

**Evaluation of Year One:
Implementation of New Students
Against Violence Everywhere
(S.A.V.E.) Chapters**

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Introduction

Students Against Violence Everywhere (S.A.V.E.) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting violence prevention through student-initiated and managed chapters at schools across the country. Formed in 1989 in North Carolina in memory of Alex Orange, a student shot and killed while attempting to break up a fight, S.A.V.E. educates schools and communities about the implications of violence. S.A.V.E. helps students foster nonviolence through three primary means: crime prevention, conflict management, and service learning projects.

S.A.V.E. is sponsored nationally by Chevrolet. The support of Chevrolet helps S.A.V.E. create new educational materials, provide ongoing assistance to existing chapters, and conduct local outreach and chapter start up workshops. With over 80,000 registered members, S.A.V.E. is a large and ever expanding organization.

Methodology

The Evaluation and Training Institute (ETI) was contracted to conduct an evaluation of the implementation process of new chapters of Students Against Violence Everywhere (S.A.V.E.). In assessing the effectiveness of the implementation process, ETI set forth to analyze data from the first year of implementation at 25 new sites. Five sites from each of the following locations were included in the sample: San Diego, California; Orlando, Florida; Tampa, Florida; Detroit, Michigan; and San Antonio, Texas.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed to assess the implementation process. Quantitative data were collected through written surveys of advisors and students, while qualitative data were gathered through site visits to two school sites and interviews with advisors and principals.

Research Questions

The evaluation was guided by the following research questions:

- To what extent are the S.A.V.E. advisors adequate to implement, maintain, expand, monitor and evaluate the Program?
- To what extent are the S.A.V.E. recruitment activities adequate to recruit, enroll, and sustain the needed numbers of students?
- To what extent has each school site implemented the key components of S.A.V.E.?
- What aspects of the program are working well?
- What aspects of the program are having problems?
- What evidence is there that the program is working as intended? What progress has been made toward program objectives?
- What are the recommendations for the second year implementation?

Instruments

In consultation with both S.A.V.E and Chevrolet, ETI developed the following instruments to examine the research questions in the field:

- Telephone interview protocol for advisors;
- Middle and high school student surveys;
- Elementary school teacher survey; and
- Telephone interview protocol for principals.

Data Collection Activities

To allow for comparability between pre- and post-implementation data, ETI solicited outcome data only from those 13 schools that had returned completed student, teacher, and/or advisor surveys earlier in the school year. ETI made multiple telephone contacts with each school to schedule and conduct interviews with the principal and S.A.V.E. advisor for each. In total, advisors were interviewed at 12 of the 13 schools, and principals were interviewed at five schools.

To collect student data, post-implementation student surveys were administered to the six middle schools and high schools in the sample. Four of these schools returned a total of 170 surveys to ETI in May 2002. Because of lower reading ability, elementary school students were not

asked to complete written surveys. Instead, teachers at the elementary schools completed surveys regarding their students' attitudes and behavior. Six schools returned teacher surveys, including five elementary schools and one middle school that was unable to administer student surveys.

Findings

Student Survey Findings (Middle and High Schools)

S.A.V.E. Student Demographics

Similar to previous survey findings, the post-implementation survey found that many different kinds of students are participating in the S.A.V.E. chapters:

- As with the pre-implementation survey, slightly over half of respondents were male (51%).
- Again, students in all grade levels from 6-12 were represented in the sample. Respondents to the post-implementation survey, however, were further along in school than previous respondents. The percentage of middle school students decreased from the pre-test (49%) to post-test (46%), as did the percentage of ninth and tenth graders (30% pre versus 23% post); however, the percentage of eleventh and twelfth graders increased (18% pre, versus 30% post).

Program Awareness

In general, participants were aware that Chevrolet sponsors the program. Four-out-of-five students responding (80%) were able, without prompting, to name Chevrolet, Chevy Rock or GMAC as the national sponsor of the S.A.V.E. program.

However, participants were not consistently sharing their S.A.V.E. involvement with their families. Slightly fewer than half of respondents (47%) had told their parents about the S.A.V.E. program.

Students' Perceptions of School Safety

Students joined S.A.V.E. to improve their school environment. (See **Table 1.**) In the post-implementation survey, as with the earlier survey, just over half of the students reported joining S.A.V.E. “to make my school a safer place” (58% and 51%, respectively). The next most popular reasons for joining S.A.V.E. continued to be “to take action to decrease the violence in my school” (35% post, 36% pre) and “to be involved in my school’s safe plan or planning”(35% post, 31% pre).

Table 1. Why did you join S.A.V.E.?

	Pre	Post
To make my school a safer place	51%	58%
To be involved in my school's safe school plan or planning	31%	35%
To take action to decrease the potential for violence in my school	36%	35%
To make my community a safe place	25%	30%
To meet new people	26%	27%
To be with my friends	21%	22%
To add to my extracurricular activities	19%	20%

Student perceptions of campus safety were less positive in the most recent survey. When asked about how safe they feel at school, fewer students reported feeling *very safe* (6% post versus 18% pre) and more reported feeling just *safe* (56% post versus 41% pre). Fifteen percent of respondents felt *not very safe* or *not safe at all*, compared to less than 10 percent of pre-implementation survey respondents. The remainder of students (23% post, 32% pre) felt *somewhat safe* at school.

Students' S.A.V.E. Experiences

Since the formation of their S.A.V.E. chapters during the 2001-2002 school year, students have engaged in a variety of S.A.V.E. activities at their sites. (See **Table 2.**) The top five S.A.V.E. activities that responding students have participated in with their S.A.V.E. chapters are [n=96]:

1. Red Ribbon Week (68% post, 55% pre);
2. Public service announcements, videos, or brochures (55% post, 27% pre);
3. A S.A.V.E. Week or National School Safety Week (54% post, 10% pre);
4. A S.A.V.E. poster or essay contest (50% post, 10% pre); and
5. A non-violence pledge drive (47% post, 32% pre).

When asked what activities they would like to participate in, create or sponsor with their S.A.V.E. chapter, students most often selected social activities, such as *visiting other schools to spread S.A.V.E.'s message* (73%), *a S.A.V.E. dance* (69%), and *skits or role-play scenarios* (65%). Of the 17 activities measured in the survey, *Red Ribbon Week* (43%) and *a S.A.V.E. Week or National School Safety Week* (48%) generated the least interest.

Table 2. Which of the following activities have you participated in with S.A.V.E.? Which activities would you like to participate in, create, or sponsor with your S.A.V.E. chapter?

	Participated in (pre)	Participated in (post)	Would like to
Red Ribbon Week	55%	68%	43%
Public service announcements/videos/brochures	27%	55%	52%
A S.A.V.E. Week/National School Safety Week	10%	54%	48%
A S.A.V.E. poster/essay contest	10%	50%	54%
A non-violence pledge drive	32%	47%	53%
Skits and/or role play scenarios	30%	46%	65%
A kick-off rally for S.A.V.E.	29%	45%	63%
A school-wide assembly about S.A.V.E.	37%	42%	64%
Train students in conflict management	39%	42%	61%

	Participated in (pre)	Participated in (post)	Would like to
A Peer Mediation show case	13%	41%	51%
The annual S.A.V.E. summit	16%	41%	49%
A guest speaker related to non-violence and S.A.V.E.	35%	25%	64%
Visit other schools to spread S.A.V.E.'s message	16%	23%	73%
Cooperative efforts with other organizations	23%	18%	56%
A S.A.V.E dance	25%	17%	69%
Parents on Patrol (to monitor the hallways)	17%	13%	59%
A photo/fingerprint booth at local expo or fair	13%	10%	63%

Impact of S.A.V.E. on Student Perceptions

Students identified what impact they felt S.A.V.E. had had on their school. (See **Table 3.**) Respondents most frequently stated that S.A.V.E. had improved their school by *teaching students how to manage and resolve conflict* (48%), *reducing violence* (46%), and *helping more students get involved* (40%).

Table 3. How do you think S.A.V.E. has improved your school?

Impact	Percent
Taught students how to manage and resolve conflict	48%
Reduced violence	46%
Helped more students get involved	40%
Helped bring staff/teachers and students closer together	34%
Made stronger connections to the community	19%
Made stronger connections to other schools	15%
Helped parents become involved	14%

Respondents also were asked to identify the ways in which S.A.V.E. had improved their life. (See **Table 4.**) Most frequent responses were *taught me how to manage conflict better* (53%), *made my school safer* (37%), *helped me feel more secure about how I handle myself when a conflict or emergency arises* (36%), and *helped me to make friends and get to know more people* (35%).

Table 4. How do you think S.A.V.E. has improved your life?

Impact	Percent
Taught me how to manage conflict better	53%
Made my school safer	37%
Helped me feel more secure about how I handle myself when in a conflict or emergency	36%
Helped me to make friends and get to know more people	35%
Provided an opportunity for me to help my school and community	28%
Given me a safe place to go before/after school	26%
Made my community safer	12%

Advisor Survey Findings (Elementary Schools)

S.A.V.E. Program Support

Advisors reported receiving a variety of S.A.V.E. materials and resources. Nearly all of the six sites responding said that they had received a Chevrolet R.O.C.K. Matching Grant (5 sites), S.A.V.E. Essentials Manual (5 sites), S.A.V.E. Web site (4 sites), and S.A.V.E. representative (4 sites). Sites most frequently reported *using* the S.A.V.E. Essentials Manual (5 sites) and S.A.V.E. Web site (3 sites).

Advisors were also asked about the support that their school provides for the S.A.V.E. program. Three of the survey respondents reported receiving *full support* from the administration at their site. One respondent, in contrast, reported receiving *no support*.

Student and Parent Involvement

The six responding program sites varied widely in student enrollment. The number of students participating in S.A.V.E. ranged from seven to 130, with a median of 26.

Parent involvement also varied from site to site. Four of the six advisors responding reported that they sent materials home to parents about their S.A.V.E. chapter. However, only one school stated that parents are involved in their S.A.V.E. chapter. This school involved parents in fundraising, supervision of activities, and transportation.

Activity Implementation

The six sites surveyed reported having conducted a variety of activities already. The activities that most sites had implemented were *skits or role-play scenarios* (5 sites), *training students in conflict management/peer mediation* (5 sites), and *Red Ribbon Week* (4 sites). In addition, the majority of respondents stated that they would like to do the following activities: *public service announcements, videos or brochures* (5 sites); *a kick-off rally for S.A.V.E.* (4 sites); *visit other schools to spread S.A.V.E.'s message* (4 sites); *a guest speaker related to non-violence and S.A.V.E. issues* (4 sites); *a school-wide assembly about S.A.V.E.* (4 sites); and *a S.A.V.E. poster/essay contest* (4 sites).

Program Need

Advisors were asked to identify the violence problems at their school. The majority of sites *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the following were still problems: *put downs/name calling* (5 sites), *disputes/conflicts* (5 sites), *theft* (5 sites), and *bullying* (4 sites). The majority of participants *strongly disagreed* that *gangs* (4 sites) or *dating violence* (4 sites) were problems at their school.

Impact of S.A.V.E. on School and Students

Advisors were asked how S.A.V.E. had improved their school. The most frequent responses were that it had *helped more students get involved in their school and community* (5 sites), *taught students how to manage and resolve conflicts* (4 sites), and *reduced violence* (3 sites). In contrast, no respondents stated that the program *helped bring faculty and students closer together*, and only one reported that it *helped parents become more involved with their children and schools*.

Advisors reported that their students had acquired several positive skills and attributes as a result of participating in S.A.V.E., including *self-esteem and confidence* (5 sites), *conflict resolution* (4 sites), *presentation/public speaking* (4 sites), and *knowledge about different violence prevention strategies* (4 sites).

Advisors also described several other impacts of S.A.V.E. on their school, students and community. These included:

- *“Personal enjoyment of belonging to a good program. [Participants] feel proud and helpful.”*

- *“Increased awareness and a public commitment.”*
- *“It put a young face on a positive issue. Students are making a stand on an issue that affects their lives. It is a positive way to teach others about non-violence.”*
- *“Good foundation for students going into [middle school]. We plan on using these students to spread the word.”*
- *“Students participating benefited by learning anti-violence strategies and to give back to the community. The community benefited from service projects.”*
- *“It has helped students to manage and resolve conflicts. I would like to educate them [about] the effects and consequences of violence as safe extracurricular activities for students, parents, and the community.”*

Advisor Interview Findings

Advisor Expectations and Awareness

Advisors were asked about their initial expectations for the S.A.V.E. program and whether or not these expectations had been met. Advisors all had different expectations and desired outcomes for the program, yet they generally reported that their expectations were met. Some of their hopes for S.A.V.E. included:

- To teach children about non-violence,
- To assist students in solving conflict,
- To have older students serve as a positive influence on younger students,
- To get kids involved in the community,
- To give students something positive to do,
- To help kids solve problems at home,
- For kids to see the good in other people,
- To raise awareness of violence, and
- To increase students’ involvement in school and community safety.

All advisors interviewed were aware that Chevrolet sponsors the S.A.V.E. program. They all named Chevy without prompting.

Activities and Accomplishments

Nine of the 12 respondents claimed that they had accomplished what they had set out to do when they started the program. Specific accomplishments included getting students involved, organizing and

implementing community activities, meeting weekly as a club, and making people aware of the program.

The sites had conducted a vast range of activities in their first year of implementation. Some of the activities that advisors saw as most successful were: guest speakers, puppet shows and skits, random acts of kindness, alcohol and crime awareness week, a student pledge to be non-violent, a kick-off event, training to be a good listener, a peace rally, attending the regional summit, a banner contest, community service projects, and the Olympics torch run. Some of the other activities being conducted by more than one site included: canned food drives and fundraisers for charity, producing a school non-violence video, Red Ribbon Week, and school talent shows or performances.

Parent Involvement

All but three of the 12 advisors interviewed had at least some parent involvement in their program. This ranged from just one parent to about 15. Parents most commonly participated by attending field trips, events and meetings. In less frequent cases, parents also helped with program planning, contacting community service organizations, and having T-shirts made.

Program Outcomes

Respondents described multiple ways in which participants benefited from program involvement. According to advisors, as a result of S.A.V.E., students now:

- Feel like they can make a difference in their neighborhood,
- Are spokespersons and role models for the school,
- Have an awareness of the violence that occurs in their community,
- Can deal with different types of conflicts,
- Become uplifted when doing S.A.V.E. activities,
- Have better self-esteem,
- Are less prone to aggression and fighting,
- Stop conflicts at earlier stages, and
- Are more comfortable speaking about violence they may have seen.

In addition, advisors were asked to discuss the impact that S.A.V.E. has had so far on their school and community. Several improvements in participants' interactions with the community were identified. According to advisors:

- *"The kids are being proactive and the community loves it because they see a message of non-violence being spread."*
- *"[The school and community] benefit through partnerships and working together for the same cause."*
- *"Eventually the program will help cut down the fights and disagreements; it will show the community that the school is working together to be aware of non-violence."*
- *"The kids are more aware of strangers or strange occurrences in the neighborhood. They're talking to cops more often about what they see and hear."*
- *"The community has received things from kids, like pen-pals and placemats for Meals on Wheels. They feel less lonely through the kids' service projects."*
- *"[Participants have] shown the community that not all kids are violent."*

Advisors named what they saw to be their biggest successes, which were: getting students involved and active (6 sites), improving students' conflict resolution skills (4 sites), and raising awareness of the school and community (3 sites). As one advisor stated, *"There is unity among the kids. They try to help each other, and they've learned that there's a difference between tattling and speaking up about the violence they've seen or heard about."*

Challenges and Areas of Need

Sites faced various challenges in implementing S.A.V.E., including time, money and personnel constraints; lack of administrator buy-in; and difficulty in gaining student involvement. According to one advisor, *"Students are so stretched out with homework and activities that they don't feel they have the time."* No more than two sites named any specific challenge.

Advisors were asked if there was any additional assistance from the national S.A.V.E. office that would improve their program. A few sites said that nothing was needed. As one advisor stated, *"The national SAVE office has been outstanding and supportive."* The remainder of respondents suggested various ways that the national S.A.V.E. office could help them. The most common suggestions were: to hold local conferences (4 sites), to

help sites more with advertising and promotion (2 sites), and to provide more funding (2 sites). Other suggestions included providing sites with:

- Free materials,
- Guidance on training other guidance counselors in the country to implement S.A.V.E. in their schools,
- Guest speakers,
- Ideas for conducting S.A.V.E. with young elementary school children,
- Connections with important people or organizations,
- Workshops where students can get together with other clubs, and
- Representatives who visit the sites and talk to school administrators about the program and its benefits.

Finally, advisors were asked if there were anything they would change about the program if they had the chance to do it all over again. Half of respondents said that there was nothing they would change (6 sites). As one stated, *"I wouldn't change anything. I think its great. It's about kids talking to kids."* Other suggestions included:

- Starting the program earlier in the school year (2 sites),
- Getting more staff involved (2 sites),
- Opening the club to the entire student body (1 site),
- Preparing more for the role of advisor through education and seminars (1 site), and
- Ordering more T-shirts for students (1 site).

Principal Interview Findings

Principal Awareness and Involvement with S.A.V.E.

All five of the principals interviewed were aware of the S.A.V.E. program at their school. When asked what they knew about the program, two principals said that they had been involved in the program since its inception at their school. These respondents were highly familiar with the activities that their students are conducting through the program. Other principals were less aware of the details of the program, but knew that their school, for example, had set aside a room for the program or had received a check for the program. All respondents knew that the program promotes non-violence. Only two of the five principals were aware that Chevrolet sponsors the program.

Four of the five principals interviewed stated that they had met with the S.A.V.E. advisor to discuss chapter formation. Topics discussed included: budget, incentives, classroom training, spreading the program to other schools, planning the kick-off event, and specific campus safety issues. These four principals were aware of a variety of S.A.V.E. activities that their schools were conducting. The remaining principal said that, although he personally had not met with the advisor, his Vice Principal had. He was not sure what the program had done at his school.

School and Community Climate

The five responding sites were very different in terms of school and community safety issues. One site, a rural elementary school, only had problems with teasing, put downs, and verbal bullying. Two other schools faced threats from the outside, as the principals described:

- *“There are lots of crime and dangers in the community. There are out-of-control older youths around. Plus, the school bridges two neighborhoods, acting as a natural walkway for these two neighborhoods to cross into each other.”*
- *“This is not a gated school; anyone can walk into the school. Gang activity is not as prevalent as in the 80’s, but it’s a low-income area and the threat comes from outside the school. Basically, it’s pretty safe inside the school.”*

The remaining two schools faced internal threats from their own students:

- *“We have ‘no tolerance’ students, felony offense students. When students are problems in other schools, they are sent to this school. We had some violent incidents, but have significantly reduced the potential for this through S.A.V.E. techniques.”*
- *“There are no external threats, but there may be threats within the school. This is a magnet school, with kids from the entire district and every ethnicity. Generally speaking, we have a safe campus, but it’s not a utopia.”*

Principals' Goals for the Program

Respondents listed several benefits that they hoped to see as a result of having the S.A.V.E. program at their school. These included:

- *"We'll have leaders in the school, advising kids to say 'no' to drugs, mediating conflicts, setting examples."*
- *"We want to get kids to think differently. This will be an accomplishment."*
- *"It will help prevent violence at school and in the community. Plus, sometimes kids listen to their peers more, so those outside of the school may learn about S.A.V.E. through the chapter members."*
- *"The message is good. They're using at-risk kids to have them be more influential in school so that they're not so alone."*
- *"It will address alternatives to the negative influences surrounding the community. It will also give the kids positive values."*

Principals also gave their hopes for how students in S.A.V.E. can promote non-violence at their school. They offered the following suggestions for what role they would like the S.A.V.E. chapter students to play in creating a safe campus and community:

- *"They will continue to model non-violent behavior. They will act as examples, and they will continue doing skits in the classes. Leadership is best taught when done so by example."*
- *"In their individual communities, they can speak to kids who haven't been exposed to SAVE. Perhaps this'll lessen the amount of violence."*
- *"Through positive actions. Hopefully, their positive attitudes will trickle down to others."*
- *"By being good role models, and participating in and promoting activities that teach non-violence."*
- *"The kids in the SAVE club show leadership and act as examples. They talk with the student council and the student council shares their thoughts with the school."*

Challenges and Areas of Need

When asked what challenges the school faced in implementing a successful and sustainable S.A.V.E. chapter, two of the five principals reported that there were no challenges. Two of the sites said that the time and effort to organize a chapter was challenging, and the remaining site stated that the short stay of students at his school made participant retention difficult.

Respondents were generally satisfied with the level of support they receive from the national S.A.V.E. organization. As one principal stated, *“The program has been great and the national SAVE Organization has been generous, supportive, and great.”* None of the sites could think of specific support needed from the national S.A.V.E. organization to assist their school in setting up a chapter. One site did mention that materials, such as videos, curriculum and updates, could be useful but that these could be obtained by networking with other neighborhoods or communities.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In general, the S.A.V.E. chapters surveyed and interviewed have been very active, conducting a wide variety of activities to promote non-violence. Each site is unique and has implemented the program in a different way. However, overall, sites have been highly effective at improving awareness and offering alternatives to violence for students who are involved.

Based upon the findings presented here, ETI suggests that S.A.V.E. chapters, with the support of the national S.A.V.E. organization, focus on the following issues in the next year of implementation:

- **School Administrator Involvement.** Principals are not as informed about the program as they should be. Although most advisors are pleased with the support they receive from their principal, others see lack of principal support as a major impediment to their chapter success. Advisors need to schedule regular, brief meetings with their administrators to keep them informed of program activities and accomplishment. The national S.A.V.E. organization can support this through outreach materials or an available S.A.V.E. representative to help describe to the principals the program and its importance.
- **Parent Involvement.** About half of the students reported **not** telling their parents about the S.A.V.E. program. In addition, advisors often reported that there was no parent involvement in their programs. For those chapters that do not have adequate parent involvement, advisors should begin soliciting parents to help with specific tasks, such as chaperoning field trips or events. This will introduce parents to the program and hopefully, lead to more parental support for their children's involvement.
- **Teacher Involvement.** Many advisors reported feeling overwhelmed or alone in administering the program. In addition, survey results show that the program has not been successful in bringing faculty and students closer together. For these reasons, sites need to make a special effort to get more teachers involved, even on a small scale. Perhaps teachers can be used to refer students to the program, thus increasing both student and teacher involvement. At the least, sites

should make every effort to make teachers aware of the program campus-wide.

- **More Social Activities.** Students reported that they wanted more social activities and opportunities to celebrate non-violence with their peers. Advisors also were often interested in having a kick-off rally or visiting other schools to spread the word. Not only will social activities be more enjoyable for the participants, they will also improve the image of the organization and its leaders among other students and will attract new students to participate.
- **Local Conferences.** Several sites requested local conferences, since they often do not have the resources to go to the regional conference. Those who were able to attend the regional conference ranked it among their top S.A.V.E. activities. To accommodate the needs of more schools, local conferences should be organized annually that will provide an opportunity to network and learn at a low cost to participants.
- **Evaluation.** Gaining cooperation and gathering the data from the schools was an extremely difficult and tedious process, especially gathering student data from the teachers. In order to facilitate this process in the future, we strongly suggest that cooperation and participation in the evaluation effort be made a part of the initial negotiations with the selected sites and that the principals be accountable for their teachers' participation. The benefits of such participation could be included in S.A.V.E.'s materials, and schools that cooperate could be highlighted.
- **National S.A.V.E. Evaluation.** The evaluation of the implementation of S.A.V.E at the new chapters in this report shows a very positive beginning, both in terms of advisor and student perceptions of effectiveness. We urge the National office to continue the evaluation for a second year to document the continued trends in success of these sites and explore the impacts of new chapters started in 2002 – 2003.