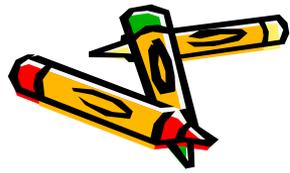


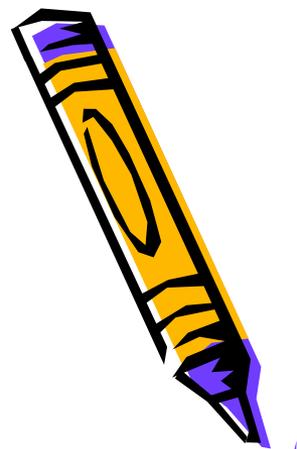
# The SMU PALS Program



Stephen Schneider, Saint Mary's University  
29th Annual Atlantic Crime Prevention Conference  
Saint John, NB, May 31-June 1



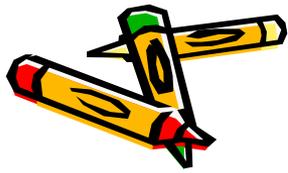
# Theoretical Foundations



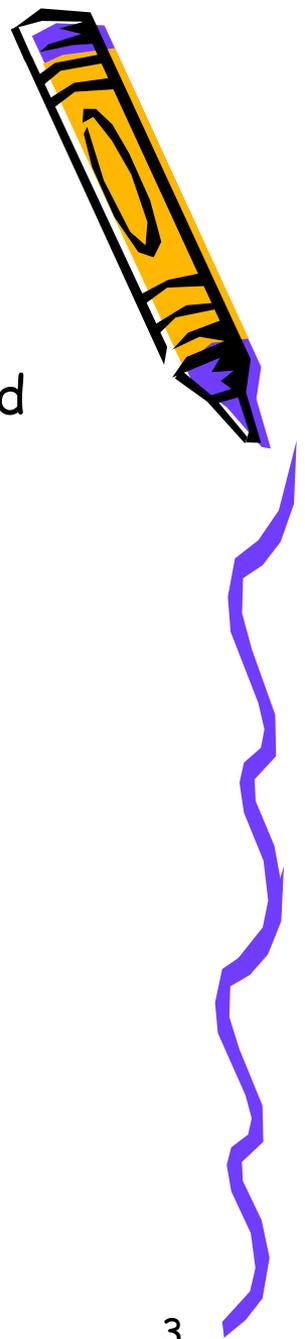
## Developmental Criminology

- Identifies factors that put children & youth at risk of future delinquency & criminality
- Offending is part of a larger syndrome of antisocial behaviour that arises in childhood & tends to persist into adulthood
- Factors that put children & youth at risk of future offending also put them at risk of a wide range of negative behaviours, circumstances, mental health problems, etc.





# Developmental Criminology

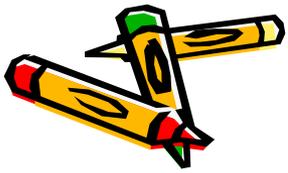


Criminogenic risk factors can be grouped into two broad categories:

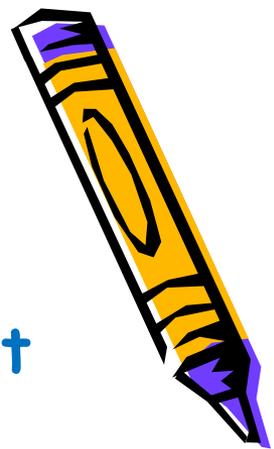
1. **Individual** - psychological, intellectual, cognitive, socio-biological & physiological factors
2. **Environmental** - risk factors produced by the social environment that surrounds an individual or group

Criminality is not due to individual pathology, but often the interaction between high-risk individual & social environmental characteristics





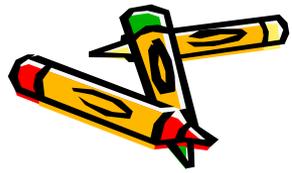
# Theoretical Foundations



## Crime Prevention through Social Development

- a.k.a. "crime prevention through social-problem-solving" or "criminality prevention"
- Interventions that attempt to address the root causes of criminality, particularly among "at-risk" children & youth
- Geared toward preventing criminal predispositions from developing in the first place
- Remove criminogenic "risk factors" by replacing or countering them with "protective factors" (positive influences & interventions that counteract risk factors)





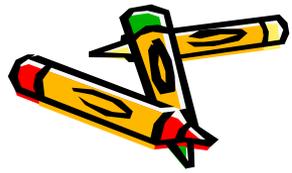
# Crime Prevention Through Social Development



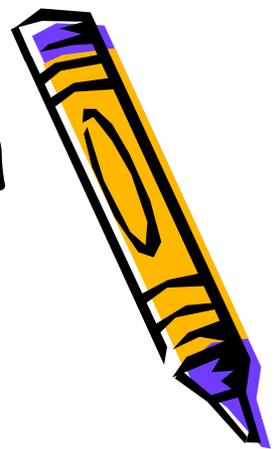
## Resilience

- The protective factors delivered through CPSD are meant to promote a child's **resilience**
- A set of qualities that foster a process of successful adaptation & development despite risk & adversity
- Personal resilience can help at-risk children withstand negative (social environmental) forces in their lives
- Resilience can develop organically or through purposeful interventions (or both)





# Crime Prevention Through Social Development



**CPSD interventions influenced by three major considerations**

**The developmental stage of the individual:**

Infants  
(0 to 4)

Children  
(5 to 12)

Youth  
(13 to 17)

Young Adult  
(18-25)

Adult  
(over 25)

**Institution(s) through which interventions are made:**

Family

Schools

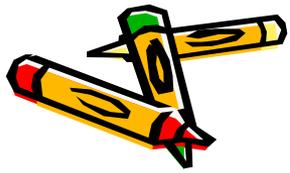
Community

Labour markets

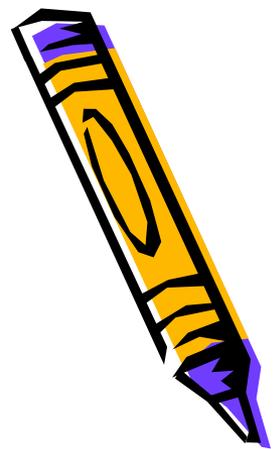
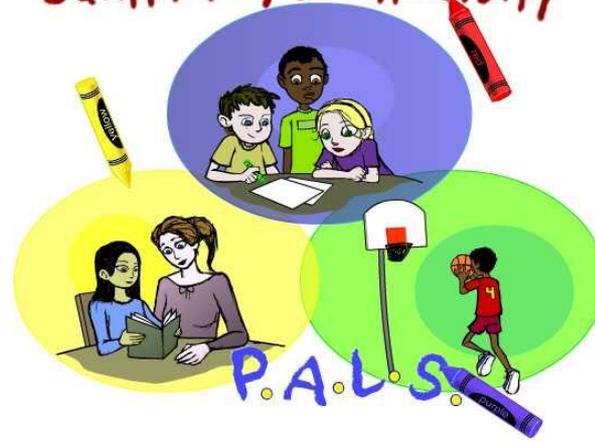
**Target:**

Indirect: Change social environment of child/youth

Direct: Increase resilience of child/youth

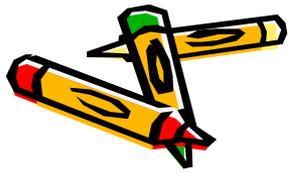


Saint Mary's University

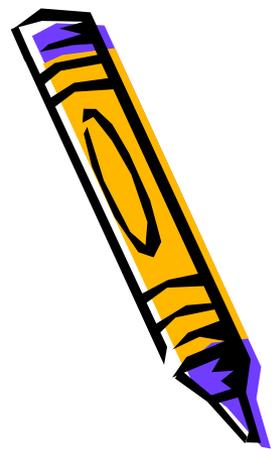
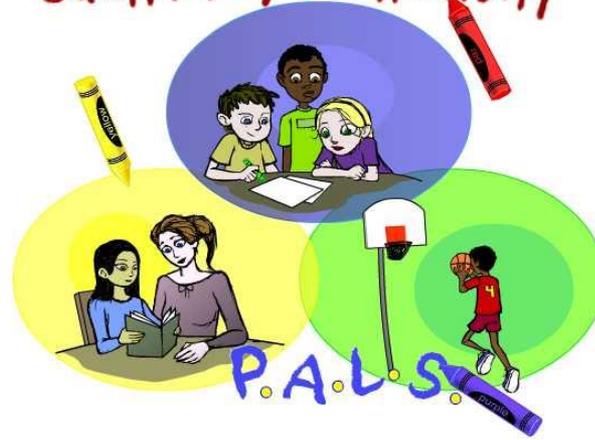


**P**ositive Role Models & Mentors  
**A**cademic Tutoring  
**L**eisure & Physical Activity  
**S**ocial & Life Skills Development



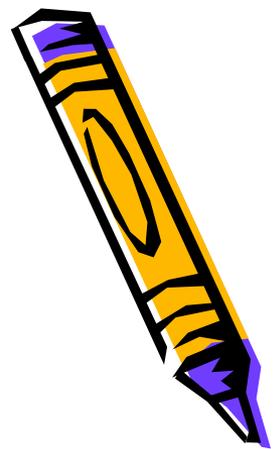
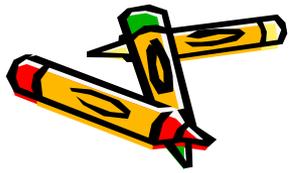


## Saint Mary's University



- Social developmental program for children (ages 5 to 12) living in disadvantaged environments in Halifax
- Administered from 2006-2009
- Approx. 40 children attend SMU 2x week, 6 months (16 sessions) / year

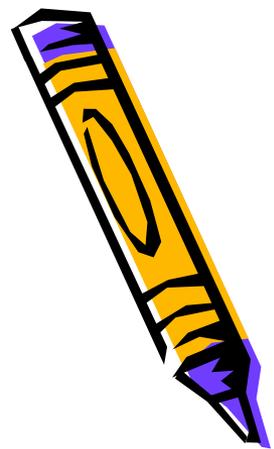
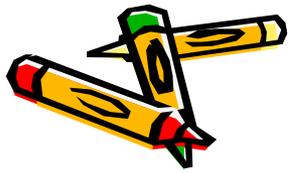




## Criminogenic Risk Factors Addressed

- (1) Poor academic achievement
- (2) low-self-esteem, self-worth, self-efficacy
- (3) aggression/anger management problems
- (4) hyperactivity
- (5) low levels of empathy





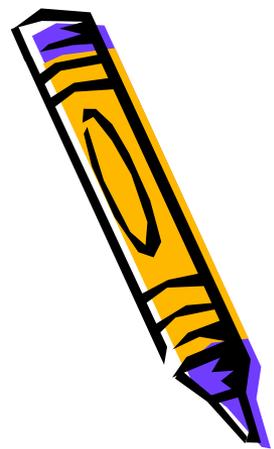
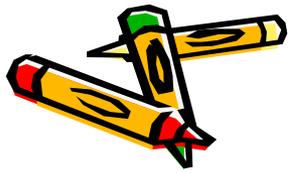
## Criminogenic Risk Factors Addressed (cont.)

(6) **Critical / Abstract thinking deficits** (poor problem-solving skills, inability to anticipate consequences of one's action, impulsivity, inability to identify positive options to high-risk or anti-social behaviour),

(7) **Social participation problems** (poor social networking skills, inability to work in a group context, poor teamwork & cooperation skills),

(8) **Stress & anxiety**



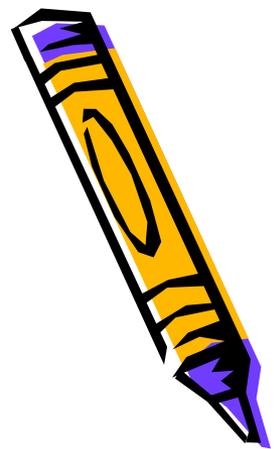
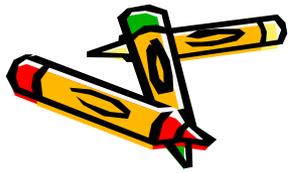


## Goal:

Reduce, mitigate, or counteract criminogenic risk factors in the lives of (at-risk) children by

- nurturing their personal resilience
- decreasing anti-social & maladaptive behaviour





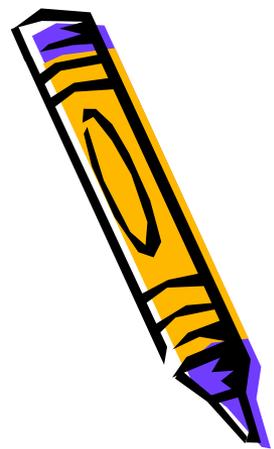
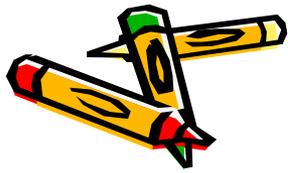
## Academic / Cognitive

- Promote academic success
- Higher grades
- Foster reading & literacy skills
- Promote bonds with school & learning

## Physical & Mental Health

- Participate in physical activity
- Nurture participation & proficiency in sports
- Foster coping skills (anxiety, stress)

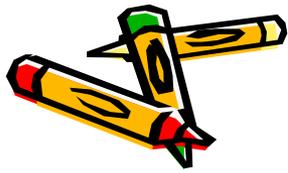




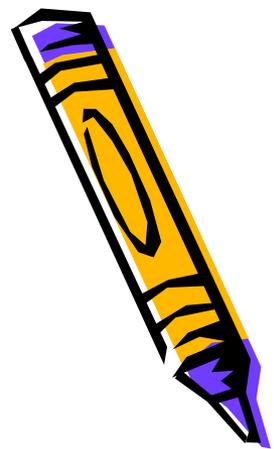
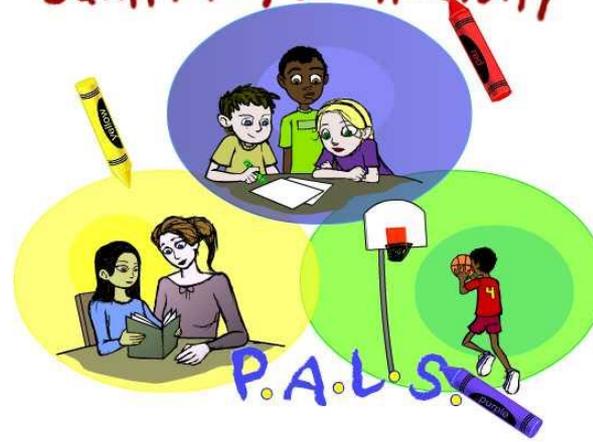
## Social & Life Skills

- self-esteem, self-confidence, self-efficacy
- social participation & cooperative behaviour
- empathy
- problem-solving skills
- ability to envision & anticipate the consequences of one's actions
- anger management skills
- ability to self-regulate impulsive & hyperactive behaviour





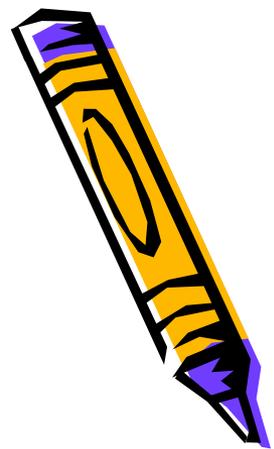
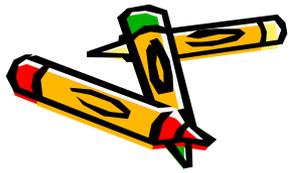
Saint Mary's University



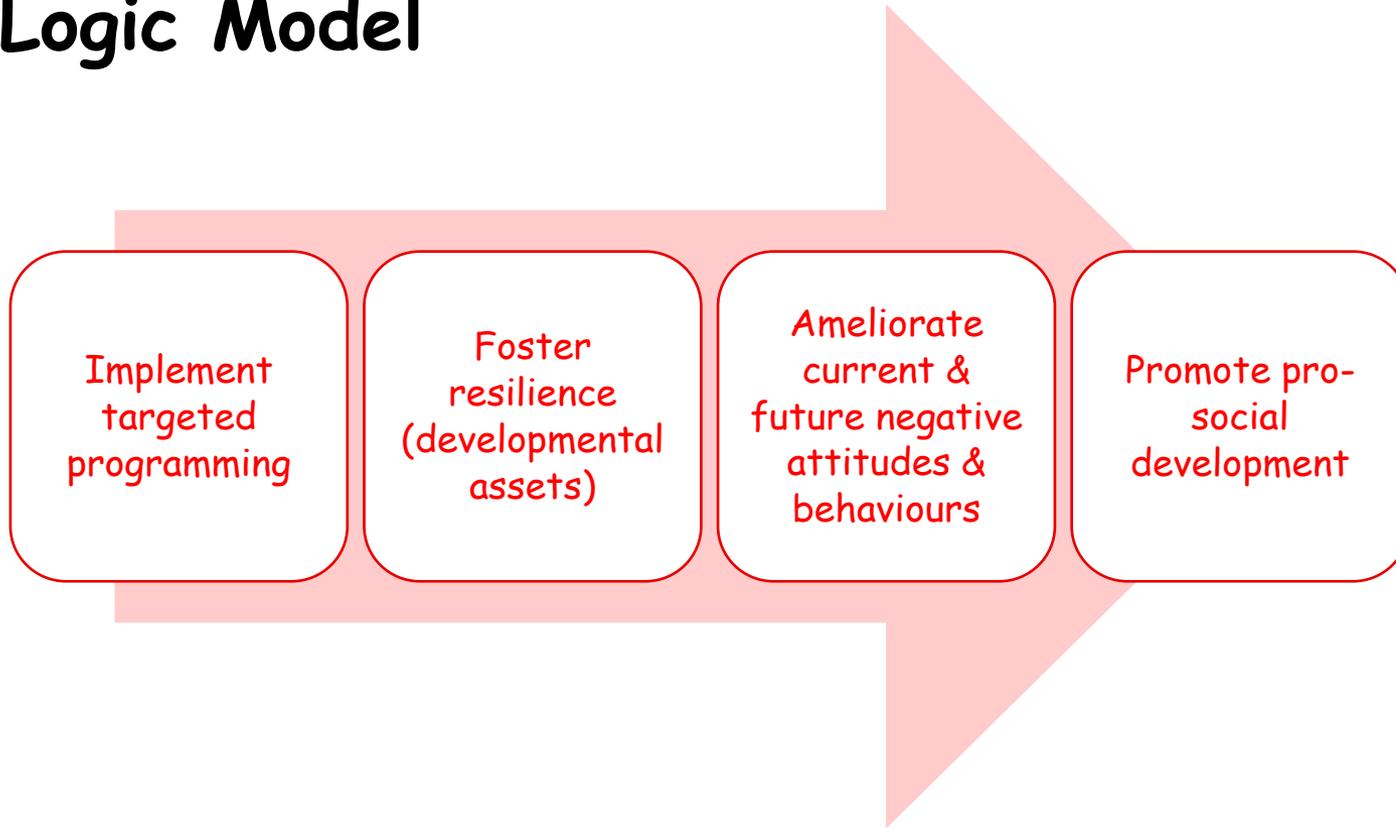
## Program Components

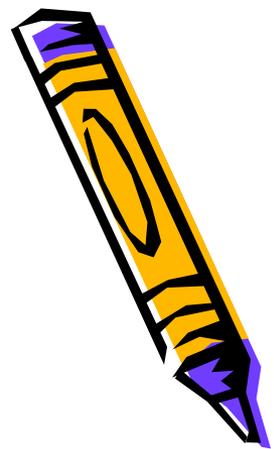
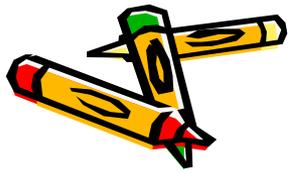
- Education (Academic development)
- Social competency skills (Behavioural development)
- Critical thinking, deliberative decision-making & problem-solving skills (Cognitive behavioural development)
- Coping skills (mental health development)
- Physical activity (Physical health development)
- Mentors (Positive role models)





# Logic Model

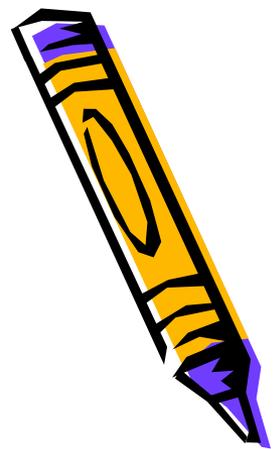
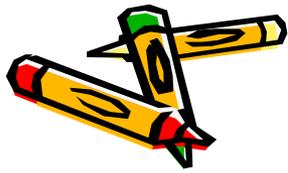




## Research Questions

- Can resilience be fostered exclusively through measures delivered directly at youth (i.e., without changing their social environment)?
- To what extent do mentors increase the fidelity (& effect sizes) of programming, including cognitive behavioural programming?
- Is it necessary to provide comprehensive CPSD programming to alleviate risk factors?
- Administrative: How can such programming be delivered in a sustainable manner (i.e., that minimizes external funding)?

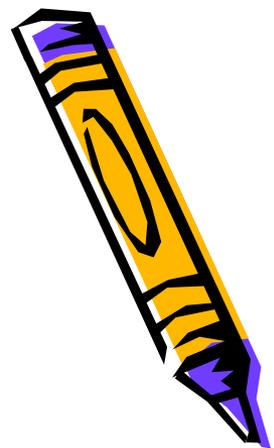
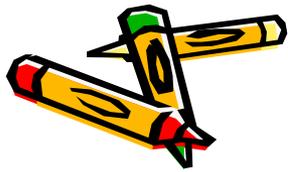




## Guiding Principles

- Evidence-based
  - Developmental criminology
  - CPSD
- Focus on resilience (fostering “developmental assets”)
- Comprehensive
- Individually-tailored to each child
- Programming on SMU campus
- Cognitive Behavioural
- University students central to PALS

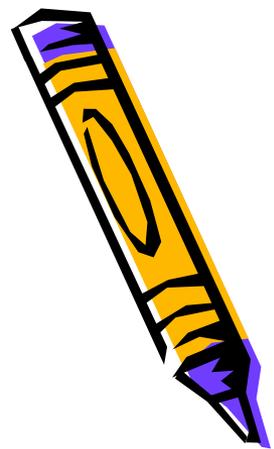
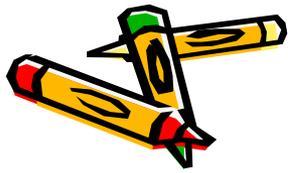




- **Mentoring-based Cognitive Behavioral Pedagogy (fostering social skills)**

- 1) Teach social skill in group context
- 2) Mentors role-play skill
- 3) Children practice/role-play skill with mentors
- 4) Children practice/role-play with each other
- 5) Children & mentors generalize skill in PALS setting
- 6) Behavioural modeling by mentors
- 7) Children generalize skill outside of PALS

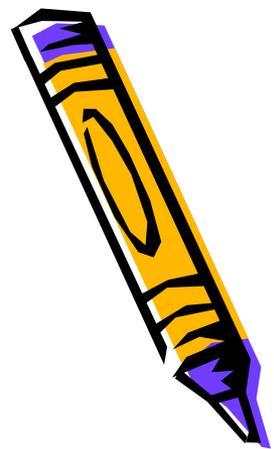
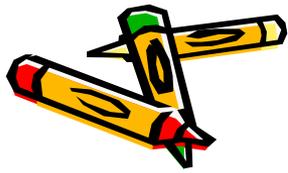




## Intake Assessment

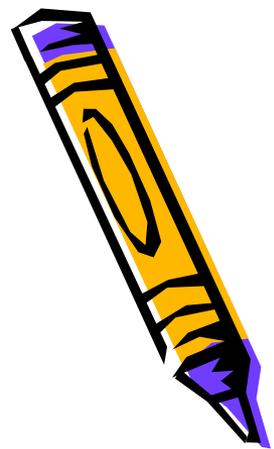
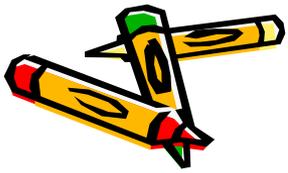
- Each child undergoes comprehensive psycho-educational assessment
  - Achenbach (Child Behaviour Checklist)
  - Literacy assessments (administered by Halifax Learning Centre)
  - Assessments specific to social skills (self-esteem, empathy, problem-solving)
- Programming individualized based on assessment
  - Tutor/Mentor briefed on assessment results to ensure appropriate **behavioural modeling**





- **Two-hour session (2x a week)**
  - Bus picks up kids in community
  - SMU students greet kids as they arrive on campus
  - Free time (10-15 minutes)
  - Structured (cognitive behavioural) curriculum
    - ICPS
    - FRIENDS for Life
    - ART
  - Homework/Reading
  - Structured Activity
    - In-class
    - Sports in gym or outdoor field

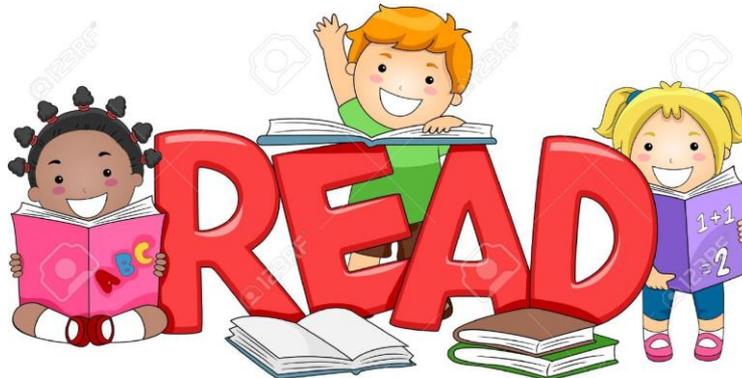


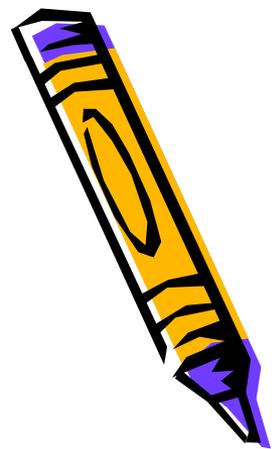
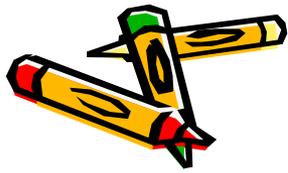


## Program Implementation:

### - Tutoring (focus: literacy)

- Homework and/or
- Each child reads to his/her tutor



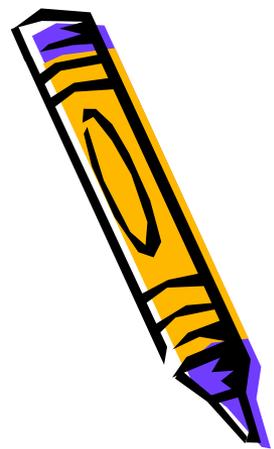
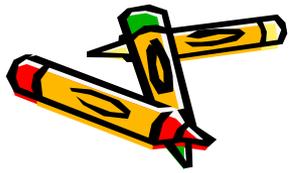


## Program Implementation:

### - Structured Activities

- Promotes a range of positive behaviours & social competency:
  - Self-esteem & self-confidence
  - Empathy
  - Team work & cooperation
  - Leadership & communication
  - Appropriate expression of emotions
  - Critical thinking & problem-solving
  - Self-control & impulse control
  - Negotiation, mediation & conflict resolution
  - Anger management

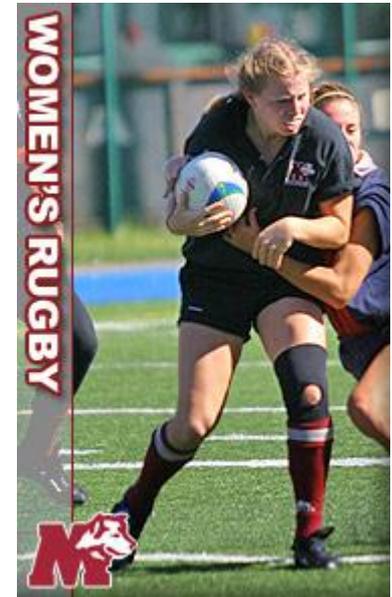


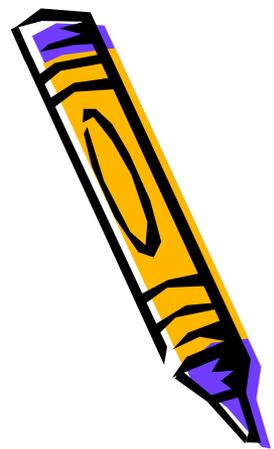
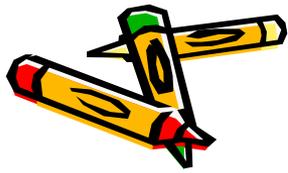


## Program Implementation:

### - Sports Mentorship

- Kids (& mentors) work out with varsity team athletes
  - Physical exercise
  - Promotes interest & proficiency in sports
  - Exposes kids to positive role models
  - Promotes positive behaviours & social competency (inherent in team sports)

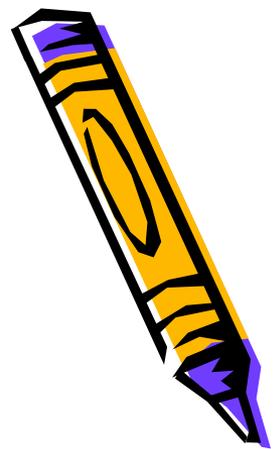
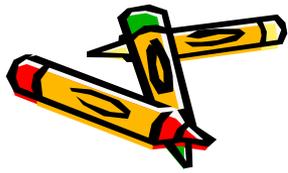




## Research Findings

- **Treatment Group:** a child must have
  - (i) completed at least six of the eight semesters over the three years &
  - (ii) completed the three structured curriculums offered through the program (ICPS, ART, & FRIENDS)
  - n = 21
- **Control Group**
  - Wait list
  - Attrition list
  - n = 16



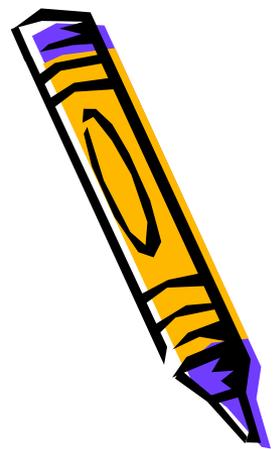
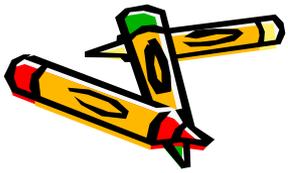


## Research Findings

PALS had a partial impact on enhancing some of the protective factors targeted by the program:

- improved social participation & cooperative behaviour, improved inter-personal problem solving skills,
- improved capacity to self-regulate impulsive behaviour, a decrease in rule-breaking behaviour / oppositional defiant problems (increase in compliant, on-task behaviour), &
- an increase in reading & literacy skills.



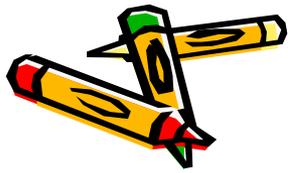


# Research Findings

Key protective factors that do not appear to have been enhanced by the PALS program:

- self-esteem
- empathy
- increased capacity to self-identify consequences of one's actions, & a decrease in conduct problems.



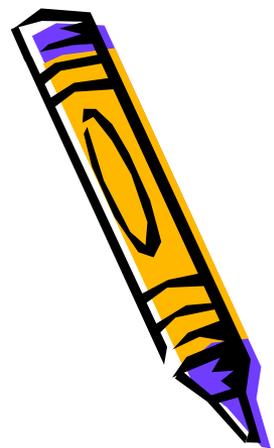
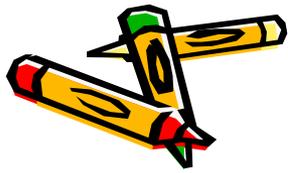


# Research Findings

Table Eight – CBCL Social Participation Problems Index: Mean Average Scores for Pre- and Post-test Periods, Treatment Group vs. Control Group

Outcome Measure	Time	Treatment Group Pre-test: N=19 Post-test: N=20	Control Group Pre-test: N=9 Post-test: N=15
CBCL Social Participation Problems Index	Pre-test	M = 3.68, SD= 3.54	M = 3.33, SD= 2.449
	Post-test	M = 2.45, SD= 2.44	M = 2.93, SD= 2.658
	<b>Difference</b>	<b>M = -1.23 (-33%)</b>	<b>M = -.4 (-12%)</b>



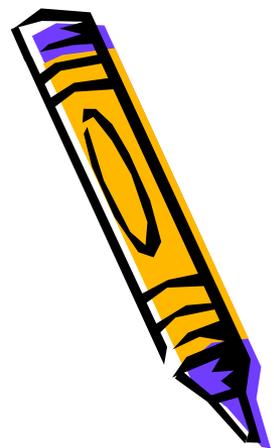
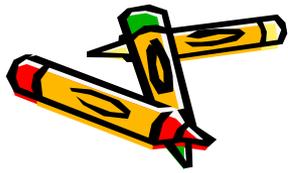


# Research Findings

**Table Nine - CBCL Social Participation Problems Index: Independent-measures Test: Mean Differences, Statistical Significance, and Effect Sizes for Treatment and Control Groups**

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Upper	Lower
Equal variances not assumed  Cohen's d: -1.4514	--	--	-3.521	23.538	.002	-2.167	.615	-3.438	-.895



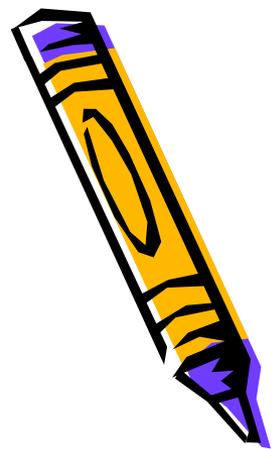
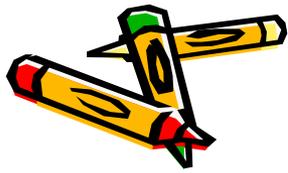


## Discussion & Analysis

Reasons why the PALS program failed to more substantially enhance the targeted protective (resilience) factors

- weaknesses in the program design & implementation
- too ambitious in terms of the number risk factors targeted & the number of interventions & curriculums implemented
- absence of a component that targeted social environmental risk factors (in particular lack of parental component)
- 16 two-hour sessions spaced over six months per year insufficient to instil (greater) resilience in participating children (esp. in absence of social environmental changes)





## Program Revisions

- limit the number of risk factors targeted
- limit the number of program interventions (commensurate with limiting the number of risk factors targeted)
- add a social environmental (parent training & education) component
- Include booster sessions following program completion
- enlist more program partners (agencies & professionals) during the project planning phase
- ensure there are sufficient & appropriate space allocations at the post-secondary institution before the program begins.

