

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to convey the impact of the SPAVA program on students in Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) and in local private schools during SPAVA's ninth full year of implementation.

SPAVA is a unique violence-prevention and character-building program presented by trained community volunteer mentors to classes of students and their teachers in grades one through twelve. Mentors follow one of two detailed curriculum guides - for students in grades three through twelve or in grades one and two. The program, which must be requested by a teacher or school administrator, is presented in 45-minute weekly sessions ranging from five to ten weeks in duration. SPAVA students are encouraged to develop and conduct service-learning projects in order to apply and share something they learned in SPAVA with others. They are also encouraged to apply for SPAVA scholarships and awards.

SPAVA was developed by Timir Banerjee, M.D., a retired neurosurgeon, in response to the 1997 school shooting tragedy at Heath High School in western Kentucky. Dr. Banerjee's mission in creating SPAVA was "to help create a nonviolent society by being role models for the younger generation." The goals of SPAVA are to promote respect, honor and integrity among students; to recognize and understand feelings; to develop anger-management skills; and to recognize the characteristics of famous men and women of peace.

Information for this report was derived from evaluation surveys completed by SPAVA students in grades three through twelve, their teachers and their mentors from Jefferson County Public Schools and from area private schools. It also includes evaluation responses from teachers of SPAVA students in grades one and two and answers to eight evaluation questions posed verbally by teachers to these young students. All surveys include both direct and open-ended response information. Florence Chang and Deven Vaught of the District Planning Office collected and analyzed the direct-response data from evaluation surveys assisted by Ryan McCafferty of their office. Additionally, they collected and analyzed the suspension information included in this report.

KEY FINDINGS

From Evaluation Surveys

1. Students and teachers agreed that the greatest student growth from SPAVA was in knowledge of peacemakers and peacemaking followed by the ability to think of different ways to solve problems when upset.
2. Students and teachers agreed that students improved in each of the eleven SPAVA content areas after participation in SPAVA. These eleven areas are: calming down when upset, figuring out the real problem when upset, thinking about different ways to solve a problem when upset, solving problems with others, recognizing and understanding one's own feelings, recognizing and understanding other people's feelings, showing respect for oneself, showing respect for others, learning about peacemakers, learning about peacemaking, behaving as peacemakers. Improvements in each of these areas were all statistically significant ($p < .001$).

3. Seventy-four percent of students reported that they had changed because of SPAVA.
4. While JCPS suspensions rose by 13% from first semester to second semester, SPAVA suspensions rose by only 4% pre-and post-SPAVA participation.
5. Over 85% of students recommend SPAVA for other students and over 80% of teachers would like SPAVA in their class again.
6. Students always rated their own abilities addressed in SPAVA, both pre- and post-SPAVA, higher than teachers rated these students' abilities pre- and post-SPAVA.

From JCPS Suspension Data

Suspension data were pulled for students in sixteen participating classes of middle, high and special schools. Overall, their suspensions increased by 4% in 2008-09 when comparing their rates pre-and post-SPAVA participation. District suspensions overall increased by 13% from first semester to second semester.

PARTICIPATION

	<u>2004-05</u>	<u>2005-06</u>	<u>2006-07</u>	<u>2007-08</u>	<u>2008-09</u>
Students who participated in SPAVA					
JCPS	786	1384	1374*	1850	1121
Private schools	294	145	180	177	118
Total	1080	1529	1554	2027	1239
Total number of SPAVA sites					
JCPS	25	24	20	25	23
Private schools	4	2	2	3	3
Community sites	1	1	1	2	0
Total	30	27	23	30	26
Total number of classes					
JCPS	32	55	52	72	51
Private schools	7	6	6	6	5
Community site	1	1	1	2	0
Total	40	62	59	80	56
Total number of active mentors					
JCPS	28	45	48	75	42
Private schools	1**	1**	1**	3**	1**
Community sites				4**	
Total	28	45	48	80	42
Scholarship award applicants					
JCPS	152~	105	166	92	
Private schools		102	143	109	
Community sites				3	

Total	152	207	309	204	199
Scholarship award winners	33~				
JCPs		37	40	74	55
Private schools		31	70	23	31
Community sites				2	
Total	33~	68	110	99	86

* Includes 80 JCPs students at one community site

** One mentor here also mentors in JCPs and is counted among the JCPs number already.

~ JCPs and Catholic schools combined

EVALUATION DATA

FOR ALL GRADES 3-12

From Student Surveys

A total of 518 students, grades 3-12, returned student surveys from 30 classes out of 39 possible grades 3-12 classes resulting in a student response of 77%. This represents a 31% increase over the 2007-08 student response rate. Student surveys allowed responses of "not at all," "a little bit," "a lot." The percentages below reflect student responses reported by them as "a little bit," or "a lot".

74% thought they had changed because of SPAVA.

78% said they felt more respected and cared about in their classroom because of SPAVA.

86% said they would recommend SPAVA to a friend.

The top seven areas of personal growth because of SPAVA reported by students are knowledge of peacemakers and peacemaking, thinking about different ways to solve a problem when upset, calming down when upset, trying to figure out the real problem when upset; solving problems with other people, and recognizing and understanding other people's feelings.

From Teacher Surveys

This information is from 34 returned teacher surveys of a possible 56, giving a response rate of 61%. Teachers' response rate increased this year over last year's rate by 19%. Again, percentages reported reflect responses of "a little" and "a lot."

93% said students used anger management skills taught in SPAVA.

86% reported a decrease in inappropriate classroom behaviors.

100% said they can use aspects of SPAVA with all students.

84% said they would like SPAVA for their class next year.

The top five areas of student growth because of SPAVA from teachers' reports are knowledge of peacemaking and peacemakers, thinking about different ways to solve a problem when upset, solving problems they had with other people, and showing respect for others.

From Mentors' Surveys

Mentors were asked to complete a survey for each class they worked with. Of a possible 56 surveys, 35 were returned. The response rate was 63%. This reflects a 10% decrease in mentor responses from last year.

86% rated their training as very adequate for presenting SPAVA's concepts and materials.

86% said they very closely or mostly followed the curriculum.

87% said the classroom teacher participated a lot during sessions.

46% thought students saw SPAVA as very relevant and valuable to their lives and 51% thought students saw SPAVA as a little relevant and valuable to their lives.

FOR GRADES 1-2

Responses from Teachers

Teachers of first and second-grade students rated the most student growth in the areas of knowledge of peacemakers and peacemaking, trying to figure out the real problem when upset, thinking about different ways to solve problems, and recognizing and understanding their own feelings. Overall, teachers noted that the SPAVA concepts and curriculum guide were appropriate for the children in their age group. A couple of teachers noted that some of the vocabulary and the information on peacemakers were a little difficult for students.

What SPAVA People Say

From Evaluation Surveys

Students in *grades three through twelve* said:

- I've learned not to bully others.
- I can walk away from a bully.
- I can calm down when I get mad.
- I am acting nicer to people.
- Now I really stop, think, and listen to people's feelings.
- I don't let my actions get out of control.
- I don't make fun of people any more.
- I solve problems in a different way.
- I have learned to deal with my feelings better.
- I started respecting my teachers.
- I just see everything through a different aspect.
- I think more about the consequences before I do things.
- I think more about others and their feelings.
- I'm a better peacemaker and I help people out.
- I started to try to avoid conflicts and settle it down with some kind talk.
- Now I have a positive attitude.
- I have learned to respect others.
- I really stop and think things through more before I act.

Students in *grades one and two* said:

- I tried not yelling at people, using I messages instead of screaming in somebody's ear.
- I messages help me with my mom and I cool down.
- I liked learning how to be nice to others and to be a peacemaker.
- When a little boy or girl is alone, I come over and I play with them.

- I sing to my stuffed animals and hug them when I am sad, angry or alone.
- Now I tell the truth more to my mom.
- When I'm mad, I use STAR.

Teachers of students in *grades three through twelve* said:

- I see them walk away from situations when they are red face mad.
- They are calmer, quieter, on task, helping each other more.
- Students are more respectful, think before reacting, constantly bring up SPAVA in situations.
- Less shouting, less referrals for cursing, fighting.
- They respect me when I ask them to do things like sit, be quiet, etc.
- They are trying to encourage each other to do well.
- They tell me how they use STAR in and out of school. Students even tell me about how their peers use it in and out of school.
- I use it whenever there is a problem and to analyze problems in stories and history.
- I wish the program was mandated in all the schools.

Teachers of students in *grades one and two* said:

- I have seen them use I messages and STAR being used more.
- When a situation occurs, I remind kids of the "choices," to use positive ways to solve problems.
- I like the STAR concept, this will help students calm down. Additionally it helps me stay calm.
- Kids love having a new teacher face in class.
- This program is a must for all classrooms!

Mentors of students in *grades three through twelve* said:

- It created a fairly safe place for students to express themselves; they realized we're more alike than they previously thought.
- It created a shift in consciousness and the way they view others, put them in touch with their feelings.
- They valued knowing that someone other than their parents and teacher cares about them and their future.
- I think they valued learning how to be a friend and what to expect of a friend.
- These kids touched my life in a very positive way.
- It was helpful to use (SPAVA ideas and values) in my life and the teacher said that also.
- It was a lot of work but I learned a lot about the kids and myself.

Mentors of students in *grades one and two* said:

- I think they valued dealing with bullying - they wanted this and spent two weeks on it.
- I think they valued speaking up about personal issues in front of their friends.
- I was surprised at how many second graders got the concept of empathy and used it to work out problems.
- I was surprised that children grasped the concept of STAR so well.
- It gave me the direction I wanted, to learn if I enjoy teaching and what grade level I'd prefer.
- I really learned about controlling my impulses and expressing my feelings in a better way.

Other

1. In response to prior years' requests that SPAVA create a means for older students to teach SPAVA to younger students, SPAVA developed and conducted a service-learning project with

an after-school student group at Seneca High School who conducted two SPAVA sessions on bullying with students at nearby Goldsmith Elementary School. Assistance was provided by the VTC Service Learning Coordinator.

2. A video was created of actual SPAVA sessions in response to repeated requests from new mentors. The Waggener High School Telemedia Department staff and students collaborated with SPAVA to film, edit and copy the video which is now available in SPAVA's lending library.
3. A new SPAVA Peace and Kindness (PEAK) student award was created and awarded this year as a result of a donation by the Women's Club of Louisville, who also judged entries for it.
4. Optional sessions were held for mentors to learn more about dealing with bullying, to troubleshoot challenges together and to share experiences.
5. The partnership continued between SPAVA and University of Louisville. One psychology professor who requires students in two of her classes to do service-learning projects offered SPAVA as a choice. Several of these students served as SPAVA mentors boosting our provision of the program to JCPS classes. This partnership also provided SPAVA with a part-time UL student aide for the spring semester. Our aide presented her work with SPAVA plus information about the program at UL's first Service-Learning Fair in Spring, 2008.
6. Site visits to classroom SPAVA sessions were conducted in spring using a rubric developed for SPAVA to note the manner and effectiveness of implementation of the program in classrooms.
7. A new evaluation form was developed, used, and analyzed this year to better assess program effectiveness with students in grades one and two. It included questions for teacher to ask their students for which responses were recorded.
8. The curriculum guide developed last year for use with students in grades one and two was modified to include more detailed instructions on request of mentors who used the original guide last year.
9. The SPAVA Advisory Council met once in December giving perspectives and counsel on several issues. Additional meetings were not held due to lack of need.
10. Every 1 Reads format continues to be emphasized during mentor trainings for use whenever materials are read aloud in SPAVA sessions.
11. The SPAVA Awards Celebration this year included not only refreshments provided by Waggener's Culinary Arts Department students as in the past, but also music performed by several Waggener Orchestra students. Many guests complimented both.

Recommendations for 2009-10

1. Update the two SPAVA curriculum guides with current recommendations and omit dating logos so they are available for several years' use.
2. Broaden mentor recruitment at local universities and in our community to lessen the constant number of unmet teacher requests for SPAVA because of too few mentors.
3. Address a few new problem issues related to the SPAVA scholarship award program.
4. Increase the conduct of SPAVA service learning with both older students teaching younger students, and by SPAVA teachers with their classes.
5. Maintain a relationship with SPAVA's Advisory Council members for meetings as needed.
6. Develop a SPAVA professional development session for teachers.