

**P.R.A.I.S.E.**  
**Police Recognition and Intervention for Students to Excel**  
**North Hollywood Area**

Nature of the problem: Children that lack recognition in the traditional sense often seek attention, even negative attention, to improve their low self-esteem. Intervention, education and recognition appear to be factors that can have a positive impact on problem children, and remedy their behavior. To accomplish this, PRAISE was designed as a school based program for children who lack positive support systems, and have typically been underachievers or behavioral problems.

Measures taken: The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) supports these efforts through front-end intervention techniques and counseling, to be followed up with recognition or PRAISE in the presence of school officials, parents and peers. The goal of PRAISE is to create better citizens and improve overall academic performance. LAPD - North Hollywood Division has determined that at-risk behaviors are being observed at earlier ages. PRAISE is designed to target Elementary school children in grades 3-5.

PRAISE is a highly effective early intervention program, which has demonstrated that students have the power to change their behavior. When a well-organized comprehensive plan involving existing community resources is applied, students make great gains in all areas of citizenship. PRAISE is effective because it is a comprehensive community-based partnership between the police and the families of troubled youth. Many of the families served by PRAISE have not previously seen the police as a viable resource for assisting them with their parenting efforts. The children involved in PRAISE have the opportunity to develop a relationship with a police officer that they interact with on a regular basis. This relationship assists youth with meeting expectations by providing a level of accountability and a positive motivation for change.

A. Scanning

What was the nature of the problem?

Since the Los Angeles School Police Department does not provide an officer to the campuses of elementary schools, there was no regular police presence on the campus of elementary schools within the District. PRAISE established a regular and highly visible police presence to elementary schools in an effort to positively influence change at an age where children are most likely to respond. The community has welcomed this effort by approaching officers during campus visits and during graduations and thanking them. Parents note a marked change in their children's behavior, which they directly attribute to the efforts of PRAISE. Teachers notice and comment on their ability to effectively manage their classrooms and engage students in productive learning activities due to PRAISE influencing troubled student's behavior. The PRAISE strategy has shown effectiveness by demonstrating a reduced disciplinary history and increased academic performance.

How was the problem identified?

- An increase in the number of crimes committed by juvenile suspects at elementary school ages.

Who identified the problem?

- Officer Johnneen Jones of the Los Angeles Police Department, North Hollywood Division. Officer Jones has been assigned and working juvenile cases for the past three years. She has been a police officer for the past 19 years. She has witnessed problem firsthand in her experience working with juvenile arrests and investigating cases.

What was the initial level of diagnosis/unit of analysis?

- Initially, a Department representative (juvenile officer or detective) meets with school administrators and identifies students who may be suitable for program consideration. An invitation and waiver form is forwarded to the parent or guardian requesting permission for program participation and the sharing of information. After selection, the Department representative meets with the students to set the tone and expectations for improvement in behavior. Open dialogue is created between the representative and the students regarding conduct that violates school rules or criminal codes. Alternative decisions and suggestions for avoiding or dealing with conflict are presented to students. Consequences are discussed and explored so students understand that the power of choice belongs to them. Students are motivated and empowered to change their behavior by weekly meetings between the representative and the PRAISE group. The on-site school counselor who conducts activities with the family supports these weekly meeting. Academic tutoring and assistance during and after school hours further support students. A Law Enforcement Mentor interacts with PRAISE students while they are at lunch or during recess periods. Weekly progress reports are submitted by teachers that indicate any positive or negative changes in behavior. Students are awarded certificates and receive praise during the weekly program meetings if progress is made during a two-week period. At the conclusion of three months, recognition is given during graduation ceremonies to those students who have demonstrated marked behavioral improvement during the PRAISE Program. This well-rounded approach has proven successful with the target population by improving classroom behavior and reducing disciplinary activities. Parents have also reported that their children are more respectful at home and are better behaved. When students continue attending the school in subsequent years, the impact of the program continues to positively influence future behavior.

## B. Analysis

What methods, data and information sources were used to analyze the problem?

- Input from elementary school principals regarding the behavioral challenges faced by some students.

Who was involved in the problem (offenders, victims, others) and what were their respective motivations, gains and losses?

- The Los Angeles Police Department, elementary schools and parents were involved. There have been no losses assessed. The juvenile participants and their families have gained increased motivation to succeed.

How was the problem being addressed before the problem-solving project? What were the results of those responses?

- Prior to the inception of this program the problems were addressed via prevention and suppression methods. The problems were not addressed utilizing front-end intervention in the way the PRAISE program is designed to work.

What did the analysis reveal about the causes and underlying conditions that precipitated the problem?

- The same factors involved were revealed when discussing at-risk youth. Dysfunctional, weak family structure, repetitive poor parenting skills, at-risk high crime residential living conditions and past arrest/criminal behavior of family members.

What did the analysis reveal about the nature and extent of the problem.

- Juveniles who are susceptible to being victims of their own negative behavior will continue to struggle without front-end intervention.

### C. Response

What range of possible alternatives were considered to deal with the problem?

- Utilizing outside/inside resources available to the police department such as Los Angeles City Attorney Parenting Programs and Youth Advocacy Programs.

What evaluation criteria were most important to the department before implementation of the response alternative(s) (e.g. legality, community values, potential effectiveness, cost, practicality, etc.?)

- Parental involvement, parental permission, and first-hand evaluation by a police officer to choose which child would benefit the most.

What did you intend to accomplish with your response plan (i.e. project goal and corresponding measurable objectives)?

- To change a child's outlook to that of a positive mindset that would allow the child to excel utilizing a simplistic measure such as positive reinforcement or the concept of "PRAISE."

What resources were available to help solve the problem?

- All community based and City oriented programs. Both the Los Angeles Unified School District and the Los Angeles Police Department support PRAISE. After evaluation of the student, other resources both public and private are utilized as needed to supplement the program. El Nido Family Services or the Department of Children and Family Services provide counseling support to the families. The Los Angeles County District Attorney's ACT (Abolish Chronic Truancy) and the Los Angeles County Probation Department CAP (Community Advocacy Program) provide additional enforcement support to the PRAISE Program. In addition, regular progress reports and programming information is shared between PRAISE and the California State Attorney General's Office, Department of Justice, Office of Criminal Justice Planning.

What was done before you implemented your response plan?

- The project was subjected to an internal review for administrative clearance prior to implementation.

D. Assessment:

What were the results? What degree of impact did the response plan have on this problem?

- There are 34 past and 14 current students that continue to thrive under this program. To date, none of these children have gone on to commit crime.
- Methods of evaluation and the effectiveness of the problem solving effort is currently being researched and evaluated.

Who was involved in the evaluation?

- School administration, school psychologist, and County school social workers.

What response goals were accomplished?

- Helping the children to understand that they have the power to change through positive reinforcement and getting the children to effectively change their own behavior.
- The response will require continued monitoring and a continuing effort to maintain the result of the program.
- Community support for PRAISE is obtained by holding bi-monthly campus meetings to address a variety of issues identified by parents in the community. Specialty seminars are held to increase awareness on such timely topics as narcotics usage and Internet safety.

Nomination for the 2007 Herman Goldstein Award  
for Excellence in Problem Oriented Policing

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Subject matter expert speakers, such as the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, provide additional information and materials parents can rely upon to assist them in providing parental guidance to their children.

Agency and Officer Information:

- Los Angeles Police Department, Officer Johnneen Jones.

At what level of the police organization was this problem solving initiative adopted?

- Los Angeles Police Department-North Hollywood Area, Juvenile Unit, and Juvenile Division.

What issues/problems were identified with the problem oriented policing model or the problem solving model?

- Issues involve time constraints and the fact that this program involves no additional funding for salaries or overtime. The assigned officer will have to encompass the program as an additional function of his/her police duties.

What general resources (financial and/or personnel) were committed to this project and of those resources, what went beyond the existing department budget?

- Officer Jones has continued to meet the goals of this program while engaged in her normal duty performance and has not received overtime. She was recognized by the Mayor of Los Angeles for her diligent duty.

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