# What Is G.R.E.A.T.?

*"Since 2006, indicators on the countywide survey show a 30 percent reduction in gang activity by students in the school system. G.R.E.A.T. has contributed to these results."*

—Chief Kevin Crabtree
Person County Sheriff's Office, North Carolina

**The Gang Resistance Education And Training (G.R.E.A.T.) Program is a gang and violence prevention program intended as an immunization against delinquency, youth violence, and gang membership for children.**

More than 13,000 sworn law enforcement officers from over 2,500 criminal justice agencies in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Central America have been certified to teach G.R.E.A.T. to fourth- through eighth-graders in more than 4,900 school-based settings. The G.R.E.A.T. Program offers four components for students and their families. These components include:

### Middle School Component

Officers provide a 13-lesson curriculum to students in their classrooms during the school day. G.R.E.A.T.'s violence prevention and life-skills competency curriculum helps students avoid destructive behaviors and set attainable personal goals.

### Elementary School Component

Officers provide a 6-lesson curriculum to fourth- and fifth-grade students. The goal is to prevent youth violence while developing a positive bond between law enforcement officers and youth.

### Summer Component

The summer education and recreation program continues to reinforce the cognitive and social skills that are taught in the G.R.E.A.T. Program. Youth enjoy recreational activities, games, outings, and participation in community service projects, while putting to practical use the skills that they have learned from the G.R.E.A.T. lessons.

### Families Component

The G.R.E.A.T. Families Component consists of 6 facilitator-guided, life-skills—based sessions that provide parents/guardians and their children with opportunities to bond and strengthen healthy behaviors within the family unit.

## G.R.E.A.T. History

The G.R.E.A.T. Program began more than 25 years ago, in 1991, through a combined effort of the Phoenix, Arizona, Police Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF). G.R.E.A.T. underwent an extensive curriculum and program review in 1999–2000 to ensure adherence to the latest scientifically supported data regarding prevention and educational research and theory. The review led to the development of a new and enhanced curriculum, introduced in 2002, which was created through the collaboration of specialists in criminology, sociology, psychology, education, health, and curriculum design.

In 2004, Congress transferred overall program administration from ATF to the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), which currently has operational control. Since its inception, the G.R.E.A.T. Program has expanded throughout North America, including the United States, Canada, Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama.

*"Our multicomponent evaluation found that the G.R.E.A.T. Program is implemented as it is intended and has the intended program effects on youth gang membership and on a number of risk factors and social skills thought to be associated with gang membership. Results one year post-program showed a 39 percent reduction in odds of gang joining among students who received the Program, compared to those who did not, and an average of 24 percent reduction in odds of gang joining across the four years post-program."*

—Finn-Aage Esbensen, Dana Peterson, Terrance J. Taylor, and D. Wayne Osgood. 2012. "Is G.R.E.A.T. Effective? Does the Program Prevent Gang Joining? Results From the National Evaluation of G.R.E.A.T." St. Louis, MO: University of Missouri—St. Louis.

# How Effective Is G.R.E.A.T.?

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) commissioned a nationwide long-term evaluation of the G.R.E.A.T. Program in 2006. Led by the University of Missouri–St. Louis, this rigorously designed, double-blind, multisite study of the G.R.E.A.T. Middle School Curriculum concluded in 2012. This evaluation follows an earlier (1995–2000) study that returned promising but inconclusive results and led to a rigorous programmatic review that resulted in substantial program modifications. Results of the latest study have been submitted to NIJ and are available at **https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/244346.pdf**. Several articles by the evaluation team and peer reviewers have been published in professional journals and show that the G.R.E.A.T. curriculum is effective in reducing gang involvement and also has a beneficial impact on a number of risk indicators for crime and violence.

The report notes that in one-year and four-year post-program surveys, the G.R.E.A.T. students, compared to non-G.R.E.A.T. students, showed statistically significant positive program effects on the following measures:

- More positive attitudes toward police
- More positive attitudes about police in classrooms
- Less positive attitudes about gangs
- More use of refusal skills
- Higher collective efficacy
- Less use of hitting neutralizations
- Less anger
- Lower rates of gang membership
- Higher levels of altruism
- Less risk-seeking

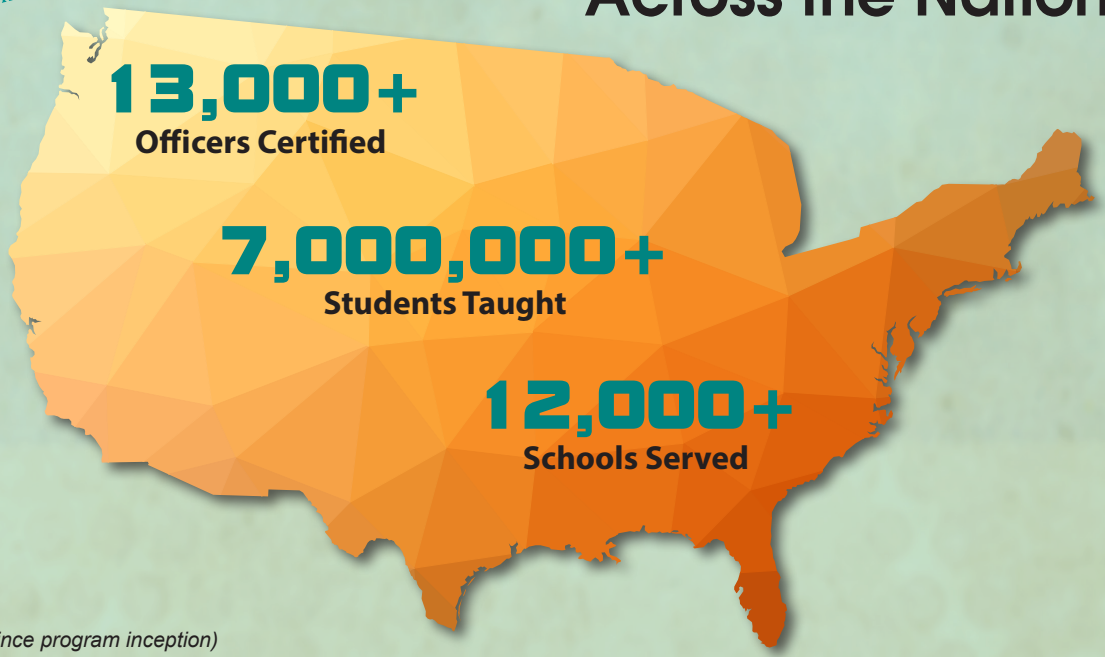
The process evaluation also included comprehensive surveys of teachers and school administrators to measure their responses to the G.R.E.A.T. Program. Surveys of school personnel found that 91% of teachers and administrators support having police officers in schools, 94% of administrators/87% of teachers are in favor of having G.R.E.A.T. in their schools, 100% of administrators/83% of teachers say G.R.E.A.T. addresses problems facing their students, and 88% of administrators/80% of teachers agree that G.R.E.A.T. teaches students the skills needed to avoid gangs and violence.

***"Former G.R.E.A.T. students have approached officers and thanked them for all their help. Students have claimed that they still follow what they learned so many years ago from the G.R.E.A.T. lessons. G.R.E.A.T. students have been very successful. Many are now going to college, and some have become members of the law enforcement community. They have made better decisions for themselves."***

—Deputy Jacob Gross, Suffolk County Sheriff's Office, New York

G.R.E.A.T.® Gang Resistance Education And Training

## Across the Nation




*(Totals since program inception)*

For more information on how to become involved with the G.R.E.A.T. Program, visit **www.great-online.org**

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