Reviewer’s report

Title: Blueprints for Violence Prevention Process Evaluation of the Life Skills Training Program: Factors Related to Implementation Fidelity

Version: 1 Date: 26 May 2006

Reviewer: Linda Dusenbury

Reviewer’s report:

General

Research on fidelity of implementation under conditions of wide dissemination is tremendously important. As the authors state, “As programs become more widely disseminated, the need to identify factors promoting or inhibiting implementation quality become essential.” Studies of this size are rare in the literature. The manuscript details and discusses important factors affecting dissemination. This manuscript is very clear and well-written. It is a large, wonderfully conceived study of implementation.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

There is considerable overlap between the previously published Fagan and Mihalic study (Community Psychology), and the report of this study (with 35 additional sites) should be described and discussed in that context.

The previous paper provides a footnote (#3) which provides some information about the quality of the observational data (i.e., the percent agreement). Even in the previous paper, the information provided is minimal, at best “only one paired observation and NOT for every observer. The manuscript under review needs at least the same type of information. Was there no effort to train observers in how to complete the observation forms beyond simply having the attend the LST workshop? What was the process of establishing reliability across observers? The reason these questions are so important, beyond important methodological concerns, is that the finding that teachers implemented 86% of curriculum points exceeds what has typically been reported in the literature. In the Botvin, Baker, Dusenbury, Botvin & Tortu study a rigorous research trial in which there was extensive effort to get teachers to implement the curriculum the average adherence was 65%. A small study of fidelity with LST when disseminated under real world conditions in Baltimore (Dusenbury & Hanson), also reported roughly 65% implementation. The findings of the study under review are great news if they’re true. It would strengthen the manuscript to have additional detail about the training of observers and tests of reliability across the 105 sites, so that readers can be confident about the validity of the findings.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

The last paragraph in the introduction section, “Implementation Fidelity of School-based Prevention Programs” (p. 5), the references after the second sentence should be moved to the first sentence. Only one of those references concerns LST. Also, the point says that program evaluations of the Life Skills Training program demonstrated that instructors taught the majority of program objectives... again refers to roughly 65% implementation.

I was curious to know more about the incentives to schools. All sites were responding to an RFP, I understand. But what, specifically, did this provide them with? Funding for personnel? The LST program training and materials? What was a school’s motivation to participate?

The variable called “characteristics of the LST program” seemed misleading. It wasn’t the characteristics of the program but rather about perceptions or opinions about the nature of the program.
Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

**What next?:** Accept after minor essential revisions

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.