Gangs in schools: Appropriate resources for elementary schools

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GANGS IN SCHOOLS: APPROPRIATE RESOURCES
FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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Statement of the Problem

This study began by reviewing the current needs in schools and communities in California to address the gang issues. Due to their powerful, insidious activities, it was apparent that schools need to be proactive when working to reduce their impact.

Review of the Literature

The review of the literature identified what constitutes a gang and why young adults are attracted to joining them. The various types of gangs that currently exist in California were reviewed as well as why these students are at such a risk. The review then examined several intervention strategies that would help to reduce the risk of these students in the elementary school years.

Goals and Objectives

This study identified three goals and a number of objectives that needed to be accomplished to address the students who had proclivities to join a gang at the intermediate school level.
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INTRODUCTION

While gangs are not new to the American culture, the increase in the level of street gang violence in California alone over the past two years establishes gangs as a major social problem for the 1990's. One has only to open a newspaper or read a current magazine to realize the impact that gangs have had on California (Gwynne, 1990; Rourke, 1990; Tomar, 1990).

Gang involvement has changed dramatically over the years. Today's gang members are often urban terrorists. Heavily armed and more violent than ever, gangsters are quick to use terror and intimidation to attain their goals. These activities result in deaths and injuries to innocent citizens, often toddlers and elementary school students (Philibosian, Gilford, Grotefend, Johnson, Price, Rowland, Sato, Schumacher, Terhune, and Trask, 1989).

Gang activity, however, is no longer limited to the center of major cities. Instead, urbanization population growth, and high unemployment in many urban centers have moved street gangs out of their traditional territory into new settings, including rural towns and suburban communities (Center, 1988). Given the proximity of the Inland Empire to the Los Angeles area, the gang presence in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties has also dramatically increased (Taskforce, 1990).

The ramifications of spreading gang activity means that more school administrators can expect to confront serious disciplinary and security problems. Gang existence poses a serious challenge to an administrator's ability to maintain order and safety. Due to gangs' ability to dominate facilities and areas within communities, today's administrator needs to be prepared to deal with these individuals.
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Gangs are not like they were in the past. Today, gang members are much younger than in past years. Based on FBI statistics, children under the age of 15 were the cause of 281 murders in 1985, as well as 2,645 rapes, 18,021 aggravated assaults and 13,899 robberies. Even though one-third of all juveniles are arrested only once, only seven percent are responsible for over 70 percent of all crime committed by youth. This trend has resulted in school and communities seriously considering the implementation of early prevention programs aimed at students in grades three through twelve (Center, 1988).

Though the importance of early intervention and prevention cannot be overstressed, there is currently no statewide curriculum for gang and drug prevention. In fact, there is no clearly identified educational approach to reduce gang involvement. While there are a number of strategies for reducing drug use among juveniles (Bennett, 1986; Horton, 1988), gang participation is such a new area of concern that curriculum for this effort has not coalesced around specific methods for working with these young people.

The problem facing educators today is developing approaches for reducing participation in gangs. This project will generate a model for staff development that will begin to zero in on this obvious weakness. Given the tremendous negative impact on both the individual and society, schools need to be proactive in dealing with the insidious problems of gangs.
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

According to Philibosian (1989), gang and drug problems are not new to California. What is new is the growing relationship between narcotics and gang activity accompanied by an alarming increase in the use of violence to handle gang disputes. Using the lure of easy money and peer respect, gangs are now recruiting and victimizing children as young as nine or ten as their "look outs" or "mules (drug runners)". Plainly, these children and adolescents become intangled with gangs to a large degree due to their inability to succeed academically.

This type of student is often termed as being "at-risk" and inservice efforts need to focus on working with the "at-risk" child as well as preventing gang involvement (Cuban, 1989; Quinones, 1987; Rumberger, 1987). The review of literature focuses on gangs and their culture, at-risk youth and inservice strategies.

Gangs and Gang Culture

Gangs have been a way of life in California since the early 1900's. Early gangs had between 10 and 30 members with an age difference of two to three years and tended to function for two to five years. Many of the modern day gangs grew from groups based on these characteristics to gangs involving multiple age-graded subgroups with membership lasting 12 to 20 years. Some of these early gangs have also evolved into new groups which now have histories as long as five generations (Taskforce, 1990).

Total gang membership in California is thought to have grown to an estimated 120,000 individuals. Furthermore, when one thinks of gangs, one naturally thinks of Los Angeles and for good reason. In 1987, gang related homicides in the greater Los Angeles area totaled 387, an average of more than one a day.

In 1988, figures showed a whopping 24 percent increase through the first eleven months alone. There are estimated to be
600 to 650 gangs in Los Angeles County with a total membership ranging between 60,000 to 80,000. Los Angeles County sheriffs report that approximately 68 percent of gang arrests are for felony charges. In the city of Los Angeles alone, there are estimated to be 250 gangs with a membership in excess of 30,000 (Philibosian, et al., 1989).

Gangs are not restricted to Los Angeles. A 1983 United States Department of Justice study indicated that there was widespread gang involvement throughout the nation. Western states, however, are more often plagued with gang problems than Eastern cities. Most youth gangs are still found in their traditional settings, the major population centers. The movement of gangs, on the other hand, is now presenting challenges to law enforcement and educational institutions in cities and urban areas with populations under 250,000 (Gwynne, 1990; Stanley, 1990).

Large, well-established gangs now move throughout states and the nation like the population at large. Gang members have realized that, for the cost of a plane or bus ticket, they can double or triple their profits in other cities. Upon arriving in smaller locales, these gangs establish themselves as the primary gang in town by usurping smaller, less sophisticated groups. Miami law enforcement officials find themselves coping with Chicago gangsters who have moved to Dade County and Riverside County officials find themselves dealing with gangsters from Los Angeles and Orange County (Center, 1988).

As widely reported, gangs are becoming more involved in the sale and distribution of drugs. This trend is disturbing both to law enforcement as well as teachers and administrators. When juveniles begin earning large sums, the promise of a good job upon graduation pales in comparison. Concurrently, drug trafficking makes gangs more organized because of wider interaction with other gang operations both within and throughout the nation (Center, 1988; Gwynne, 1990; Philibosian, et al., 1989).

As profits increase, so does the level of sophistication in the gang operations. Some gangs are rumored to be taking applications
for membership; many use car phones and pagers. Others apply modern business practices for financing, marketing, pricing and even franchising their operations. Despite such refinements, gang and drug trafficking activities frequently culminate in modern day, urban warfare, "mano a mano", AK47 versus AK47. As a result, gang warfare has become more lethal as the weapons formerly used have been replaced by a heavier artillery of shotguns, automatic weapons and explosives (Center, 1988; Taskforce, 1990; Stanley, 1990).

What is a Gang?

There are probably as many definitions of what constitutes a "gang" in today's society as there are gangs themselves. Common to most, if not all of these definitions however, are the following factors:
- Association on a regular basis to the exclusion of others
- Adoption of a group name
- Claim to a specific neighborhood or operational area

Obviously there are other entities, ranging all the way from loose knit social "groups" to community civic organizations such as Rotary and Kiwanis that share in part, some of these same factors. What is distinctive about street gangs however, and what makes them such a threat to the very communities and schools in which they are located, is their propensity for engaging in criminal and often times violent behavior. Such behavior may range from simple property damage to random vandalism and graffiti to drug trafficking, assault and battery, and even murder (Philibosian, et al., 1989; Stanley, 1990).

While movies and television have created the belief that all gang members wear colors and have certain stylized dress, the persistent law enforcement activities against gang members has led the youths to avoid dressing in a manner which would assist easy
identification. Certainly there are gang members who do wear colors or specific clothing, but the more sophisticated gang members have moved away from such easy identification habits (Center, 1988; Taskforce, 1990; Stanley, 1990; Woodyard, 1989).

Gangs in California, then, are a grouping of individuals ranging from early adolescence through old age. Using a common name, these members express common beliefs about how one should act and what is important within their environment. The most obvious area of agreement is their pursuit of criminal activities as part of gang activity.

**Why Join a Gang?**

Gangs in our society meet many of the same basic needs of any other social group. They provide companionship, common ideals, training, activities, protection from others, and a sense of belonging. By themselves, gang members are often not very aggressive or assertive, but once they join a gang, they enjoy the feeling of power. The gang also provides a sense of security by assuring that the acts of individuals will be supported by the group (Center, 1988; Taskforce, 1990).

While gangs meet many of the needs often fulfilled by such groups as the Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, or local Rotarians, gangs are also very different from these groups. One of the major differences is their strong tendency toward violence. Through an unexpected teaching cycle, children in gangs are inculcated with values of striking out at or shooting one another for simple acts of teasing or downgrading a person, or his gang (Gwynne, 1990).

Gang activity is not restricted to low income youth. Some middle and upper-class suburbs are facing problems caused by gangs whose members come from affluent residences. Their criminal acts are explained as the outcomes of boredom or alienation from their families and peers. At the same time, these affluent young adults and those in the barrios and ghettos share a common bond in a gang. There is a feeling of respect and close friendship (Woodyard, 1989).
Other factors also make gang involvement increasingly attractive to young men, and women. Such factors include the excitement of gang activity, peer pressure, camaraderie, the ability of gangs to move beyond their local neighborhoods and still wield tremendous influence and the sense of pride and identity that comes from gang membership (Center, 1988; Philibosian, et al., 1989; Taskforce, 1990; Stanley, 1990).

The problem with gangs is compounded as the "gang" look or "gang" style begins to be popular. In the past, law enforcement authorities worried that using gang members in rock videos would contribute to an increasing popularity of gangs. Now, as reported in the Los Angeles Times (Rourke, 1990), the clothing style of gang members is becoming "haut couture", the look of the early 1990's.

One of the clear differences between gangs and other youth groups is gang members' serious regard for territoriality. Though gang members are stretching their web of terror beyond their own neighborhoods, the majority of juveniles involved in gang activity are highly territorial. In fact, many altercations between rival gangs occur from breaking territorial boundaries (Taskforce, 1990).

In summary, youths join a gang for a myriad of reasons. Some individuals feel the social pressure to belong to a gang, especially in those areas where gangs have been a way of life for generations. Others join to be with other young adults, while still others are responding to the glamorized style as portrayed on television and in the movies. Whatever the reason, these youths are responding to forces that seem overwhelming. To them, the gang appears to be the best way to meet their needs.

Types of Gangs

The types of gangs can be divided into ethnic minority gangs and white gangs. White gangs are usually organized around racial issues, on "heavy metal" musical interests, or on the occult. The largest and most commonly recognized gangs are the ethnic minority
gangs. Generally, these gangs divide into black, brown, and Asian groups. While each of these groups comes from an ethnic group, their behaviors generally do not reflect the typical actions of members of their ethnic affiliation. Furthermore, there are only a few selected members within each ethnic group that decide to become part of a gang (Center, 1988).

Gangs generally prey upon rival gangs of the same ethnic background, that is black gang against black gang, or brown versus brown. Though there is some cross ethnic rivalry, in most cases the ethnic minority gangs engage in warfare among themselves (Taskforce, 1990).

**Black Gangs**

Black gangs originated in the Los Angeles area during the 1920's with new groups emerging since the original "Boozie" group dominated the black community in South Central Los Angeles. The most well-known of the black gangs at this time is the "Crips". The Crip organization, flying the color blue, has been active in Los Angeles since the later 1960's. While the Crips began as a group at Washington High School in Los Angeles Unified School District, the name and the power of the group quickly spread throughout the Los Angeles basin (Center, 1988).

The other most widely know black gang is the "Bloods". The bloods, are a descendant group of the Pirus, formed to protect themselves against the Crips. This group formed predominantly in the Compton area and used the color red to identify themselves. The Bloods were successful in building its organization until the late 1970's when the Crips began to outnumber the Bloods (Center, 1988).

Due to various factors, the Crips and Bloods dominate the black gang activity in Los Angeles and in most of Southern California. At the same time, there are sub-gangs that affiliate with either the Crips or the Bloods, creating a number of sets or factions within each gang. Generally, the Bloods do not fight among themselves and, thereby, show greater unity than the Crips.
Brown Gangs

Compared to the black gangs, brown gangs do not identify with two or three major groups. While black gangs will use the name of their locale and the name "Crips" or "Bloods", e.g., Compton Crips, Compton Bloods, to identify themselves, Hispanic gangs are closely tied to the streets and areas in which they reside. The behaviors of Hispanic gangs have been studied since the early 1920's. Unlike the black gangs, brown gangs have not assimilated nor faded over the years. Similar to black gangs, though, Hispanic gangs tend to fight between themselves rather than with other groups (Philibosian, et al., 1989; Taskforce, 1990).

Hispanic gangs often organize themselves by age groups. Thus, the younger members form a new cohort. The "wanna-be's" find themselves rejected by the older members and, as a result, form a new and younger group of the same group. Each of these younger groups has its own name (e.g., Los Chicos, Los Grandes, Los Viejos) and its own special identity (Moore, 1983).

While territoriality is a defining characteristic of youth gangs (Vigil, 1983), as stated previously, the Hispanic gang strongly emphasizes territoriality. In fact, gang membership is associated with living in the neighborhood. Gang members are called "homeboys" or "homies" and the Spanish word barrio (neighborhood) is frequently used to mean "gang", e.g. my barrio. Membership, however, is not based merely on residence, but is viewed by active members as permanent and lifelong. It's just not a matter of where you live; it's how you act and feel (Miller, 1975).

Brown gangs traditionally mark their territory with graffiti or placas. To a gang member, the placa declares the member's pride in the gang and tells everyone of the gang's presence. Placas are written with very stylized lettering, often in three dimensional block letters. The names of gang members are frequently listed below the name of the gang (Moore, 1983).
Asian Gangs

Asian gangs have become a common threat in most major urban areas of the United States. Unfortunately for law enforcement agents, Asian gang members are more difficult to identify because they do not wear distinctive clothing nor mark their territory with graffiti. Like Hispanic gangs, Asian gangs adhere to a code of silence and believe "once in, never out". Furthermore, similar to Hispanic gangs, there are initiation rites, oaths of allegiance, and the demand that a crime be committed in order to enter the gang (Center, 1988).

There are three major ethnic groups in which gang activity is apparent. These groups are the Chinese, the Samoan, and the Vietnamese.

Chinese Gangs. Chinese gangs are the oldest and most sophisticated of the Asian gangs. These gangs started during the mid-19th century during the time of the influx of Chinese into the United States. Tongs, as the gangs are called, started as respectable social organizations but later moved into criminal activity. Presently, there are three main Chinese gangs--the Wha Ching, the Joe Boys and the Yu Li (Center, 1988).

Samoan Gangs. Samoan gangs are similar to black and Hispanic gangs. Samoan gang members mark turf with graffiti and wear gang colors and clothing. Samoan gangs will sometimes affiliate with black gang members. At the present time, there are a limited number of Samoan gangs, though this group requires close watching (Taskforce, 1990).

Vietnamese Gangs. Vietnamese gangs are almost a contradiction in terms. Generally speaking, the Vietnamese culture stresses achievement both academically and economically. In doing so, the cultural pressures place the Vietnamese adolescent in a position to achieve academically and, later, economically. With their entry into the mainstream of American society, a number of these individuals are lured away into gangster activity (Center, 1988).
The focus of gang activity among Vietnamese gangs is, most frequently, other Vietnamese. Members of Vietnamese gangs are not territorial and will often travel throughout the state of California in order to commit crimes. Gang members are not given to wearing specific dress for gang identification but, once identified, are feared in the Vietnamese community. A greater difficulty is that Vietnamese citizens often will not come forward when gangs have been involved. (Philibosian, et al., 1989).

**White Gangs**

White gangs are a relatively new phenomenon. The reasons for the recent emergence of white gangs are believed to be the same for that of ethnic gangs--a breakdown of the family, a decrease of parental involvement, and, the inability to see the potential for success through more acceptable means (Philibosian, et al., 1989).

White gangs are divided into punk rock, heavy metal and satanic cult gangs. Punk rock and heavy metal have dominated a number of young people throughout the United States due to the connection between certain rock groups, their songs, and the dress and style of their fans. In the past, punk rock music and heavy metal bands have also contained continuing messages about drug use, violence and suicide.

Hard core fans of heavy metal, as well as punk rockers, tend to resemble traditional street gangs in social structure and values. Gang members adorn themselves with characteristic clothing, jewelry and artifacts. At times, they will use graffiti to reflect their presence. Overall, most members of heavy metal and punk gangs outgrow their interest in the music and move on into adult life.

Other adolescents expand their interest in this area and become involved in satanic cults. These adolescent gangs are interested in chaos, disharmony, and hedonistic gratification. These groups are experiencing an increase in interest from others and the signs of satanism are appearing more and more frequently (Taskforce, 1990).
The influence of satanic groups as well as the stoners and punkers is reflected in poor school attendance, similar to many gang members, and more importantly, in on-going disruptions inside and outside of the classroom. These activities need to be handled in the same manner as that seen by any other gang member—systematically, with concern about the individual, and with full understanding that all students need to be able to attend school with little fear (Philibosian, et al., 1989).

**Summary**

This section has provided a definition of a gang and an overview of the types of gangs found in today's society. It is important to note that gangs have broadened their sphere of influence from the neighborhood streets to the local schoolyard. While the reasons for joining a gang were discussed, the underlying causes for students to become involved in a gang have not been reviewed. The next section focuses on some of the reasons why students turn to gangs. This discussion examines the factors that lead many students to gangs and some of the methods that have been implemented to try to assist similar students at-risk.

**Who is At-Risk?**

Due to their nature and impact on society, it is obvious that gang members can be classified as being at-risk. The question, though, is why are these particular young adults involved with gangs while others from the same neighborhoods are not. Risk factors provide a method for looking beyond the gang at some of the underlying causes for gang activities.

Risk factors are similar to the factors associated with heart disease. With heart disease, risk factors provide some estimate of the chance of an individual experiencing a heart attack or a stroke. For young adults, the risk factors do not insure that a person will
drop out, use drugs or join a gang. Instead, an individual who is exposed to many of the factors is more likely to drop out, use drugs, or get involved with gangs.

According to Slavin and Madden (1989), risk factors include low achievement, retention, behavior problems, poor attendance, low socioeconomic status, and attending schools with large numbers of poor students. Watson and Bright (1988), however, view the risk factors as part of the culture of the child. They imply that the impact of poverty connected with a minority ethnic background set the stage for the later failure.

This seems to be particularly true of the Hispanic student where a subculture of gangs has emerged (Moore, 1983). While many Hispanic students have overcome such factors, the meltdown of the American family, the continuing influx of migrant students, rising rates of divorce and a weakening commitment to children have exacerbated the dilemma of the at-risk and of the "wanna-be" students.

Given this setting, the risks skyrocket if a Hispanic student is unable to keep up academically. Usually, the stumbling block for many at-risk youth is the lack of mastery of English and a teaching staff which finds itself, due to large class sizes, unable to provide the necessary academic support for these students. Suddenly, the student begins to understand that education does not offer a way to achieve, only a way to fail. At that moment, as Ogbu (1989) points out, the student's attitude shifts from trust to distrust, and justifiably, to suspicion of teachers and schools. This is further exacerbated by the existence of a strong gang presence and the pressure of adolescence to demonstrate maturity (Edelman, 1986; Vigil, 1983).

The killing field for many of these students, as Calabrese (1988) contends, is the structure of the schools. This structure results in these students being "referred" for assessment, being placed in special education classrooms, or being pushed out to continuation schools due to poor grades or poor relationships with
their teachers or peers. In these cases, the student with gang proclivities is blamed for not trying hard enough, not having the motivation to achieve, or for being excessively defiant.

In truth, the young adult, in many ways, is merely relating to a very negative social environment. Many Hispanic and black students are placed in low functioning classes or tracks (Oakes, 1985), which often receive less financial support and are accompanied by lowered expectations of success (Edelman, 1986). Directly or indirectly, students in these classes get the unspoken message, "You're not wanted here".

The conditions in schools are very drastic. Students leaning toward gangs repeatedly encounter strong messages from the schools confirming their worthlessness. These cues are so unconscious and automatic, and become so ingrained, it almost seems overpowering to attempt to alter the pattern of failure. One has merely to listen to the radio or watch television to be informed of the tragic consequences of this cycle, as witnessed by drive-by shootings by gang members, their high unemployment rate, and the continuing spiral of despair.

Oakes (1985) indicates that gang members, in particular, are a category of at-risk students she identifies as being severely disconnected from our society. These juveniles are unskilled at learning in the classroom and dangerous to society, and ultimately to themselves. Jones (1989) estimated that there are 2.5 million youth who fall within this category; a tremendous increase from the 1970's.

The students who end up being a part of a gang often drop out of school. These youth represent a major challenge for educators now and in the near future. The real question, if these students are at such great risk, is what can be done to halt gang activities within a school. Several ideas addressing these issues are presented next.
Working with High Risk Youth

The preceding discussion is, in its content, focused on young adults in the pre-teen or teenage years. These youth find themselves having to make a decision to join or to reject membership in gangs. This discussion, however, is directly influenced by the educational and school related experiences that the student has had during kindergarten through sixth grade.

Adolescents who end up using drugs or joining gangs are, by definition, in a high risk category. This means that school personnel can directly impact these students' risks by shaping what occurs in and around the classroom during the critical elementary school years. This, in turn, implies that schools can reduce the odds that a student will be at high risk by devising strong programs for these students. These programs will center on inservicing teachers, aides, parents, and community members on new and innovative approaches for working with these students (Shaw, 1989).

Intervention Strategies

The approaches for intervening with younger students are, however, not the focus of most of the efforts with gang involved youngsters. Of the seven recommendations made by the State Taskforce on Gangs and Drugs (Calabrese, 1988; Jones, 1989), only two have direct application to the elementary school level. The first recommendation focuses on the development and implementation of a gang and drug prevention curriculum at all grade levels including training in self-esteem, the development of social responsibility, and strategies for avoiding gang involvement.

The second recommendation suggests that all "at-risk" students in the primary schools be evaluated for potential learning disabilities. This screening effort was recommended due to the fact that so many of the students who are in gangs have been identified as having learning disabilities.
Eliminate Tracking

While the four ideas espoused by the task force (improved self-esteem, social responsibility, avoiding gang involvement and evaluating for learning disabilities) are good ideas, these recommendations are generalities. Several individuals have made more concrete suggestions of what can be done for these students. According to Oakes (1988), one of the best solutions would be the elimination of ability grouping and tracking for these high risk students.

As Oakes (1988) explained, ability grouping and tracking, often implemented in kindergarten and first grade, leads to substantial differences in the day to day learning experiences students have at school. The nature of these differences results in students in the high-ability groups having access to more enriching learning environments. These differences are noted not only in high school classes, but also in elementary school. Tracking particularly reduces these students' access to knowledge and opportunities to learn in the classroom.

Peterson (1989) demonstrated the negative power of tracking by randomly assigning 100 remedial, 100 average, and 100 accelerated students to one of three conditions. In the first condition, all three groups were given skill building class experiences. In the second condition, the students received standard class experiences but at a slower pace. In the third condition, all three types of student received "accelerated" training. The remedial students in the accelerated classes showed significantly more improvement in all skill areas than the remedial students in either of the other programs. This positive impact was independent of the teacher and reflected a difference in the behavior of these students. The remedial students in the accelerated classes asked more questions, participated at high levels, and seemed to enjoy mathematics. Conversely, for the remedial students in remedial classes, the achievement gap between the remedial students and the
average students grew making the remedial students even more "remedial" (Peterson, 1989).

Ability grouping and tracking have been implemented, however, over the years generally as educational strategies to assist the teacher in dealing with the great differences in abilities that exist in a classroom. In other words, teachers have supported the use of tracking and ability grouping because they felt more effective when they could teach a group that appeared homogeneous.

What this means is that teachers need viable alternatives to tracking and grouping if we are to truly reach the children who will otherwise become active gang members. Furthermore, there are powerful forces seeking to continue the support of ability grouping, particularly among parents and teachers of gifted (Wallach, 1989). As a result, it is imperative that viable alternatives to tracking and ability grouping be implemented.

**Eliminate Pull Out Programs**

Many of the students who later get involved in gang activities are also participants in Chapter I programs (OERI, 1987). These programs are operated to provide a quality education for children who are economically disadvantaged and educationally deficient. Unfortunately, research has shown that Chapter I programs

1) Are frequently so poorly coordinated with regular educational efforts that student learning is actually impeded.
2) Are frequently taught by teacher's aides because they are less expensive than certified teachers.
3) Have students spend an inordinate amount of time working alone at their desks.
4) Result in teachers having lower expectations for their students and in teaching students skill based information rather than preparing them for future needs.
5) Are generally less effective for a student with severe learning problems (as many gang members do) than for the
more marginal student needing some remedial assistance, and

6) Result in students becoming "lifers" in Chapter I programs rather than exiting into regular classroom instruction (Anderson and Pelllicer, 1990).

As Slavin and Madden (1989) indicated, the fragmentation caused by Chapter I programs or remedial, special education pull out programs has lead to increasing concerns about what approaches should be used with these at-risk youth. If we are to keep students from entering gangs at later moments, then the programs that they experience during the elementary years are pivotal to their future decisions. Several models and approaches have been demonstrated as being more effective with these students.

**Preschool and Kindergarten Programs**

One simple model calls for the expansion of the amount of time at-risk students spend in school. The quickest and easiest of these approaches is to include these students in both preschool and kindergarten (all-day) programs. The research on Headstart and other preschool programs reflects that such programs have a beneficial effect lasting well into the early adulthood of the participants (Karweit, 1989).

**Continuous Progress**

While inclusion of at-risk children in preschool and kindergarten programs is one specific step, there are others that also offer assistance to these children. One approach is a continuous progress model. In continuous progress, students proceed at their own pace through a sequence of well-defined instructional objectives (Slavin and Madden, 1989).

In this methodology, students are no longer tracked but work in small groups on similar skills with students from a number of differing classes. Due to the differing ages and rates of skill development, students in such programs are frequently assessed academically and redistributed to other classes with higher levels of skills (Slavin and Madden, 1989). Furthermore, the continuous
progress models have been relatively well researched and present viable alternatives to tracking.

**Cooperative Learning**

Cooperative learning, the strategy of having students work collaboratively in small groups, is a very powerful technique for improving the academic achievement of the elementary-age students headed for the gangs as teenagers. Cooperative learning has been intensively evaluated and has shown itself to be very effective for improving the academic achievement of similar at-risk or Chapter I students (Joyce, Showers, and Rolheiser-Bennett, 1987).

According to Johnson and Johnson (1987), cooperative learning offers one of the most effective methods for assisting these students during their elementary years. Cooperative learning has been shown to improve motivation to learn, retention of information, transfer of information to new situation, and expansion of the students' critical thinking (Davidson and O'Leary, 1990).

**Use of Peer Tutors**

Another approach that has shown itself to be very effective with children who are not achieving well is peer tutoring or cross-age tutoring. According to authors Slavin and Madden (1989), these approaches use one-to-one tutoring to provide the necessary support for students who are not achieving satisfactorily. The effectiveness of the peer tutorial strategy is not limited just to early primary students. As Hamby (1989) reports, peer tutorial programs work very effectively at both the middle and high school levels.

Interestingly, as Slavin and Madden (1989) indicate, tutorial programs are beneficial to both learners and tutors with both groups showing solid academic gains following tutorial experiences. Additionally, tutorial programs are reported to be the most effective model for addressing the needs of high risk students.

**Increase Parental Involvement**

According to Chrispeels (1987), the data to date shows that increased parental involvement does improve student academic performance, especially for elementary students who are high at
risk. Most importantly, parents who participate through well-planned, comprehensive, and long-lasting efforts can have tremendous influence on the achievement of their children (Cotton and Savard, 1980).

Frequently, when students have difficulties, parents are contacted. These interactions quickly mount from informal calls to formal demands and a subliminal message that their child is "a problem". What parents actually want are ways and approaches for improving the behavior of their children (Chrispeels, 1987).

To insure that we have full parental support with at-risk children, we need to implement a number of steps. We need to begin to involve parents in the educational process beyond traditional parent conferences and "open houses". Teachers and administrators certainly believe that parent participation is a key variable for improving the academic performance of the children, but too often neither teachers nor administrators make increasing parental support the number one priority for a school.

Summary

The previous discussion reflected that there are numerous educational intervention strategies to address the needs of children with proclivities for later gang involvement. Key to these strategies is informing and assisting teachers through training to adopt one or more of these approaches. There are a number of considerations that must be included, however, when discussing training programs for teachers and others. The following review examines the factors influencing how such staff development programs should be formulated.

Qualities of Inservice Education

A key area to consider when thinking of training teachers and instructional aides about any new area is staff development or
inservice education (Nicholson, Joyce, Parker, and Waterman, 1976). Though there has been extensive debate over staff development efforts, these efforts appear to be simultaneously hated and loved.

Sparks (1983) supported the position that teacher staff development efforts are one of the most promising methods of improvement of instruction, especially for at-risk students. Sparks (1983) saw staff development activities as an enterprise of groups of teachers, often working in concert with specialist, supervisors, school administrators, counselors, parents, and many other people who were interacting with the schools, working together to enhance and coordinate the services offered to at-risk children.

Staff development has become, in the view of this group of professionals, a major school activity, involving the time and resources of many people and making extensive demands on school system budgets which could have a tremendous impact on the effectiveness of the school (Fenstermacher and Berliner, 1985). It is important to note, in terms of gang prevention and suppression, that inservice training offers one of the ways that schools and teachers can respond more effectively to the threat of gang activity.

It seems obvious that the development and organization of the training for teachers needs to be carefully thought out in order to have maximum impact. The one issue, however, that is not apparent is that any inservice for teachers on gangs and intervening with high risk students will be different from typical staff development activities for teachers.

Staff development activities with gang youth as its major focus will differ than tradition staff development in several ways. First, most teachers will need to develop awareness of the "gang" lifestyle or culture, particularly as demonstrated within their student population. Since teachers will often be beginners in this topic, the staff development effort will need to provide the "basics".

Second, teachers will need to continually consider how the instruction process can be improved. This improvement will, by necessity, involve strategies used within and across the school.
Teachers will have to seriously consider, for example, organizing peer tutorial programs or using cooperative learning for large portions of the school day.

Third, teachers, parents and community members will need to sit together and actively discuss how the educational program can be improved the students most likely to be involved gangs. Since schools which house such students are already within areas of high gang activity, this step is critical for pulling together various elements to ensure success for the students as they move through the various grade level.
PROJECT DESIGN

The project is designed to maximize the utilization of on-site staff and specialists, as well as increase communication with parents and law enforcement personnel. There are several goals and objectives that will guide this project. These goals and objectives are predicated on the project being implemented at the intermediate school level, i.e., a school serving grades three through five.

Goals and Objectives

Goal One

The first goal is to provide adequate information so that the teachers, staff and parents are well informed about gangs and how gangs are related to the students attending intermediate schools. This goal was identified first before any attempts to determine the extent of gang activity so that staff and parents would be more knowledgeable in assessing their needs. The purpose of this goal is to provide these designated groups with information so that they can recognize the magnitude of the potential threat that gangs present at their intermediate school and in their community. There are several objectives for this goal. The objectives are:

1) To provide inservice to the school staff on gangs and the connection between gangs and at-risk students.
2) To provide information to parents about gangs and gang activity.

Since both of these objectives lead to the development of intervention plans, they both need to be carried out either very early in the school year or very late to allow for planning time after the information sharing. The activities to accomplish these objectives are:

1) To have the faculty (including clerical and custodial staff) attend an inservice presented by local law enforcement
about gangs. This inservice would address such issues as graffiti, "gang" clothing habits, mannerisms, and gang activity in the local area.

2) To have the teaching faculty receive inservice on the connection between academic success and gang involvement.
3) To have the school site steering committee (with all parents invited) attend the same inservice as the faculty to provide a common beginning point.
4) To have the first two PTA meetings devoted to increasing the awareness of parents of the potential problems of gangs within the community.

Goal Two

The second goal is to develop a school-community plan to address the reduction and prevention of gang involvement by students in intermediate grade levels. There are several objectives for this goal. They are:

1) To develop a schoolwide prevention plan to more adequately meet the needs of at-risk students.
2) To consider increasing the interactions/communication with local law enforcement personnel.
3) To develop a school-parent action plan for addressing issues that include home and school.

Objective One

To address the first objective, which is to develop a prevention plan addressing the educational needs of the at-risk or gang prone student, two steps will need to be taken, needs assessment and plan formulation.

Needs Assessment

1) Identify the number of students who are either doing poorly academically, i.e., have been receiving Chapter I assistance for more than one year, are continuing behavior problems, or are being considered for retention, or are in special
education (learning handicaps) or being considered for special education. This step will identify the needs of an intermediate school in terms of number of students at-risk.

2) Identify what strategies are currently being used by the teachers to assist these youngsters. This step will allow clarification of what is being done, who has expertise in various techniques, and what methodologies haven't been considered.

**Plan Formulation**

The development of the prevention plan is anticipated to require the involvement of the site administration, representatives from each grade level, a parent representative, and, perhaps, law enforcement. The development of an at-risk prevention plan should include:

1) The identification of the current skills and abilities within the existing staff, as well as identification of potential sources for training within the district and the surrounding districts.

2) The identification of which strategies should be implemented to address the gang problem at this level. Such strategies include: continuous progress models; utilization of peer tutors; expansion of the use of cooperative learning; use of critical thinking skills, etc. This identification, however, need not be limited to the ideas espoused earlier but could include other approaches and strategies.

3) Development of a site plan for a comprehensive approach to the problem as it affects the students. Such a plan would include:
   - Continuing inservice programs for teachers on effective educational strategies;
   - Peer coaching to assist in the mastery of these educational strategies;
- Early identification and intervention with at-risk students;
- Support and training for peer tutors;
- Increasing home-school communication; and
- Utilization of Chapter I and other project monies as well as coordination among these various programs to maximize the benefit to the student and the teacher.

4) Maintenance and support of the school site plan by the school district administration. Given the current increase of gang activities in most districts in California, the central administration will need to be made aware of this staff development effort in order to provide support for this plan.

Furthermore, such a plan would, by necessity, need to be multi-year in its implementation. Since students are, for the most part, at a school for a number of years, the prevention plan needs to look at addressing this problem over a number of years.

Objective Two

The second objective is to increase the interaction and communication with local law enforcement. The steps that should be taken include:

1) Contact of local law enforcement at the beginning stages by the site administrator;
2) Invite local law enforcement to share their expertise with faculty and parents, particularly in the areas of identification and activities of gang members; and
3) Invite local law enforcement to participate in the development of the local site plan.
Objective Three

The third objective is to develop a school-parent plan for addressing issues that include home and school. This plan may include identification of the needs of the parents as well as resources within the community. A critical need, present in almost all schools, is to increase parent/school communication.

This school-parent plan will be developed through the active involvement of the local school site committee and will most likely include:

1) Ways of informing parents of the gang problem and how it is being addressed at their particular school site;
2) Newsletters introducing parents to the new methodologies being considered and requesting feedback about these ideas;
3) Parent meetings to review the projected changes and comments about the changes;
4) Active identification and utilization of techniques to increase parental involvement in the school's activities;
5) Increased efforts to expand parental presence on the school site, whether to merely observe their child's class or to work actively as a teacher's aide; and,
6) Identification of ways and approaches to assist parents of at-risk students to support the educational attainments of their children.

Goal Three

The third goal is to implement the action plans developed by the groups. The proposed plans would need to be formally introduced to the faculty, staff, parents, and the community at large. Following discussion and contemplation, the plans would be revised to incorporate any further suggestions or ideas.

Timeline for Implementation

There are several steps necessary for this timeline. To provide a clearer understanding of the timeline, this proposed
timeline outlines the steps implied by goals one and two as well as for goal three. These steps and anticipated times for implementation of these goals are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Anticipated Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Inservice of School Staff</td>
<td>9/1/92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Inservice of Community</td>
<td>10/15/92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Develop Schoolwide Prevention Plan</td>
<td>11/15/92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Increase Interaction Among Community, Police Services and Staff</td>
<td>1/15/93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Development of School-Community Action Plan</td>
<td>2/15/93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Begin School-Community Action Plan Implementation</td>
<td>3/15/93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Determine Regular Meetings with Critical Elements of Community, Staff and Service Agencies</td>
<td>4/15/93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Begin Planning for the 1993-94 School Year</td>
<td>5/15/93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Upon revision and review, the new plan would be given appropriate time lines for implementation. Oversight of the timelines would be the responsibility of the site administrator guided by the school site committee. Realizing the great importance of this effort, the staff would receive regular updates on its implementation, as well as opportunities to discuss and review impediments to its successful execution.
Summary

This section identified three goals and a number of objectives that need to be accomplished to address the at-risk students who have proclivities to join a gang at the intermediate level. Documentation was provided detailing why staff development is the key to implementing successful intervention and prevention plans. Because the educational system touches the various segments of society, that is parents, law enforcement, and community, it is imperative that a plan be designed that first informs these segments, then calls upon them for support. The educational system, and more importantly, the administrator who takes on these responsibilities, will be the foundation for which these other groups will look for guidance. Therefore, it is imperative that the administrator have a well developed plan, seek input from others, and implement the plan in a timely and well-executed manner.
SUMMARY

This project has identified that there is a critical need to address the problems of students who are involved in gangs or are prone to gang involvement. An extensive review of the literature documented that gangs are very lethal organizations and that gangs have a very negative effect on both the school and the community. The research noted that gangs are no longer isolated as "urban problems", but are threatening to put an end to the rural and suburban way of life as we know it today. Every ethnic group and neighborhood is threatened as long as communities remain uninformed and school sites refuse to tackle the gang issue head on.

Because a key ingredient as to why students become involved with gangs is related to their academic success, it is only logical that the school site should be a major force in developing prevention plans. Identification of at-risk students is essential. In addition, a number of strategies were explored that can be implemented to assist students in being more successful in their elementary school years. These strategies, which include peer tutoring, cooperative learning and the elimination of tracking, make an effort to insure academic success for every student. Yet, strategies in isolation are not enough. There is a need to develop specific action plans that involve school personnel, parents and the community at large. Only a concerted effort by all three of these groups will lead to the intervention and prevention of at-risk students.

This project outlined the major goals and objectives necessary for schools to follow in order to improve the educational program for at-risk students. Additionally, a sample timeline was provided to enable schools to implement the goals and suggested objectives.
REFERENCES


