

'ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

TRADING PLACES PROGRAM

Summary

Two Prince George's County Police Officers, Detective Adriane Minor and Sergeant James A. Harper, Jr. created "Trading Places". The Trading Places Program was first performed at Central High School located in Capitol Heights, Maryland during the (1997) school year. Trading Places is a role-play program that allows interaction between high school students and police officers. This interaction allows students to role-play police officers and the police officers to role-play the students. Detective Minor and Sergeant Harper intended the program to accomplish the following goals:

- Create a dialogue between students and police officers
- Create an appreciation of one another between students and police officers
- Create an element of understanding between the students and police officers
- Create a relationship whereas students will feel comfortable reporting pertinent information relating to crimes committed in school and/or in the community.

The following benchmarks were created to ensure positive dialogue:

- « Disseminate Referral Information
- Discussion of Options
- Departmental Obligation (Police Department's)
- Legal Ramification
- « Comprehension/Understanding

These projected goals were met and exceeded. On March 3, 2000, several local television stations and newspaper reporters had an opportunity to witness the program while it was in session. During a period of three hours, the media observed students develop respect, and a change in their attitudes. The sharing of experiences and opinions allowed growth for students and police officers. There are many scenarios that are acted out and then critiqued.

Some of the scenarios are:

- Domestic involving students/domestics with parents
- Gang/Crew disagreements
- Curfew Violation
- Possession/Distribution of Controlled Dangerous Substances
- Traffic Violations
- Disorderly/Resisting Arrest
- Peer Pressure
- Trespassing/Loitering Violations

The critique phase of the program is absolutely critical. The critique ensures that goals, benchmarks, options and opinions are discussed and not neglected.

Safety is paramount. This program is not designed to be physical (i.e. wrestling, grappling or play fighting). It is designed to initiate a dialogue. The program has been and continues to be a success. Several local news television stations and newspapers heard of the program and its success, and attended a session. They all were surprised to witness how uninterested and unmotivated the students initially were; however, by the end of the session students were visibly upset they were not chosen to participate in the scenarios or did not get an opportunity to stress their opinion. Enclosed are several articles from local newspapers describing the Trading Places Program along with a videotaped interview with Chief John Farrell and Police Officer First Class George Nader.

Other police agencies such as the District of Columbia Metropolitan Police Department and the City of New Orleans Police Department have made inquiries about the program in hopes of tailoring a program for their agency.

Points of Contact:

Sergeant J. Harper Jr. #1853
Bureau of Patrol/Headquarters
7600 Barlowe Rd
Landover, Md. 20785
(301)772-4750
E-mail: harpduke@es.com

Detective A. Minor #2105
District III/Investigative Section
7600 Barlowe Rd.
Landover, Md. 20785
(301)772-4911
E-mail: minor5@cs.com

SCAN

Detective Adriane Minor and Sergeant James A. Harper incorporated the principles of the S.A.R.A. problem-solving model during the creation of the Trading Places Program, although the Scanning, Analysis, Response and Assessment (S.A.R.A.) phases were somewhat modified. The S.A.R.A. model provided an excellent medium to address a concern that Detective Minor and Sergeant Harper believed deserved more energy and more in-depth one-on-one discussions. Detective Adriane Minor and Sergeant James A. Harper initially completed the scanning during several different occasions. First, while they both were maturing as young adults and not experiencing the relationship with law enforcement officials; secondly, as patrol officers and witnessing first-hand the lack of understanding between students and police officers; and third, serving in the capacity of Community Oriented Policing Officers. Detective Minor demonstrated the ability to relate and communicate with high school aged young women and Sergeant Harper demonstrated the ability to relate and communicate with high school aged young men.

Although there were other concerns that could have been addressed instead of attempting to improve communication between police officers and students, such as students bringing weapons to school, students bringing controlled dangerous substances to school, students driving stolen vehicles to school, Detective Minor and Sergeant Harper believed that if the students and officers had an opportunity to switch roles and talk about the reasons why and the ramifications. Minor and Harper also believed that students who participated in the Trading Places Program would (1) be less likely participate in the aforementioned criminal activities; and (2) become comfortable approaching police officers and reporting the types of criminal activity that was described earlier whether the act occurred at school or in the community.

ANALYSIS

The analysis of the project is the same as in most metropolitan areas, which is juveniles, chiefly in the high school age range, commit a large percentage of the crime. Usually, the non-proactive approach of arresting the juveniles and being processed by some form of Juvenile Justice was taken. After the screening of the juveniles, the decision was made to either commit the juveniles or refer them to some form of counseling. Sergeant Harper and Detective Minor witnessed and heard of how high school students would commit unwise decisions when being stopped for a **minor** traffic violation and because of those unwise decisions escalated that minor traffic violation into a possible jailable situation. The "Resisting Arrest" scenario during the Trading Places Program best demonstrates this situation. Many times students may not understand or agree with a particular police procedure, but they are repetitiously reminded to not worsen an encounter with a police officer because of that fact.

The percentage of how many students use, sell and store weapons and various types of controlled dangerous substances at home and/or school is scary to imagine. Harper and Minor believe that the Trading Places Program could indirectly decrease that percentage. However, what is most significant to Harper and Minor is the new found respect and understanding that is now shared with an excess of over 500 students and local officers.

Moreover, the Prince George's County Police Department now has an excess of 500 students who are more comfortable with reporting crimes that have occurred in the past as well as crimes that may occur in the future at school or around the community. These 500 students may remember the Trading Places Program and the relationship they have with the Police Department before committing a criminal act.

There have been other programs that use role-playing; however, Trading Places is for high school students. Trading Places strikes a positive chord with high school students due to the topics, conversations and the use of props to depict various forms of controlled dangerous substances (i.e. marijuana, crack cocaine, powder cocaine, PCP,), alcoholic beverages, weapons and police uniform shirts.

The officers are directed to act as the students and the students are directed to act as police officers. It is paramount for participants not to over exaggerate one another, but continue to play the role of the other.

Goals and Benchmarks were developed to ensure that the Trading Places Program would remain focused and travel in unproductive areas of discussions or workshops. The Benchmarks provided a check and balance system which remained in line with the original goals.

RESPONSE

The Response phase of the program was extremely enjoyable, because it was "Show-Time". It was time to perform the Trading Places Program. All of the planning, brainstorming, and asking the principals and teachers if the program could be performed in their schools and classrooms had come by the officers humbling themselves and entering the schools. The officers who were assigned to the District III, Henry-Sector, Community Oriented Policing Squad added their comments to the program and assisted with role-playing duties. Some contributed their own money for props and give-a-ways. Their contributions were greatly appreciated. Sergeant Harper nominated the squad for a Unit Citation award in which they were awarded and now wear proudly on their uniforms.

However, there were obstacles that impeded the progress of the program. Detective Minor and Sergeant Harper, as well as teachers and school administrators, shared the concern of a student being possibly injured as a result of participating in the program. This concern was addressed by constantly reminding the officers and students involved to not be too physical.

Safety officers were established to monitor the scenarios as they were performed and the location of the nearest hospital was discussed prior to the start of the program. Another obstacle was attempting to show the sincerity of the Trading Places Program and the officers who were participating to the students. This was accomplished by introducing the students to scenarios they could relate to and by not making any excuses of becoming defensive of any alleged police actions that a student may or may not have encountered.

Sergeant Harper and Detective Minor found that one could give time to discussing the incident and possibly finding out why the officer did a particular action, but never was a

student's encounter treated like it did not occur or the officer was automatically exonerated because "all officers stick together".

This approach gave the officers and program great credit. Unfortunately, there were students who regardless of what approach was taken had already decided to alienate themselves from what the program was attempting to offer. Ultimately, there were several success stories involving students with that attitude. Those students were normally identified earlier during the program and persuaded or drafted into participating in the program. This approach has changed the opinion of some of the most difficult students. These students did not become police spokespersons, but they had a better understanding and opinion of police officers. This is one of the goals of the program.

ASSESSMENT

The Assessment phase of the program was astounding. Detective Minor and Sergeant Harper were ecstatic with the success of the Trading Places Program. Percentages, which are normally associated with rating productivity and success, did not apply. The comments, hugs, hand shakes, head nods and hand waves that are received from the students when they are in school and on the streets cannot be calculated. The verbal acknowledgement when students are alone and around friends is priceless. The better understanding and respect between students and police officers along with the sharing of personal encounters cannot be measured. Success factors like these cannot be measured by the familiar and overused percentile method of rating success and failure. However, the investment into attempting to better the relationship of over 500 students is more than enough for the co-authors.

On March 3, 2000, several newspaper and television reporters had an opportunity to witness the program. A local Channel 7 reporter's comment summed it best when after receiving the assignment he knew he would cover the story. However he did not imagine how good this program would really be. Secondly, he stated that it initially appeared as if the students were reluctant towards the program, but by the end of the program students were upset that they did not get an opportunity to participate. These observations were huge. Especially coming from a news gathering agency.

The success of the program will continue to grow with each performance. There will always be one student present who did not understand, did not respect a police officer, or may have contemplated on participating in a criminal activity, but then decided not to do those things. Conversely, the police officers will also be able to learn from this interaction.

Inter-Office Memorandum
Prince George's County, Maryland

December 21, 1999

TO: Commander, District III

FR: Lt. Stephen A. Joy #980 , Commander, District III COPS

RE: Letter of Commendation - Trading Places Program

I am requesting that the members of District III's H-sector Community Oriented Policing Squad, Cpl. A. Clayton #2105, of District III's Special Projects section be nominated and awarded the Unit Citation Award. Below is a list of all officers who have participated in the program.

Moreover, I am recommending that the Chiefs Award be awarded to Cpl. J. Harper Jr. #1853 and Cpl. A. Clayton #2105 for their initiative, creativity and ability to be innovative. For, it was these two officers who created "Trading Places". Their efforts are in direct adherence to the Chiefs Award criteria that states, "the Chiefs Award is awarded for outstanding meritorious achievement reflecting credit on the recipient or Department. It is associated with administrative, career development, and general public service or community relations achievements, rather than with patrol or investigative performance." I submit the Trading Places program, created by Cpl. A. Clayton and Cpl. J. Harper Jr., meet and supersede the criteria for the Chiefs Award.

These officers have demonstrated their commitment first, to the department's Mission Statement by displaying Professionalism, Integrity, Responsiveness, Respect, Openness and Sensitivity. Second, they have displayed themselves as professionals by participating in the "Trading Places" role-play program. The participating officers have purchased props with their own monies and donated personal items to ensure the success of the program. Since 1997, this program has been performed at Forestville High School, Suitland High School, Central High School, and Fairmont High School.

Cpl. A. Clayton #2105 along with Cpl. J. Harper Jr. #1853 combined like ideas to create Trading Places. Trading Places is designed to foster a better UNDERSTANDING between high school youths and police officers. Students and police officers exchange roles to experience how one affects the other. The success of this program has made its way into the business community. The Community Policing Unit (H-Sector) will soon be performed the Trading Places program at several Business and Civic Association meetings this year.

Trading Places has had a tremendous effect on strengthening the understanding and overall relationship between students and police officers. There have been incidents whereas at the start of the program there would be a student who expressed hatred towards police officers. HATE is the actual word that was said by more than one student at each of the high schools. However, after allowing those particular students to participate, the final responses at the conclusion of the program are frequently, "you all ain't that bad"; "I see now", "can I ask you some questions", and other statements. Listed below are the names of school administrators who can attest to the positive affect that Trading Places produces.

Central High School
Mrs. N. Stewart
200 Cabin Branch Rd.
Capt.Hgts. MD, 20743
(301)499-7080

Forestville High School
Mr. E. Minnis
7001BeltzDr.
Forestville, MD. 20774
(301) 817-0400

Suitland High School
Ms. Vora
5200 Silver Hill Rd.
Forestville, MD. 20747
(301) 817-0500

OMINEES:

Sgt. D.Preston #1871
Cpl. D. Proctor #1427
Cpl. W. Steen#1674
Cpl. R. Clark #1941
Cpl. D. Waring #2162
Pfc. G. Nader #2230

Cpl. J. Harper #1853
Cpl. J. Wright #1531
Cpl. K. McSwain #1700
Cpl. J. Henderson #1968
Cpl. A. Clayton #2105