



What is our Group's Goal for the Breakout Session?

To use the expertise of our group to create a foundation of prevention strategies to ultimately reduce criminal gangs comprised of youth 24 years of age and younger.



Three Tier Approach to Prevention

Prevention strategies aimed at:

- Youth before they are involved in gang-related activities, but may be on a trajectory path toward gang involvement
- Youth in a “gang” that is committing delinquent and/or pre-criminal activity [Note: gang may not meet the statutory definition in these cases]
- Identified gang-involved youth [prevention/intervention focus]



Risk-based Prevention Domains

- Community
- School
- Family
- Peer
- Individual
- Law Enforcement

Spheres of influence to

- decrease conditions of risks that lead to gang involvement
- increase resiliency in youth to avoid gang involvement



Current Ineffective Strategy Elements

Ineffective Prevention Tactics & Approaches

- Scare tactics/threats
- Reactive disciplinary measures
- Zero tolerance
- “Just say no” as the only prevention measure
- Out of school suspension
- Grouping of anti-social students without adequate services
- Periodic mentoring



Prioritized List of Effective Strategy Elements

- Build positive proactive school climate which improves school safety, promotes protective factor of student to school connectedness, and improves students' school success rate
- Make positive school and community activities available as alternatives to gang- involved activities
- Employ sustained and regular interaction that build pro-social relationships between adults and youth (building connectedness)
- Establish a process for gang prevention and intervention that engage multiple community sectors



Current and Innovative Effective Strategy Elements

Build positive proactive school climate

- Maintain physical school site
- Respectful of student rights
- Site-based management
- Quick response to problems
- Value of diversity and multiple cultures, cultural competency
- Balance of rules and relationships
- Clear expectations of acceptable desired behaviors



Current and Innovative Effective Strategy Elements

Build positive proactive school climate

- Teach personal responsibility
- Build trust in authority figures
- Strong and active adult supervision
- Consistent rule enforcement
- Consistent and high quality training on behavior management and gang awareness
- Establish criteria for school-based gang assessment
- Apply theory and practice of 40 developmental assets



Current and Innovative Effective Strategy Elements

Make positive school and community activities available as alternatives to gang- involved activities

- After school structured activities with active supervision by trained adults
- Activities based on interest for targeted youth population
- Good transportation provided
- Affordable for all families
- Activities between the hours 3-7 and on weekends



Current and Innovative Effective Strategy Elements

Employ sustained and regular interaction that build pro-social relationships between adults and youth (building connectedness)

- Emphasis on sustained interaction
- Emphasis on building connectedness between adult and youth
- Mentorship



Current and Innovative Effective Strategy Elements

Establish a process for gang prevention and intervention that engage multiple community sectors

- Create consistency of effort between schools, communities, and families
- Safe places
- Accessible and effective childcare
- Code enforcement
- Neighborhood Crime Watch
- Equitable access to medical care including mental health
- Employment opportunities
- Street lights
- Cultural competency



General Barriers

- Lack of buy-in
- Lack of clear and common expectations
- Poor coordination b/w law enforcement and schools
- Lack of training
- Need more information sharing
- Need district point person
- Avoid “profiling”
- Lack of ongoing communication between agencies
- Lack of regular and sustained effort



Driving Forces Behind Prevention Approaches

- Local government
- Community business stakeholders
- Commitment from leadership
- Ongoing dialogue
- Youth and parent involvement and commitment



Build Positive Proactive School Climate

Barriers

- Lack of training for school and community staff
- Money/resources for personnel, lack of funding for prevention/categorical funding, ineffective allocation/targeted resources for specific areas
- Poor fidelity in implementation of programs
- Competing priorities – quick fixes will not work/need to acknowledge that it takes time. Need balance b/w time spent on FCAT and everything else.
- Untrained leadership

Driving Force

- Buy-in and commitment from school leadership (superintendent, school board, and school administrators)
- Teaches and school staff
- Teacher union
- PTA/PTSO



Build Positive Proactive School Climate

Barriers

- Lack of buy-in by leadership
- Denial and minimization of problem
- Lack of sustained support structure
- Weak monitoring and unfunded mandates/legislation
- Sensationalization of incidents by media – too much focus on negative
- At state level: how educational success is defined
- Projected state and local-level shortfalls

Driving Force

- Business partnerships to support schools
- Social service agency partnerships
- Student and student empowerment
- Evidence of effectiveness
- Appropriate maintenance of physical plant



Make Positive School And Community Activities Available As Alternatives To Gang Activities

Barriers

- Money – improperly allocated resources
- Not targeting the youth most in need or not able to access those youth
- Lack of strong partnership b/w community agencies

Driving Force

- Dedicated funding sources
- Community commitment and initiative
- Faith-based organizations
- Volunteers!



Employ Sustained And Regular Interaction That Build Pro-social Relationships Between Adults And Youth (Building Connectedness)

Barriers

- Teachers are expected to primarily focus on testing
- Teaching for the FCAT
- Cultural insensitivity
- Inappropriate use of technology (blogs, Myspace, etc.) to intimidate, bullying, threatened youth
- Lack of respect b/w adults and youth (both ways)
- Fear of adults ob being sued or disciplined for their connection to students – fear of reprisal
- Lack of student support services – lack of adults trained on how to sustain relationship or to model healthy relationships
- Low socio-economic status
- Time to connect with youth e.g. class meeting time, schedules are packed
- Lack of effective mentorhsip
- Adults are too busy to focus on youth/lack of family connection.
- Projected state and local-level shortfalls

Driving Force

- Family
- Positive media messaging
- Positive feedback from youth
- Same driving forces as before



Establish A Systemic Process For Gang Prevention And Intervention - Engaging Multiple Community Sectors

Barriers

- Lack of ongoing communication b/w agencies
- Lack of regular and sustained effort
- Lack of clear and common expectations
- Unspecified outcomes
- Lack of personnel resources to support the process
- Agency turf issues
- Lack of funding/resources
- Inflexible schedules - difficult for parents to participate because not able to meet at specified times, competing family priorities, transportation, etc.
- Projected state and local-level shortfalls

Driving Forces

- Superintendent, school board, and law enforcement
- Local government
- Community businesses/stakeholders
- Commitment from leadership and ongoing dialogue
- Youth involvement
- Parent involvement and commitment
- Available fund streams



Challenge #3

Sculpturing the Blue Print – Combining Effective with Innovative Elements

Required Resources

- Dedicated funding applied based on assessment results and strategic plan
- Increased tax incentives for businesses for employment and school-related activities
- Trained workforce
- Better connection b/w workforce development boards and schools
- Change state policy or legislation to address alternative/vocational education opportunities (early employment intervention) for younger students
- Flexibility to participate
- Facilities/places to meet
- Evidence-based/best practices curriculums and courses for social and vocational skill-building



Challenge #3 (cont'd)

Is it working?

Element

- #1 Build positive proactive school climate which improves school safety, promotes protective factor of student to school connectedness, and improves students' school success rate
- #2 Make positive school and community activities available as alternatives to gang activities
- #3 Employ sustained and regular interaction that build pro-social relationships between adults and youth (building connectedness)
- #4 Establish a systemic process for gang prevention and intervention – engaging multiple community sectors

Evaluation

Element #1

- Reduction in absenteeism
- Increased commitment to school (school climate survey)
- Reduction in disciplinary referrals, expulsions, suspensions, SESIR incidents

Element #2

- Increased in # of youth participating in alternative activities
- Increased # of pro-social involvement rewards in community
- Reduction of criminal activity committed by youth b/w hours of 3 – 7pm
- Reduction of truancy

Element #3

- Improved neighborhood attachment
- Reduction of criminal activity committed by youth b/w hours of 3 – 7pm

Element #4

- Increased awareness of gang problem
- Established MOUs b/w agencies



Concluding Thoughts

- Community perceives gang problem as a LE issue and not a community/school issue
- Some local LE may not want to recognize the existence of a gang problem
- Some schools are not acknowledging the gang problem on campus and those that do, do not always feel empowered to respond
- “Reverse peer pressure” is important to encourage – can be a form of empowering students
- Engage gang members in creating solutions
- Obtain feedback from youth who are not involved -why they are not engaged in gangs
- Address the buyer market/drug buyer – principle of supply and demand (reduce demand...) – need stronger consequences for buyer
- Target alternative sites, i.e., cash oriented businesses that are points of recruitment
- Coordinate local gang reduction efforts with community anti-drug coalitions
- Address low level of literacy and academic success
- Schools over identifying SES/Special Ed youth and gangs often prey on the weak