

CRIME PREVENTION CURRICULUM IN SOUTH AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS: A STUDY OF PROGRAMMES, MATERIALS AND INITIATIVES

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Introduction

Since the 1970s interest in crime prevention, other than through law enforcement, has become a priority in many western industrialised countries. Perspectives for crime prevention are linked to such indexes as crime rates and trends, which are, in turn, influenced by an array of social, economic, technological and political factors.

Like most other western industrialised countries, Australia has experienced significant increases in crime post-World War II. South Australia is no exception. In the mid-1980s the Government of South Australia began with some rigour to take stock of crime and crime prevention in that State and elsewhere.

This was the first step in developing anti-crime policies that ultimately were described in the *Confronting Crime - Crime Prevention Strategy*. A Crime Prevention Policy Unit was established in the Attorney-General's Department and it has maintained stewardship over many of the State's crime prevention initiatives, although its focus has shift over time to suit the political imperatives of the day.

Our appreciation that crime prevention requires multi-faceted and inter-sectoral approaches has evolved alongside our knowledge on crime and its causes. The role of the education sector, for example, has emerged as an important partner in crime prevention activities in South Australia.

Representatives from the education sector, for instance, sit on many of the State's locally-based crime prevention committees. Some schools have integrated crime prevention into their curriculum. The Department of Education, Training and Employment (as it was), through staff involvement in the Retail Industry Crime Prevention Advisory Committee, developed curriculum on shops, shopping centres and crime.

No comprehensive inventory of these and like preventive activities existed. Consequently, the Crime Prevention Unit successfully argued the need to take stock of existing crime prevention in schools programmes, materials and initiatives with the aim of furthering the development and promotion of crime prevention strategies.

The specific objectives were—

- To research and document existing programmes and materials in the field of crime prevention curriculum in South Australia.
- To develop a comprehensive resource list of good practice in crime prevention curriculum programmes and materials.
- To identify further opportunities for crime prevention program development linked to school curriculum.
- To liaise with professional education associations regarding appropriate professional development linked to school curriculum.
- To develop appropriate teacher professional development in the area of crime prevention to guide future delivery of crime prevention curriculum in the education sector.
- To promote crime prevention curriculum and related materials across the education sector.

This paper provides an overview of the research that was undertaken to achieve these objectives. It includes a summary of the literature review, survey results and main findings.

Phase One

I have already mentioned some background to the project but I should in fairness identify who were involved. The Crime Prevention Unit developed the project brief in partnership with the Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE), the Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA) and the Catholic Education Office. A Project Management Team representing each of these agencies engaged a team of researchers with relevant specialist expertise from the Centre for Research in Education, Equity and Work, University of South Australia, to undertake the project.

It is additionally worth noting that during the first phase of the project the meanings of 'curriculum', 'crime prevention' and 'good practice' were discussed at length. I suspect that this does not surprise some of you.

The Project Management Team and the Research Team agreed to interpret 'curriculum' in a broad sense thereby including all school-based activities involving students. They acknowledged that 'crime prevention' has many meanings and what is deemed to be prevention rests upon different philosophical and theoretical paradigms. These were explored in a literature review that I will give more detail on in a moment. They also agreed that it was important to establish what 'crime prevention' meant to teachers and school personnel. In relation to 'good practice', they agreed that it was not the purpose of the research project to conduct an evaluation of current crime prevention programmes in schools to determine achievements of 'good practice' or 'best practice'; rather, they decided to examine and report on possible principles of 'good practice'.

Literature Review

The literature review confirmed the difficulties defining crime prevention per se. Crime prevention has been described as a "rubbery concept" with "elastic" boundaries, which are not "easy to place" (McMillan 1992). The definition of crime prevention is "contentious" (White 1996). Indeed, it has been observed that "crime prevention has come to mean so many things to so many people" (Texas Crime Prevention Institute no date), that it is a "difficult beast to tame" (Gilling 1997, pxi). This is certainly true in the school context. Many of the preventive programmes in schools examined during the course of the project were not specifically designed to prevent crime but many programmes address factors that are precursors to crime.

The review confirmed the great potential that schools offer as a locus for crime prevention (Gottfredson 1997) and an important locus for violence reduction (Petrie, Christie & Christie 1999). Schools provide both an opportunity to ameliorate the risk factors or precursors associated with the 'pathway' to crime and substance abuse, and an opportunity to promote the protective factors or resiliency factors which moderate the influence of risk factors, especially at key transition points in an individual's life course. Moreover, a comprehensive school based crime prevention plan might incorporate aspects of developmental prevention, targeting the risk factors and bolstering the protective factors, and opportunity-reduction approaches that include situational prevention and crime prevention through environmental design. In addition, a comprehensive approach should involve families and the community.

Phase Two

The second phase of the study entailed an audit conducted of existing crime prevention curriculum, programmes and materials in South Australia. This involved consultation with:

- The three schooling sectors (including principal associations, student counsellors and teachers);
- South Australia Police;
- The Council of Educational Associations of South Australia (CEASA);
- The Schools of Education within the three universities; and
- Crime Prevention Officers in local government.

Information was collected on existing programmes and materials in crime prevention curriculum, and it formed the basis for consideration in a broader framework relevant to crime prevention in education. Now is not the time to go into a significant description of the process used. Suffice to say:

- Comment was invited using a range of communication strategies, including setting up a website dedicated to the study.
- Letters with information sheets and facsimile response sheets specifically designed to elicit the information required for the project were disseminated across the State.
- Telephone interviews and site visits were conducted to validate information and elicit more detailed information where necessary.

Table 1 gives a sense of the nature and scope of contacts made.

The detailed analysis included:

- Documenting existing programmes and materials.
- Identifying good practice in crime prevention curriculum and a resource list of 'good practice'.
- Identifying the relationship between crime prevention material and curriculum.
- Determining gaps and areas for improvement.
- Identifying strategies and further action to address the gaps.
- Identifying further opportunities for crime prevention.

Table 1 - People contacted included:

Crime Prevention Officers	14
SAPOL personnel	11
Other organizations and agencies	39
Pre-schools/kindergartens	53
Primary schools	96
<u>Secondary schools</u>	<u>45</u>
Total	258

A survey instrument was prepared and distributed to all pre-schools, kindergartens, primary and secondary schools as well as to schools counsellors and schools of education in universities in South Australia. 194 responses were received from schools. I concede this a low response rate, which can in part reflect a view held in many schools that "they do not do crime prevention". My colleagues who visited many schools state that many schools simply did not recognise the significant relationship, for instance, between crime prevention and good citizenship, yet all schools clearly indicated that 'good citizenship' is an integral part of their teaching.

The survey results give an important insight into the ambit of crime prevention in the education sector.

Survey results

Pre-schools & kindergartens

53 preschools and kindergartens reported on situational preventive techniques (including lights and alarms) that were primarily associated with security. They acknowledged the importance of School Watch, Neighbourhood Watch and the presence of parents. They also felt that police visits and road safety programmes were important.

A greater number of responses, however, indicated that they recognised the importance of developmental issues and in particular, identified teaching a combination of protective behaviours (for example, how to keep safe) and social skills (for example, behaviour management, conflict resolution and values development).

Primary schools

96 primary schools answered the survey. These schools focussed primarily on developmental issues but situational techniques - focusing on school security - were also often mentioned.

Developmental issues were dominated by protective behaviours, the drug strategy and police visits as well as police involvement in programmes. The role of the Student Representative Council, class meetings and the importance of 'student voice' were emphasised. References were also made to religious education, anger management, anti-bullying and anti-harassment strategies.

Like pre-schools and kindergartens, primary schools acknowledged the importance of community-based programmes such as School Watch, Safety House Ambassadors and Neighbourhood Watch. They also recognised the value of surveillance through parents coming and going, which they presumed had a deterrent effect. Some responses commented on the prevention resulting from community members involved in school gardening.

Secondary schools

45 secondary schools responded to the survey. Their responses placed a far greater emphasis on developmental issues than situational issues. Developmental issues included the drug strategy. Many responses indicated that police visits and the involvement of police in specific programmes were integral to school preventive activities. Schools identified the developmental role of crime prevention within curriculum areas, especially religious education. Many schools mentioned the importance of social skills development including peer mediation, maintaining relationships, behaviour management and teaching wiser decision making. Driver education (central to road safety) and protective behaviours (central to personal safety) were also indicated.

What else can be distilled from the survey results? In sum the survey results suggest pre-schools and primary schools tend to appreciate the connection between social skills and crime prevention. They point to a strong awareness of existing developmental programmes and preparedness to consider how these might better be integrated into their current curricula.

The primary school counsellors' group recommended that instead of the creation of additional programmes, some long-term action research be undertaken which could investigate the effectiveness of the long-term programmes. Action research is applied research conducted while programmes are running and the resultant data used to change or modify these programmes. It is therefore, technically not theoretical research, hence arguably not pure research; nevertheless, if done correctly can be very useful (Hibberd 1990).

Schools appear to place a greater emphasis on developmental issues than situational issues. Secondary schools tend to focus on specific curriculum areas whilst stating the need for more integration across curriculum areas by year and year to year. Perhaps, this reflects the more integrated nature of pre-school and primary education as opposed to secondary education that is predominantly discipline-based.

Secondary schools make wider use of discrete programmes and are more interventionist, with some schools tending to respond to situations with a programme designed to address a particular issue or problem.

The survey results confirmed that there is a need for networking and greater sharing about programmes and approaches that are successfully operating in pre-schools, kindergartens and schools. The results also present as a wealth of information on programmes and strategies to be shared, and the Research Team recommended ways of doing so in the context of professional development. More on that later.

Curriculum Development

The Research Team concluded, on the basis of data gleaned from the literature review, early consultation and survey results, that crime prevention can be appropriately addressed and reinforced within the State's curriculum standards and accountability framework.

Many of the crime prevention programmes and preventive strategies identified would complement a constructivist approach to curriculum development, which would involve students in seeking real life information and commensurate life skills including social skills, relationships building, drug education, health living and other matters that impact on their lives. Ideally, the curricula would be constructed around the needs of the students and the communities in which they live. In this way, teaching crime prevention becomes in essence a component of the broader focus on the development of the student as individuals and students as people in communities.

In South Australia five 'essential learnings' have been identified: Futures, Identity, Interdependence, Thinking and Communication. They foster the capabilities to:

- Develop the flexibility to respond to change, recognise connections with the past and conceive solutions for preferred futures (Futures)
- Develop a positive sense of group, accept individual and group responsibilities and respect individual and group responsibilities and respect individual and group differences (Identity)
- Work in harmony with others and for common purposes within and across cultures (Interdependence)

- Be independent and critical thinkers, with the ability to appraise information, make decisions, be innovative and devise creative solutions (Thinking)
- Communicate powerfully (Communication)

It seems to my colleagues and me, in light of our research, that crime prevention curriculum is one way to address and make these 'essential learnings' live in the classroom. What is more, many crime prevention activities offer an opportunity to engage students in meaningful ways and in key decision making, which can play a significant part in the development of life skills.

Where might crime prevention be integrated into existing curriculum?

It appears that for many schools crime prevention fits neatly within the Learning Areas of Health and Physical Education, Society and Environment and Arts. The research showed that a number of teachers are teaching units in relation to Health and Physical Education that cover drug education, bullying and harassment, respecting difference and homophobia.

Crime prevention curriculum can be developed through all four strands of the Society and Environment learning area. In the Time, Continuity and Change strand, students are encouraged to link personal and social histories with broader social issues and to begin to understand that human experiences shape individual and collective identities. In Place, Space and Environment students are encouraged to assess the ways in which values shape behaviour. In Societies and Cultures students learn to develop an understanding and respect for diverse values, beliefs and practices of groups of people. In Social Systems students engage in decision-making and negotiation alongside and gain an understanding of rules and laws in society.

The research data highlighted that many schools are running programmes within Society and Environment that they broadly called crime prevention. These include units on rules and laws, and law and order. I mentioned that a number of schools referred to the significance of civics and citizenship education in teaching crime prevention. Obviously, they saw a link that could be exploited. For example, a number of teachers involved in the research stated that civics and citizenship education was vital in developing crime prevention curriculum since participation and decision-making skills as well as understandings of citizenship lay at the core of crime prevention.

In Arts, crime prevention programmes can be developed through dance, drama, media, music and visual arts. Specifically, they can be developed through the Arts Practice, Arts Analysis and Response, and Arts in Context strands.

A couple of prime examples come to mind. Parafield Gardens High School fashioned learning activities that raised awareness of crimes into the Arts programme. The school developed a large mural at the local public transport inter-change, which formed the catalyst for other physical design changes to improve safety in and about the inter-change. The school also choreographed a dance that communicated the social, health and legal issues of cannabis use.

One primary school in Adelaide actually integrated crime prevention into an array of programmes and learning areas. Aspects of crime prevention featured in critical literacy programmes, statistical maths activities, Health and Physical Education, Society and Environment and media studies programmes offered at Klemzig Primary School. Throughout their learning experiences, students are encouraged to critically analyse societal pressures associated with drugs, alcohol, theft and violence.

Good Practice - Guiding Principles

I pointed out earlier that Research Team was not tasked to evaluate the crime prevention programmes of schools in South Australia. It is therefore, not possible to definitively state what constitutes “good practice”. However, the literature review and analysis suggested certain indicators of what may constitute “good practice” and indeed extrapolated the following principles—

- **Prevention** - reducing incidents through developmental programmes that focus on, for instance, healthy relationships and conflict resolution, and opportunity-reduction strategies that make the social and physical environment safer but avoid making the school look like a fortress.
- **Intervention** - through surveillance and other activities with an aim to disrupt circumstances that might lead to crime and delinquency. Rules should be clarified and consistently enforced, although the focus should be on learning and education rather than control and coercion.
- **Professional development** - teachers, school counsellors and administrators require training and education to increase their classroom management and leadership skills, and to increase their awareness of preventive and intervention strategies, as well as learning how to identify cues and respond constructively to incidents. Training should also cover parental / interagency collaboration.
- **Parent education / Community outreach** - forge partnerships between parents and schools (both primary sources of socialisation and informal control), with a particular focus on children at risk. Involve outside agencies and build communal support.
- **Flexible and context specific** - programmes should be adapted to suit school environments. Students (e.g. a target group) should be included in problem-solving, solution development and solution implementation. Programmes should be sensitive to culturally diverse norms.
- **On-going monitoring and evaluation** - programme design needs to incorporate performance indicators and be evaluated in the short- and long-term. Evaluations should incorporate formulative and impact elements.

Using these principles, the Research Team devised a template that was given to a selection of schools that participated in the survey and appeared to have incorporated some or all of the principles into their prevention programmes or preventive activities. Six case studies were then generated to illustrate a whole-of-school approach to school-based crime prevention. Rather than lead you through each case study, I will draw a few points out to illustrate their content.

Prevention

The case studies demonstrate that schools use a number of strategies and programmes to prevent incidents such as bullying and violence in their schools and promote a range of alternatives to students. These programmes often aim to moderate some of the risk factors and amplify some of the protective factors, albeit that crime prevention is not the stated primary aim. For example,

- Klemzig Primary School and Port Pirie West Primary Schools run Program Achieve that aims to develop students’ social, emotional and behavioural well-being, and students are encouraged to reframe negative thoughts.
- Alberton Primary School runs a peer support program to provide positive support between students.
- Windsor Gardens Vocational College has introduced a class structure so that each teacher is the care-group teacher for no more than 12 students. The teacher is a significant other for students who seeks to build strong relationships with students and their families.

- Wilderness School runs a resilience program entitled Resourceful Adolescent Program (RAP), which enables students to discuss and realise their personal strengths, thoughts, support people and self talk. There is also a staff committee which shares research on resilience, examines whole school curricula for resilience content and prepares programmes
- Parafield Gardens High School developed a 'Making Choices About Drug Use' project that involves students choreographing a dance that communicates the social, health and legal issues around cannabis use. The intent is, through dance, to help students in making informed choices in the future.

Intervention

All of the case studies offer counselling, advocacy and other interventions that aim to disrupt circumstances that may lead to crime. In all of the case studies the role of the school counsellor and/or chaplain is very significant. There are several specific examples of innovative approaches,

- Windsor Gardens Vocational College conducts police community conferences that give students and families an alternative to the youth criminal justice system. A local police officer meets with the families, the young people involved and a college representative and attempts to resolve the issues without resorting to a traditional criminal justice process. The underlying tenets of the conferences are consistent with the concept of restorative justice
- Port Pirie West Primary School has a 'Shed' established for some Year 5-7 male students who are either on police bail or who have court offences. The 'Shed' provides a refuge for positive experiences for these students.

Professional development

I will say more about professional development in a moment. In terms of the case studies, it is evident that crime prevention is a professional development priority for these schools. For example:

- Klemzig Primary School supports the view that for crime prevention programmes to be effective there must accompanying changes to curriculum, pedagogy, school governance, and social relations within the school, and the need for effective liaison between school and the surrounding community.

Community outreach / parent education

Consistently, the 'case study' schools reported on the importance of interagency approaches and collaboration with community groups outside the school. Engaging others appears to strengthen the support available to all parties. Family and Youth Services, Child Adolescent Mental Health Service and the South Australia Police were most often identified in 'partnerships' that had been forged.

Specific examples include,

- Windsor Gardens Vocational College provides twilight schooling over four afternoons from 3:30pm-5:30 pm in response to the needs of a group of students who were disengaged from their education. People from within and outside of the school deliver the programme. Outsiders - so to speak - include representatives from ASK Employment, Centrelink, Holden Hill Police and Inner North East Youth Workers.
- Port Pirie West Primary School runs a police in education programme that involves a local police officer who works with students, teachers and parents using a problem solving approach to deal with local issues that arise in and out of the school.
- Wilderness School collaborates with Griffith University, parents and other schools running programmes similar to the Resourceful Adolescent Programme, which stems from research on early intervention and fostering resilience.

Flexible and context specific programmes

Through the analysis it was evident that the 'success' of the programmes identified in the case studies should be understood in context. The school climate and staff culture, plus readiness to adapt play a vital role in the 'success'. The importance of determining what is an appropriate prevention / intervention programme for an individual school should not be over-looked. Success does not always come from simply replicating a programme tried and tested elsewhere, although examples of 'good practice' should not be ignored.

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation

Each of the programmes identified by the 'case study' schools has a monitoring process built into it. Schools draw on a diverse data including,

- attendance statistics
- anecdotal records
- student withdrawals
- use of 'time-out' rooms
- referrals to other agencies
- community, family and staff feedback.

Some schools have devised ways for students to evaluate programmes. Of course, what amounts to an evaluation can be contentious. It is not always practical to meet the scientific rigour demanded of Sherman and his colleagues (1997). Nevertheless, it is appropriate to remind you that Sherman (1992) notes that measures should suit the institutional setting; interventions should take place in a number of domains simultaneously; resources should be targeted and that reductions in crime can be achieved without necessarily addressing the root causes of crime.

Whole school approaches

The research shows that there is much variety in the ways schools approach crime prevention. It also shows that some schools are unable to make any connection between crime prevention and their daily work. Indeed, some schools reported that they do 'no' crime prevention despite the fact that they run behaviour management programmes and social skills programmes etc.

Interestingly, one school did not want their comprehensive programme for 'at risk' students labelled a crime prevention strategy for fear it would be stigmatised the students involved.

Many schools undertake crime prevention programmes but they target specific areas of concern, and tend to work in 'pockets' without an integrated curriculum approach. Schools that have implemented whole school approaches to crime prevention indicated that these programmes had a significant impact on school culture and practice.

Phase Three

During the third phase the Research Team collaborated with appropriate professional education associations on the development of professional development programmes in the field of crime prevention in the education sector, and a professional development plan was developed for increasing principals' and teachers' awareness of crime prevention curriculum.

It emerged that the vast majority of teachers have not undertaken professional development in relation to crime prevention. Most teachers, however, left the researchers in little doubt that they are keen to find out more about successful prevention programmes operating in schools. Many teachers indicated that they would like to know more about: what crime prevention is, what theories underpin different crime prevention techniques, and how the theories and techniques might best be used in an educational setting.

Some teachers stated an interest in tapping into information on 'at risk' students, how to identify these students and delay or prevent the on-set of delinquency and offending.

Despite the lack of integration of crime prevention in school curricula, there was a strong support from teachers for crime prevention programmes to be integrated into current curricula. Some felt that civics and citizenship education provided an opportunity for this integration to occur since crime prevention should be about developing positive personal skills and understandings of citizenship. Others felt that crime prevention should be integrated into Society and Environment, English, Health and Physical Education.

Effective professional development

The literature on professional development holds that 'one off' events have limited value in terms of teacher learning and that long-term, sustained professional development is the most effective.

Matthews and Grant (2001), in a study conducted with teachers in SA in 1999, concluded that there are six essential elements that constitute effective professional development for teachers. These include clearly expressed professional development aims and expectations, explicit teaching of new subject matter, teacher networks to sustain learning, opportunities for application and critical reflection, the use of information technologies to support learning and support and encouragement especially from colleagues and school leaders.

With the literature findings and these elements in mind, the researchers suggested that:

- A state crime prevention conference for primary and secondary teachers be convened, and I hasten to point out (by way of an advertisement) that a conference on early intervention crime prevention with sessions on crime prevention in the education will be held in Adelaide in March next year.
- School-based teams should be fostered to work initially on identifying areas for staff development in respective schools. Clearly, teacher knowledge levels varied across the State.
- An extended workshop series should be developed with a focus on crime prevention curriculum, prevention and intervention programmes and techniques, problem solving, identifying 'cues' associated with risk, intervening and making referrals, and constructive responding to incidents as well as skills on engaging parents and the community.

- Action research teams, which draw on a Victorian initiative (that seems appropriate given where this conference is being held), should be funded to undertake action research on preventive programmes and, importantly, document their findings so that others can learn from them.

Conclusion

The research findings indicate that there is a wide variety of crime prevention programmes and other preventive activities in use in pre-schools, kindergartens and schools in South Australia. The findings also indicate that there is a strong and passionate commitment by many teachers, principals, counsellors and other staff within the education sector, and by many personnel in organizations and agencies outside of that sector, to use these programmes and engage in activities that might have the effect of preventing crime, or at least delaying the on-set of offending.

The programmes and activities identified during the survey and subsequent in the case studies lend themselves to integration into the South Australia curricula for schools.

The research also identified gaps for ‘improvement’ and/or further research. Clearly, there ought to be a push towards greater integration of future crime prevention programmes in education. Crime prevention should not be construed as a “reductionist add-on” to paraphrase a survey respondent. Existing and future programmes should be evaluated and examples of good practice documented and communicated to others. There is an obvious need for professional development to support teachers, principals, counsellors and other staff.

Since the research team produced its report, a web site has been developed. A seminar was held on the police in schools education project during Law Week, and (as I mentioned) a national conference on early intervention crime prevention with sessions for teachers etc is being organised. A work group comprising staff from the Crime Prevention Unit and the Department of Education and Children Services has also been established to follow-up the research findings.

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