws (reverse item).
- Laws are there to protect us all.
- I understand why we have rules at school.
- Laws make our neighborhood safer.
- Laws are there to make sure people are treated fairly.
- I think it's important to have rules at school.

Dimension 3: Attitudes toward Legal Authorities ($\alpha=.66, .72$)
- Most judges try to be fair and honest.
- I think lawyers want to help people.
- Most lawyers try to be fair.

Dimension 4: Belief in Importance of School ($\alpha=.36, .77$)
- I think it is important to go to college.
- I think it is important to stay in school.
- Dropping out of school is a bad idea.
- I need to make it through high school to get a good job.
- It's important to finish high school.

Dimension 5: Academic Aspirations ($\alpha=.34, \alpha=.59$)
- I think I will go to college.
- I think I will finish high school.

Dimension 6: Belief in Diversity ($\alpha=.36, \alpha=.56$)
- I try treat people fairly, even if they are different than me.
- Sometimes I make fun of people who are different than me (reverse).
- I think it's good to get to know people who are different than me.

Dimension 7: Attitudes about bullying (single item)
- I think it's good to stick up for someone if they are being bullied or teased.

L.E.A.D. Teacher Interview Protocol

We want to learn about your experience with the L.E.A.D. program, what you liked about the program, what you didn't like, and what your students learned from participating in the program.

For Teachers new to L.E.A.D.: Overall Goals and Evaluation
1. What motivated you to include the L.E.A.D. program in your classroom?
   a. How did it fit with your goals for your class?
   b. What were you were hoping your students would gain from participation in the program?
2. Have you had L.E.A.D. or something like L.E.A.D. in your class before?

For Teachers experienced with L.E.A.D.:
1. How many years have you participated in the L.E.A.D. program?
2. Was there anything different in how the program worked for you or your students this year?

Program Implementation
1. Did the program go as planned this year?
2. What do you think worked well? Were there any challenges?
3. What would you change about the program, if anything?

Program Impact on Students
1. What effect do you think has the program had on students' attitudes about the importance of having laws? (probe for changes in student attitudes) Can you give us examples or evidence supporting what you just said?
2. What effect has the program had on students' attitudes toward police or lawyers? How did the students get along with the facilitators?
3. What effect has the program had on students' aspirations or career/educational goals? Can you give us examples or evidence supporting what you just said?
4. Has the program affected the classroom climate? In what ways?

School and Community Context
1. Are there similar programs like L.E.A.D. at the school?
2. Do students come from a background that would support the goals and values of the program?
3. What makes this program relevant to students?

L.E.A.D. Youth Focus Group
Spring, 2004

I'm here today to talk to you about Project L.E.A.D.. I'm doing this so I can learn about what you think about some of the issues you talk about, how you liked the program, and ways that we can make the program better. This conversation is voluntary—that means you only have to participate if you want to and you don't have to answer any questions you don't want to answer. We won't tell your teacher, your parents or the attorney what you say. We'll only talk about what kids in general think (make sure they understand). These questions have no right or wrong answers. We only want to know your opinion. If you have any questions or don't understand what the questions are asking, that's okay. Just ask us to explain. Any questions?

The first thing I'm going to ask you to do is listen to a couple of stories about kids who have to make some tough decisions. I'll ask you your opinion about what the kids in the story should do and why you think so.

Making Good Decisions

1. Samuel and Martin were at the candy store after school. They had just enough money to buy their favorite candy bar and split it. When they got to the store, they found out the owner raised his prices and they didn't have enough to buy the candy bar. Martin left the store first and when Samuel came out to meet him, he told Martin he took the candy bar and offers him half of the candy bar.
   - What do you think Martin should do? (peer pressure) *Probe for whether he should share the candy bar. What if Samuel calls him a wimp/goody goody? Should he tell on Samuel?*
   - What do you think about Samuel taking the candy bar? Was that a good decision or a bad decision? Why? (making decisions)
   - What could happen to Samuel if the owner finds out he took the candy bar? (consequences)
   - Did you talk about any situations like this in class? What did you talk about?
   - Is what Samuel did against the law? Why do you think there's a law about this? Do you think it's a good idea to have a law like that? Why?

2. (Tolerance for Diversity, Bullying,) In Melanie's school, certain groups of kids don't hang out together. Usually, they ignore each other, but sometimes they get into arguments. Melanie had to work on a project for school with Paul, a kid from her class who was part of the group her friends don't like. They didn't finish their work during class and decided to sit together and finish their project during lunch. While they were working, Melanie's friends came over and made fun of Paul and told Melanie to come sit with them.
   - What should Melanie do? Should she sit with her friends or stay with Paul? Why? *Probes: What if her friends say they don't want to hang out with her if she's going to sit with Paul?*
   - What do you think would happen if Melanie went with her friends? Probe: *How might Paul feel?*

- Did you talk about any situations like this in class? What did you talk about?

The next questions I'm going to ask are more general questions about what you learned in this program. Remember, we just want to know your opinion. There are no right or wrong answers.

Attitudes about School
In this program, did you talk about the importance of staying in school? What did you talk about? What do you think? Do you like school? Do you want to go to college?

Attitudes about Lawyers
In this program, did you talk about different kinds of lawyers? What did you talk about? Why do you think we have prosecutors? Why do you think we have defense lawyers? Which would you rather be if you could be one?

Is there anything else about the L.E.A.D. program that you want to tell us?

Thank you for sharing your opinions with us.

Appendix B: Results of the Student Attitude Questionnaire

	L.E.A.D. (n=74)			Comparison (n=81)			L.E.A.D. vs. Comparison
	Pre	Post	Change	Pre	Post	Change	Difference
Dimension 1: Resistance to Peer Pressure and Responsible Decision Making	*3.50*	*3.40*	*-.10*	*3.58*	*3.48*	***-.10†***	*.00*
I know how to stay away from people who might get me in trouble.	3.35	3.45	.10	3.52	3.46	-.06	.16
I know how to avoid things that might get me in trouble.	3.29	3.41	.11	3.44	3.47	.03	.08
I avoid things that might get me in trouble.	3.52	3.22	**-.30****	3.34	3.25	-.09	.21
I stay away from people who might get me in trouble.	3.18	3.46	**.28****	3.60	3.34	**-.26****	.54
I think about the possible good and bad results before I make decisions.	3.54	3.16	**-.38****	3.42	3.26	.04	-.36
I know how to say "no" when someone wants me to do things I know are wrong or dangerous.	3.74	3.66	-.08	3.71	3.66	-.05	-.03
I try to do what I think is right, even if my friends make fun of me.	3.48	3.32	-.16	3.62	3.32	-.30*	.14
I have the power to choose between doing things that will be good for me and doing things that will be bad for me.	3.65	3.74	.09	3.65	3.79	.14†	-.05
Dimension 2: Attitudes toward Rules and Laws	*3.39*	*3.32*	*-.07*	*3.45*	*3.23*	***-.22*****	***.14†***
I think we have too many laws (rev).	2.31	2.34	.03	2.43	2.17	**-.26***	.29
Laws are there to protect us all.	3.68	3.59	-.09	3.75	3.40	**-.35****	**.26***
I understand why we have rules at school.	3.60	3.50	-.10	3.78	3.45	**-.33****	.23
Laws make our neighborhoods safer.	3.47	3.45	.02	3.53	3.43	-.10	.12
Laws are there to make sure people are treated fairly.	3.57	3.46	-.11	3.57	3.52	-.05	-.06
I think it's important to have rules at school.	3.68	3.58	-.10	3.68	3.53	-.15	.05
Dimension 3: Attitudes toward Legal Authorities	*3.49*	*3.60*	*.11*	*3.40*	*3.48*	*.08*	*.03*
Most judges try to be fair and honest.	3.37	3.51	.14	3.42	3.49	.07	.07
I think lawyers want to help people.	3.65	3.66	.01	3.48	3.48	.00	.01
Most lawyers try to be fair.	3.46	3.61	.15	3.30	3.42	.12	.03
Dimension 4: Belief in Importance of School	*3.89*	*3.91*	*.02*	*3.96*	*3.86*	***-.10****	***.12****
I think it is important to go to college.	3.92	3.93	.01	3.96	3.93	-.03	.04
I think it is important to stay in school.	3.86	3.88	.02	3.99	3.83	**-.16****	**.18***
Dropping out of school is a bad idea.	3.73	3.89	**.16†**	3.90	3.84	-.06	.22*
I need to make it through high school to get a good job.	3.91	3.89	-.02	3.98	3.80	**-.18****	**.16***
It's important to finish high school.	3.95	3.95	.00	3.96	3.92	-.04	.04
Dimension 5: Academic Plans	*3.75*	*3.84*	*.09*	*3.92*	*3.91*	*-.01*	*.09*
I think I will go to college.	3.69	3.80	.11	3.94	3.88	-.06	.17†
I think I will finish high school.	3.82	3.88	.06	3.90	3.94	.04	.02

Dimension 6: Belief in Diversity	*3.35*	*3.25*	*-.10*	*3.64*	*3.39*	***-.25****	***.16†***
I try to treat people fairly, even if they are different than me.	3.51	3.41	.10	3.62	3.56	-.06	.16
I think it's good to know people who are different than me.	3.50	3.62	.12	3.80	3.64	**-.16***	**.28***
Sometimes I make fun of people who are different than me. (rev)	3.04	2.73	**-.29***	3.51	2.96	**-.55****	.26
Dimension 7: Attitudes about bullying							
I think it's good to stick up for someone if they are being bullied or teased.	3.38	3.35	-.03	3.40	3.54	.14	-.16

† p<.10   * p<.05

Table 2: L.E.A.D. vs. Comparison Students (School X[3])

	L.E.A.D. Overall Change	Comparison Overall Change	L.E.A.D. vs. Comparison
Dimension 1: Resistance to Peer Pressure and Responsible Decision Making	-.40*	-.28*	-12
Dimension 2: Attitudes toward Rules and Laws	-.31*	-.40*	.10
Dimension 3: Attitudes toward Legal Authorities	-.17	-.17	.00
Dimension 4: Belief in Importance of School	-.11	-.14	.03
Dimension 5: Academic Plans	.03	.05	-.02
Dimension 6: Attitudes about Diversity	-.45*	-.58*	.13
Dimension 7: Attitudes about Bullying	-.10	.18	-.28

* p <.05 † p < .10

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[3] The L.E.A.D. teacher at this school noted having an exceptionally difficult class compared to previous years. This may explain the difference in the patter of score changes for this school vs. the other schools.

Appendix C: Results of the Content Assessment

	% L.E.A.D. Students Reporting Correct Answer (entire sample n=74?Double check)			% L.E.A.D. vs. % Comparison Students Reporting Correct Answer		
It is against the law when kids…	**Pre**	**Post**	**Difference**	**L.E.A.D.**	**Comparison**	**Difference**
1. Write graffiti.	83	95	12	100	79	21
2. Drink alcohol.	85	94	9	89	66	23
3. Don't do their homework.	65	80	15	41	34	7
4. Take drugs like marijuana.	93	96	3	100	79	21
5. Miss a lot of school without a good reason.	61	82	21	59	59	0
6. Take something from a store without paying.	92	96	4	100	79	21
7. Talk back to a parent or teacher.	27	55	28	15	28	-13
8. Hit another person and hurt them.	68	74	12	62	76	-14
9. Copy somebody else's answers on a test.	36	63	27	11	31	-20
10. A person who is arrested and accused of a crime is called a **defendant.**	26	60	34	38	45	-7
11. In court, the person who tries to prove that someone committed a crime is called a **prosecutor.**	53	79	26	48	28	20
12. In court, the person who tries to prove that someone did not commit a crime is called a **defense attorney.**	71	81	10	70	62	8
13. What is a good reason to have laws?		99		85	86	-1
14. What do you call someone who ditches school?		48		22	24	-2
15. What does the F stand for in FINAL?		83		N/A	N/A	N/A
16. What does the N stand for in FINAL?		88		N/A	N/A	N/A
17. What does the A stand for in FINAL?		88		N/A	N/A	N/A
18. If your friend was being bullied at school, which of these things would be best to do?		90		67	41	26
19. A person who drops out of school before getting a high school diploma could get a job as a…		95		74	97	23

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