A Center Policy & Practice Analysis Brief . . .

Youth Gangs and Schools

April, 2007

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Preface

It is common to look at psychosocial, mental health, and educational concerns related to children and youth as separate and discrete problems, such as truancy, substance abuse, bullying, gangs, dropouts, and so forth. As a result, it is not surprising that policy makers and professionals establish practices in terms of specific problems. Indeed, our Center often focuses on one or another of these problems in discussing policy and practice.

However, in most cases, the reality is that the problems are symptoms of underlying primary and secondary instigating factors. And, from a school's perspective, concern about such matters stems mainly from the fact that they interfere with a student's ability to profit from good instruction and from the school's ability to provide an equal opportunity for every student to succeed. That is, they represent barriers to learning and teaching and result in students who disengage from learning at school and who do not achieve academically. As such, the school's focus is on addressing these barriers in order to ensure that every student has an equal opportunity to succeed at school.

In focusing on youth gangs and schools, this policy and practice analysis brief complements other documents from our Center that are designed to encourage placing specific problems in broad perspective. The intent is to provide those focusing specifically on youth gangs to consider opportunities for working broadly with the range of resources (personnel and programs) in schools, district, and the community to enhance our collective efforts to benefit children and youth and their families.

As will be evident, this document draws heavily on reports from those with expertise in this policy and practice arena. Besides highlighting major concerns, we provide a sampling of references and resources for those who are ready and interested in going into greater depth. And, of course, we suggest ways to move forward based on our Center's work.

> "The school is the main secular institution aside from the family involved with the socialization of the young. Not only do young people spend a great deal of time in school, but until the ages at which chronic truancy and dropout become problems nearly all young people are actively enrolled in school. The school therefore is in a better position than any institution other than the family to influence the behavior of young people. To the extent to which schools provide successful instruction in social competencies and develop attitudes and beliefs that are not conducive to problem behavior or involvement with gangs, gang involvement may be reduced. ... Young people who do not like school, whose school performance is poor, and who are not committed to education are more likely to engage in a variety of problem behavior – and they are more likely than other youths to become involved with gangs. Preventive interventions in school that keep youths attached to school, committed to education, achieving, and attending school may thereby reduce the likelihood of gang participation. "
>
> Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2001

Contents

Prolonged gang involvement is likely to take a heavy toll on youths' social development and life-course experiences. The gang acts as "a powerful social network" in constraining the behavior of members, limiting access to prosocial networks and cutting individuals off from conventional pursuits. These effects of the gang tend to produce precocious, off-time, and unsuccessful transitions that bring disorder to the life course in a cascading series of difficulties, including school dropout, early parenthood, and unstable employment. For some gang members, the end result of this foreclosure of future opportunities is continued involvement in criminal activity throughout adolescence and into adulthood.

Despite the apparent popular belief among youth that joining a gang will afford protection, in reality the opposite is true. Youth are far more likely to be violently victimized while in a gang than when they are not. This relationship holds irrespective of the primary reason for joining a gang (i.e., whether for protection or not). Furthermore, in two studies, involvement in gang fights more than doubled or tripled the odds of serious injury.

National Youth Gang Center
http://www.iir.com/nygc/faq.htm

About the Problem of Gangs and Schools

Few schools escape dynamics and behaviors that are associated with gangs. Think, for example, about bullying, disruptive intergroup conflicts, drug sales and abuse, and vandalism such as theft, graffiti, and other forms of property damage.

From both a policy and practice perspective, it is essential for schools to understand and address gang-related problems that interfere with productive schooling. Fortunately, there are many useful resources on the topic (see Appendix A).

Drawing on recent documents from authoritative resources, we organize the first section of this brief around answers to the following set of basic questions:

What is a youth gang?
What are the numbers?
Why do young people join gangs?
What are the trends in school policy and practice related to gangs?

Then, we discuss the need to rethink the problem in order move policy and practice forward.

What is a youth gang?

As the National Youth Gang Center stresses:

> "There is no single, accepted nationwide definition of youth gangs. It has been firmly established that the characteristics and behaviors of gangs are exceptionally varied within and across geographical areas (Egley, Howell, and Major, 2006; Klein, 2002; Weisel, 2002) and that a community's gang problem – however affected from other areas – is primarily and inherently homegrown. Thus, state and local jurisdictions tend to develop their own definitions. The terms 'youth gang' and 'street gang' are often used interchangeably, but use of the latter label can result in the confusion of youth gangs with adult criminal organizations. A youth gang is commonly thought of as a self-formed association of peers having the following characteristics: three or more members, generally ages 12 to 24; a name and some sense of identity, generally indicated by such symbols as style of clothing, graffiti, and hand signs; some degree of permanence and organization; and an elevated level of involvement in delinquent or criminal activity...." (http://www.iir.com/NYGC/faq.htm)

What are the numbers?

It is difficult to summarize and provide a big picture of gang membership and demographics as related to school concerns. Clearly, schools and communities vary in the degree to which gangs are experienced as a pressing and daily concern. A reasonable perspective of the numbers as related to youth gangs can be gleaned from three reports generated since 2000.

(1) The National Center for Educational Statistics in *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2006* reports data from the School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey. The findings are based on the responses of students ages 12-18 who were asked if gangs were present at their school during the previous 6 months. The report indicates:

7% of boys and 4% of girls said they had belonged to a gang
Gottfredson & Gottfredson

> "In 2005, some 24 percent of students reported that there were gangs at their schools. Students in urban schools were more likely to report the presence of gangs at their school than suburban students and rural students (36 vs. 21 and 16 percent, respectively). No measurable difference was found between suburban and rural students in their likelihood of reporting gang presence.
>
> The total percentage of students who reported the presence of gangs at school increased from 21 percent in 2003 to 24 percent in 2005. Similarly, the percentage of students at urban schools who reported that gangs were present at school also increased during this period from 31 to 36 percent. No measurable change was found for the percentage of suburban or rural students reporting gang presence during this period.
>
> Hispanic and Black students were more likely than White students to report gangs in their schools in 2005 (38 and 37 percent, respectively, vs. 17 percent. This pattern held among students in both urban and suburban schools. Between 2003 and 2005, reports of gangs increased among both Black students (29 vs. 37 percent) and White students (14 vs. 17 percent). No measurable change was detected in the percentage of Hispanic students reporting the presence of gangs between 2003 and 2005.

A survey of nearly 6,000 8th graders in 11 cities known as gang localities found >11% were currently gang members >17% said they had been at some point
Esbensen & Deschenes

> Students in public schools were more likely to report the presence of gangs than were students in private schools regardless of the school's location. In 2005, some 25 percent of students in public schools reported that there were gangs in their schools, compared with 4 percent of students in private schools...."
> (http://nces.ed.gov/programs/crimeindicators/ind_08.asp)

(2) Discussing urban violence and street gangs in the 2003 *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vigil states:

> "Gangs are now made up, as they were in earlier days, primarily of groups of male adolescents and youths who have grown up together as children, usually as cohorts in a low-income neighborhood of a city. Yet, only about 10% of youth in most low-income neighborhoods join gangs...."

(3) In their 2001 report entitled *Gang Problems and Gang Programs in a National Sample of Schools*, Gary and Denise Gottfredson attempt to counter the city bias in thinking about gangs. They conclude that "Despite popular notions that youth gangs are an urban phenomenon,

the differences in percentages of urban students reporting gang participation does not appear very much higher than the percentages of suburban and rural students reporting participation – particularly when the standard errors for these percentages are taken into account."

In summarizing data on the extent of gang membership and demographic characteristics, they state:

> "Previously available estimates of the proportion of young people involved with gangs are based on samples from selected locations. For example, Esbensen and Winfree (1998) reported results from surveys of a large sample of eighth graders in 41 schools in 11 cities. From their [data] we can calculate that 13.6 percent of the males and 8.5% of the females in their sample reported gang membership. Gang membership was higher for African-American (12.3%) and Hispanic (12.3%) students than for White students (6.4%). ... [A 2000 national sample of secondary school students indicates that] among boys, an estimated 7.6% belong to a gang when all respondents are included in analyses... Among girls, an estimated 3.8% belong to a gang, ... [With respect to ethnic self identification, gang participation] percentages are highest for males who are Black (13%), Other (11%), American Indian or Alaskan Native (11%), or Hispanic (10%)." (http://www.gottfredson.com/gang.htm)

Why do Young People Join Gangs?

It is commonplace to hear that youngsters mainly join because they are recruited by the gang. There are, however, many predisposing factors that precede recruitment.

In general, researchers have explored a range of related community, family, school, peer, and individual factors as precursors to joining gangs.

Social conditions and community and family factors. The National Youth Gang Center notes that, when asked, gang members say that the most common reasons for joining are: (1) social – "youth join to be around friends and family members (especially siblings or cousins) already part of the gang" and (2) protection – "youth join for the presumed safety they believe the gang can afford."
(http://www.iir.com/NYGC/faq.htm)

In 1998, Moore described the transition from typical adolescent groupings to established youth gangs in terms of four preceding community conditions: a neighborhood where (1) there is lack of effective adult supervision (e.g., conventional socializing agents are largely ineffective and/or alienating), (2) youngsters have considerable free time that is not devoted to prosocial activity, (3) there is little opportunity for moving on into a good adult job, and (4) gang members can congregate and operate.

As Wyrick and Howell (2004) comment: "Gangs tend to cluster in high-crime, socially disorganized neighborhoods. The clustering of gangs in such high-crime communities has a negative influence and provides ample opportunity for recruitment of at-risk youth into gangs."

Howell's (2003) review stresses that "longitudinal studies have identified the availability of drugs, the presence of many neighborhood youth who are in trouble, youth's feelings of being unsafe in the neighborhood, low neighborhood attachment, low levels of neighborhood integration, area poverty, and neighborhood disorganization (i.e., low informal social control) as the strongest community risk factors for gang membership.

Gary and Denise Gottfredson (2001) conclude that

> "... gang development and gang involvement is a *social* phenomenon. Certain conditions – social disorganization, a population of poorly socialized youths, and group diversity – make the development of gangs in a community more likely much as fertile soil and plenty of water foster the development of agricultural crops. But gangs do not develop and persist everywhere these conditions are found. In some places groups form and come to define themselves in a special way in relation to other groups in the community. These definitions often seem to relate to status, defense against other groups, or retaliation. These *group self-definitions* seem to be much like an infectious agent that promotes gang propagation...."

School and peer factors. Poor school performance, feeling unsafe on the way to and at school, and association with peers who engage in delinquency are among the strongest correlates found in research on factors related to gang membership.

As summarized by Wyrick and Howell (2004):

> "One of the strongest school-related risk factors for gang membership is low achievement in school, particularly at the elementary level (Hill et al., 1999; Le Blanc and Lanctot, 1998; Thornberry et al., 2003). This in turn is related to low academic aspirations, a low degree of commitment to school, and teachers' negative labeling of youth (Howell, 2003). ... Many future gang members also have problems with truancy (Lahey et al., 1999).

The accumulation of risk factors greatly increases the likelihood of gang involvement, just as it does for other problem behaviors.
National Youth Gang Center

In recent years, a great deal of attention has been paid to the problem of safe passage to and from school and the fact that so many students feel unsafe at school (e.g., Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2001). This probably plays a significant role in pushing some youngsters to gravitate toward the aggressors and associating with peers who engage in delinquency (Thornberry et al., 2003).

Individual factors. Many in the field argue that youth join gangs because gangs meet important personal needs. For example, Deborah Prothrow-Stith and Michaele Weissman in their 1991 book, *Deadly Consequences*, suggest that gang membership stems from the need for

(1) a sense of community, (2) self-esteem, (3) recognition, (4) sexual identity, and (5) a moral code.

The work that has focused on intrinsic motivation (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 1985; Deci & Flaste, 1995) has application here. This psychological focus emphasizes the role of individual needs, thoughts, and feelings. It stresses that individuals move toward circumstance that meet their need to *feel* (1) competent, (2) self-determining, and (3) related to significant others. And, they move away from circumstances that threaten those feelings.

From an observable behavioral perspective, Gottfredson and Gottfredson (2001) note that:

> "...*individuals* who become involved in gangs tend to be distinguished from other youths by a set of personal characteristics that distinguish youths who engage in more delinquent behavior in general from youths who engage in less delinquent behavior. Thornberry (1998) summarized results from studies of youth development in Rochester and Seattle showing that low attachment and commitment to school, school antisocial behavior, low achievement, poor grades, association with delinquent peers, little belief in conventional rules, and positive attitudes towards drugs were associated with the probability of joining a gang. These risk factors resemble predictors of general delinquency, violence, or serious delinquency (Farrington, 1998; Hawkins, et al., 1998; Lipsey & Derzon, 1998), which have been more extensively studied than has gang participation...."

What are the trends in school policy and practice related to gangs?

Appendix B offers examples of district policies and state legislation related to gangs in schools. (The National Association of State Boards of Education provides a state-by-state look at policies related to gangs in their Safe, Orderly, and Drug-Free Schools compendium – http://www.nasbe.org/healthyschools/states/topics.asp?category=C&Topic=3).

While many states have policies that include a focus on educational programs for prevention and early intervention related to gangs and other safe school concerns (e.g., conflict resolution strategies), it is clear that the primary focus of state level policies is on the suppression of gang activity through dress codes/school uniforms, discipline related to bullying/fighting, collaboration with law enforcement, zero tolerance, comprehensive school safety plans.

Some states provide exemplars of efforts to support rather than just mandate systemic changes. For example, Connecticut policy supports a move from the emphasis on suppression to a focus on enhancing a positive school climate so individuals can feel safe, supported and connected. California has established statewide interagency coordination and collaboration to address such problems as gang membership. Indiana is funding pilot programs in targeted districts.

In practice, school policy focused on suppressing gang activity has had limited impact. Schools located in neighborhoods where gangs are a significant force find that school programs are insufficient to address the

potency of gang culture. It is evident in such neighborhoods that school programs must be embedded in comprehensive and cohesive school and community approaches.

School prevention and intervention programs. Gottfredson and Gottfredson (2001) estimate that there are 803,000 programs, activities, or arrangements operating in the nation's schools that are intended to reduce or prevent gang participation. Of these, 782,000 were identified as prevention-oriented. A program was designated as a gang prevention or intervention activity based on principals' identification that it was "intended to reduce or prevent problem behavior or to promote a safe and orderly environment *and* ... that it had the specific objective of reducing or preventing gang participation or that it was targeted at gang members" (see Exhibit 1).

Evaluation findings indicate that "secondary school students who report being involved in gangs are less exposed to many prevention activities than are students who are not involved in gangs. This suggests the potential for including more of the highest risk youths by actively seeking ways to include them." This, of course, assumes that such youngsters are or can be motivated to participate.

In analyzing program quality, the Gottfredsons conclude that there is great variability, and even those that have been evaluated and found effective need improvement. This includes modifications in content and methodology and increases in the extent of application and how long and how frequent programs are operated.

Embedding the Work in a Comprehensive Community Approach. As is evident in dealing with most serious and complex psychosocial problems, school-based efforts are insufficient. So are approaches that use only one or a few strategies. Much more sophisticated and qualitatively better approaches are needed. And, schools and communities must work together to address the gang problem within the context of a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive framework.

Schools and communities must work together to address the gang problem within the context of a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive framework

While this reality still is not widely reflected in policy and practice, most experts in this arena agree on the need for a comprehensive, multifaceted approach that targets individual youth, peer groups, families, and the community. Some movement in this direction is seen in various reports, application guidelines for grant funds, and training guides. For example, in an online training resource entitled *Youth Gangs: Going Beyond the Myths to Address a Critical Problem,* the U.S. Department of Education states:

> "For decades, police and communities have tried to address gang problems in their areas, with often disappointing results. Like many other attempts to solve deep-rooted problems, there has been a swing from one approach to another. Early on, programs emphasized prevention in an attempt to keep youth from joining gangs. Later on, perhaps as gangs grew more violent, the focus shifted to police suppression. Neither approach, at least alone, has demonstrated much effectiveness in addressing gang problems. In response to these findings,

Exhibit 1

Some School-based Program Data from
Gang Problems and Gang Programs in a National Sample of Schools
http://www.gottfredson.com/gang.htm

"Almost half of the [school-based] gang prevention programs (49%) involve direct services to students and families. The most common kind of gang prevention program involves prevention curriculum, instruction or training, with an estimated 115,000 such programs in the nation's schools or about 15% of all gang prevention programs. Other common direct service approaches to gang prevention are counseling (78,000 programs or 10% of all gang prevention programs) and recreation, enrichment or leisure programs (60,000 programs or 8% of all gang prevention programs). Behavioral programming or behavior modification, services or programs for family members, and individual attention activities such as mentoring, tutoring, or coaching are less common types of direct service programs.

... The most common type of organizational or environmental program involves efforts to develop or maintain a distinctive culture or climate for interpersonal exchanges. There are an estimated 84,500 such programs or 11% of all gang prevention programs. The next most common organizational or environmental gang prevention program type entails the use of external personnel resources in classrooms, with 69,000 such programs or 9% of all gang prevention programs. About 51,000 programs involve activity to improve intergroup relations or interactions between the school and the community (about 7% of all gang prevention programs). The use of a school planning structure or a process for the management of change, improved classroom organization and management practices, and improved instructional practices are additional organizational or environmental approaches for preventing gang participation that are used less frequently than other types.

Ten percent of gang prevention programs involve discipline or safety management activities. Security or surveillance programs are common, with about 60,000 such programs (about 8% of all gang prevention programs). Youth roles in regulating and responding to student conduct (e.g., peer mediation) are relatively uncommon, with about 20,000 such programs (3% of all gang prevention programs).

... The distribution of gang intervention program types differs from that for gang prevention programs. Almost two thirds of gang intervention programs (66%) involve direct services to students or families. ... Counseling, social work, psychological or therapeutic interventions are the most common type of gang intervention program, with about 33,000 such programs or 20% of all gang intervention programs. About 20,000 gang intervention programs involve curriculum, instruction, or training (13% of all gang intervention programs). Almost as many – 19,000 gang intervention programs or 12% of programs – involve services for family members. Almost 17,000 school-based gang intervention programs involve behavioral programming or behavior modification (10% of intervention programs). Individual attention activities (such as mentoring, tutoring, or coaching) and recreation, enrichment or leisure activities are used less often as gang intervention approaches.

About a third (33%) of school-based gang intervention programs involve organizational or environmental arrangements. The most common of these are programs that develop or maintain a distinctive culture or climate for interpersonal exchanges – about 17,000 programs or 10% of all gang intervention programs. Programs that involve improving intergroup relations or interaction between the school and the community are also common with about 16,000 programs of this type (10% of all intervention programs).

Few programs fall in the final group of program types – discipline and safety management activities. The creation of youth roles in regulating or responding to student conduct (such as peer mediation programs) as an approach to gang intervention are the basis for an estimated 2,600 school based gang intervention programs (about 2% of all intervention programs)."

and work with gangs, many communities have begun to adopt a more comprehensive approach to dealing with gang problems....[which includes a focus on providing safe, gang-free schools by involving both the schools and communities]:

- Community Mobilization: Involvement of local citizens, including former gang youth, community groups and agencies, and the coordination of programs and staff functions within and across agencies.
- Opportunities Provision: The development of a variety of specific education, training, and employment programs targeting gang-involved youth.
- Social Intervention: Involving youth-serving agencies, schools, grass roots groups, faith-based organizations, police and other juvenile/criminal justice organizations in "reaching out" to gang-involved youth and their families, and linking them with the conventional world and needed services.
- Suppression: Formal and informal social control procedures, including close supervision and monitoring of gang-involved youth by agencies of the juvenile/criminal justice system and also by community-based agencies, schools, and grass roots groups.
- Organizational Change and Development: Development and implementation of policies and procedures that result in the most effective use of available and potential resources, within and across agencies, to better address the gang problem."

(http://www.ed.gov/print/admins/lead/safety/training/gangs/problem.html)

The *Comprehensive Gang Prevention, Intervention, and Suppression Model* (Spergel and colleagues, 1995, 2004) offers a framework to guide communities in developing and organizing a continuum of programs and strategies. And, the National Youth Gang Center (NYGC) offers a *Gang Strategic Planning Tool* for a community to use in assessing its gang problem and to guide development of a comprehensive, community-wide plan of gang prevention, intervention, and suppression (National Youth Gang Center, 2002a). NYGC also provides resource aids and information on promising and effective gang programs and strategies (National Youth Gang Center, 2002b; http://www.iir.com/nygc/tool/).

There is no one "magic bullet" . . . The youth gang problem . . . will be best addressed through a comprehensive strategy that incorporates primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention
U.S. Dept. of Justice, 2000

As emphasized by the U. S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the problem of gangs is complex and "there is no one 'magic bullet' program or 'best practice' for preventing gang affiliation and gang-associated violence. The youth gang problem is one that will be best addressed through a comprehensive strategy that incorporates primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention approaches" (U.S. Department of Justice, 2000).

Some Conclusions about Gang Prevention Strategies

From: Preventing Adolescent Gang Involvement (2000), U. S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
(http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/ojjdp/182210.pdf)

"In regard to primary prevention, three facts are particularly salient. First, gang formation is not restricted to urban, underclass areas. Second, gang members come from a variety of backgrounds; they are not exclusively male, urban, poor, minority, or from single-parent households. Third, once juveniles join a gang, they engage in high levels of criminal activity. Therefore, it is appropriate to formulate primary gang prevention efforts that target the entire adolescent population.

In terms of secondary prevention approaches, some youth are at higher risk of joining gangs. Although social structural conditions associated with gang formation and demographic characteristics attributed to gang members are diverse (and despite the facts stated above), youth gangs are still more likely to be found in socially disorganized or marginalized communities.
Secondary prevention strategies should, therefore, focus on communities and youth exposed to these greater risk factors. Community-level gang problem assessments may help guide prevention strategies by identifying areas and groups of youth that are most at risk for gang activity.

Tertiary prevention programs [e.g., law enforcement crackdowns gang suppression approaches] have shown little promise. Some detached worker programs produced the unintended consequence of increasing gang cohesion (Klein, 1995).
...
[And] ... prevention efforts that concentrate only on individual characteristics will fail to address the underlying problems. As Short (1997:181–194) states:

> 'Effective interventions at the individual level that seek to control violence thus require that macro-level factors . . . be taken into consideration. . . . Absent change in the macro-level forces associated with these conditions, vulnerable individuals will continue to be produced. It follows that . . . to be effective in reducing overall levels of violent crime, interventions directed primarily at the individual level must address the macro-level as well. . . . A substantial body of research demonstrates . . .that single approaches, whether based on prevention, suppression, coordination of agency programs, community change, or law enforcement, are unlikely to prevent gang formation or to be successful in stopping their criminal behavior.'"

Moving Forward: Rethinking the Problem

Youth gangs are one of many overlapping psychosocial and mental health problems confronting schools and communities. The extensive list of problems includes violence, abuse, bullying, sexual harassment, interracial conflict, substance abuse, oppositional behavior, vandalism, truancy, dropouts, and many others that have been identified as interfering with school performance and community well-being.

The trends in policy and practice have been to deal with each as a separate entity. This is reflected in a host of school and community programs and services that are implemented in fragmented and marginalized ways and that have generated considerable counterproductive competition for sparse resources.

Over time the complexity and the ineffectiveness of efforts to address problems such as youth gangs has led to calls for more comprehensive approaches. In doing so, however, too little attention continues to be paid to:

Overlapping problems. Youth problems rarely are discrete entities. A gang member may be involved in delinquent behavior, substance abuse, teen sex, interracial conflict, and manifest symptoms of various mental health problems. Given this, schools and communities must address a full range of problems.

Underlying commonality of cause. Many youth problems are symptoms stemming from the same underlying causes. It is well documented that common to the development of such problems are (1) chronic exposure to common risk factors and (2) the failure of protective buffers to compensate for such exposure. Of particular concern is the impact of factors that lead to lack of success in and disengagement from school learning. Given all this, schools and communities must address the many problems they encounter in ways that account for the underlying causes and secondary instigating factors.

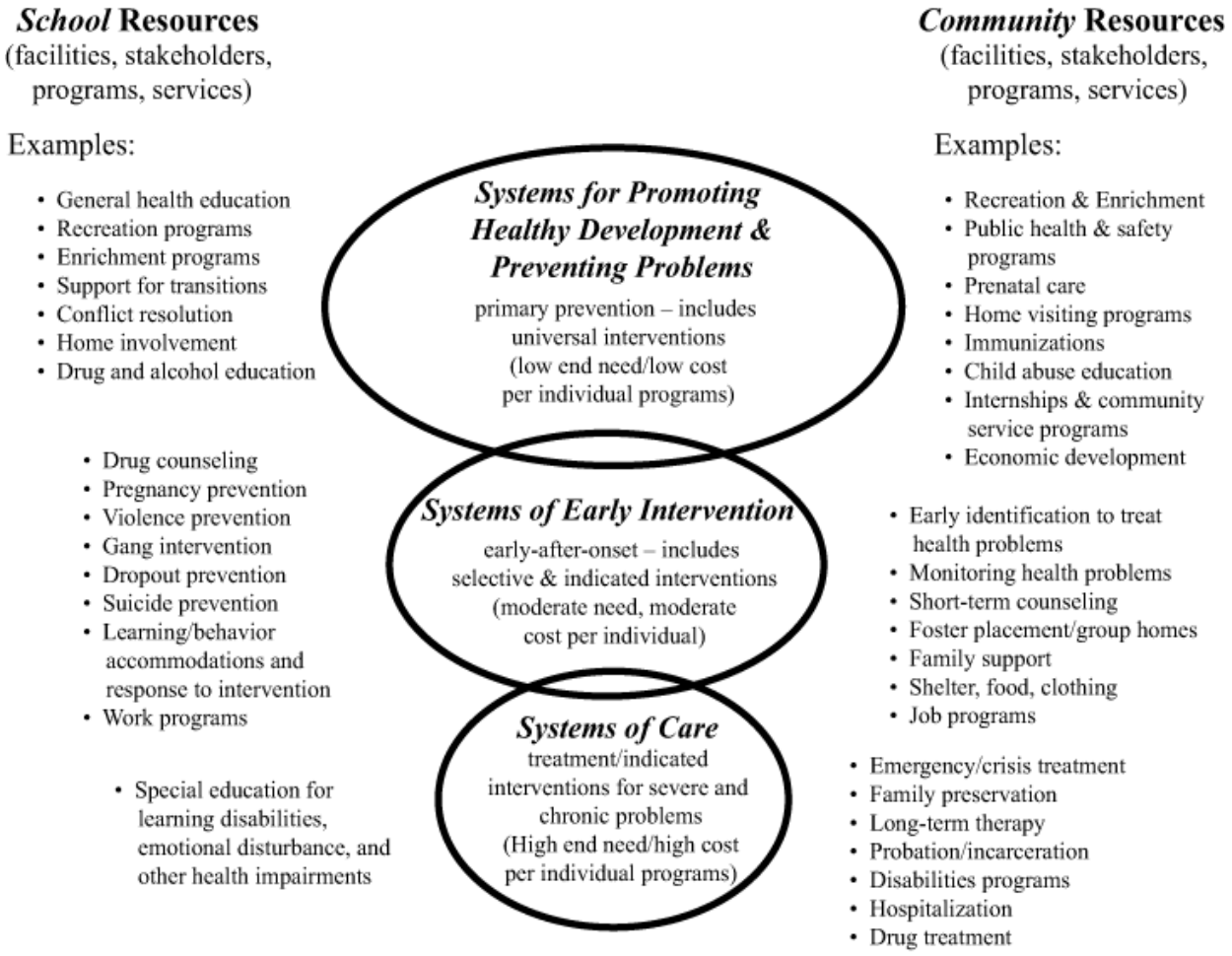
Developing a systemic approach. While current categorical and fragmented policies and practices contain essential building blocks, they are insufficient to the task. Moving forward will require a focus on (1) addressing barriers, (2) promoting protective buffers, (3) integrating programs and services into an overall system, and (4) fully integrating the system into the improvement agenda for schools and communities.

To guide development of a systemic approach, we have suggested that a continuum of integrated school-community intervention systems be used as a unifying framework (e.g., Adelman & Taylor, 2006; Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2006). The intent, over time, is for schools to play a major role in establishing a full range of integrated intervention *systems*, including school-community systems for

- promoting healthy development and preventing problems
- intervening early to address problems as soon after onset as is feasible
- assisting with chronic and severe problems.

As illustrated in Exhibit 2, the desired intervention systems can be conceived along a continuum. In keeping with public education and public health perspectives, such a continuum encompasses efforts to enable academic, social, emotional, and physical development and address behavior, learning, and emotional problems at every school.

Exhibit 2. Interconnected Systems of Intervention.



Systemic collaboration is essential to establish interprogram connections on a daily basis and over time to ensure seamless intervention within each system and among *systems of prevention, systems of early intervention, and systems of care*.

Such collaboration involves horizontal and vertical restructuring of programs and services

(a) within jurisdictions, school districts, and community agencies (e.g., among departments, divisions, units, schools, clusters of schools)

(b) between jurisdictions, school and community agencies, public and private sectors; among schools; among community agencies

Most schools and communities have some programs and services that fit along the entire continuum. However, as stressed, the interventions are not coalesced into integrated systems. Moreover, the tendency to focus mainly on the most severe problems has skewed the process so that too little is done to prevent and intervene early after the onset of a problem. As a result, public programs and services have been characterized as institutions that "wait for failure."

The continuum spans the full spectrum of prevention efforts and incorporates a holistic and developmental emphasis that envelops individuals, families, and the contexts in which they live, work, and play. The continuum also provides a framework for adhering to the principle of using the least restrictive and nonintrusive forms of intervention required to appropriately respond to problems and accommodate diversity.

Moreover, given the likelihood that many problems are not discrete, the continuum can be designed to address root causes, thereby minimizing tendencies to develop separate programs for each observed problem. In turn, this enables increased coordination and integration of resources which can increase impact and cost-effectiveness. To ensure the continuum fits with school improvement efforts, it has been conceptualized and operationalized as an enabling or learning supports component (e.g., Adelman & Taylor, 2006; Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2006).

Policy that helps schools and communities develop the full continuum of interventions is essential to moving forward. Such policy must effectively establish a *comprehensive intervention framework* that can be used to map, analyze, and set priorities. It must guide fundamental *rethinking of infrastructure* so that there is leadership and mechanisms for building integrated systems of interventions at schools and for connecting school and community resources. And, it must provide guidance for the difficulties inherent in facilitating major *systemic changes*.

What the best and wisest parent wants for his [or her] own child,
that must the community want for all of its children.
Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely;
acted upon, it destroys our democracy.

John Dewey, The School and Society, 1907

Appendix A

Resource and References

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Also, see the online clearinghouse Quick Find on Gangs on the website for the Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p3009_01.htm

National Youth Gang Center

As part of its comprehensive, coordinated response to America's gang problem, OJJDP funds the National Youth Gang Center. NYGC assists State and local jurisdictions in the collection, analysis, and exchange of information on gang-related demographics, legislation, literature, research, and promising program strategies. NYGC coordinates activities of the OJJDP Gang Consortium, a group of Federal agencies, gang program representatives, and service providers that works to coordinate gang information and programs.

The Center provides resource aids and information on promising and effective gang programs and strategies and has online a *Gang Strategic Planning Tool* for a community to use in assessing its gang problem and to guide development of a comprehensive, community-wide plan of gang prevention, intervention, and suppression. (See http://www.iir.com/nygc/tool/).

NYGC also provides training and technical assistance for OJJDP's Rural Gang, Gang-Free Schools, and Gang-Free Communities Initiatives.

For more information, contact:
National Youth Gang Center, P.O. Box 12729, Tallahassee, FL 32317
800–446–0912 850–386–5356 (fax) nygc@iir.com
www.iir.com/nygc

Appendix B

Examples of State and District Policies regarding Gangs in Schools

1. Examples of district policy

Rio Rancho Public Schools – http://www.rrps.net/board/policies/346.htm

The Board recognizes that the harm done by the presence and activities of gangs in the public schools exceeds the immediate consequences of such activities such as violence and destruction of property. Gang activities also create an atmosphere of intimidation in the entire school community. Both the immediate consequences of gang activity and the secondary effects are disruptive and obstructive of the process of education and school activities.

It is therefore the policy of the Board of Education that gangs and gang activities are prohibited in the Rio Rancho Public Schools, according to the following:

A. Definition: For purposes of this policy a "gang" is any group of two or more persons whose purposes include the commission of illegal acts, or acts in violation of disciplinary rules of the school district. ""Gang related activity"" includes but is not limited to the prohibited conduct set forth below.

B. Prohibitions: No student on or about school property or at any school activity shall:

1. Wear, possess, use, distribute, display, or sell any clothing, jewelry, emblem, badge, symbol, sign or other items that evidences or reflects membership in or affiliation with any gang;
2. Engage in any act, either verbal or nonverbal, including gestures or handshakes, showing membership or affiliation with any gang.
3. Engage in any act in furtherance of the interests of any gang or gang activity, including, but not limited to:
   a. soliciting membership in, or affiliation with, any gang;
   b. soliciting any person to pay for "protection," or threatening any person, explicitly or implicitly, with violence or with any other illegal or prohibited act;
   c. painting, writing, or otherwise inscribing gang-related graffiti, messages, symbols, or signs, on school property;
   d. engaging in violence, extortion, or any other illegal act or other violation of school policy;
   e. soliciting any person to engage in physical violence against any other person.

C. Application and Enforcement:

1. In determining, as part of the application and enforcement of this policy, whether acts, conduct, or activities are gang related, school officials are encouraged to exercise discretion and judgment based upon current circumstances in their schools, neighborhoods, and areas.
2. The removal of gang-related graffiti shall be a priority in maintenance of school property. All such graffiti on school property shall be removed or covered within twenty-four (24) hours of its first appearance to school officials, or as soon thereafter as possible, unless additional time is needed to obtain replacements for damaged items.
3. School officials should also encourage private property owners to promptly remove or cover gang-related graffiti on private property in school neighborhoods.
4. School officials are strongly encouraged to work closely with local law enforcement officials in controlling gang-related activities. Local law enforcement can provide school officials with information regarding gang-related activities in the area, including names and characteristics of local gangs.

5. The superintendent, in consultation with the appropriate building principals, should report instances of gang-related criminal acts or acts of serious disruption to local law-enforcement authorities for further action.

D. Violations of Policy: Students who violate this policy shall be subject to the full range of school disciplinary measures, in addition to applicable criminal and civil penalties.

Wake County Schools – http://www.wcpss.net/policy-files/series/policies/6424-bp.html

Gang and Gang Related Activities – The WCPSS does not support or condone gang membership or gang activity. The Superintendent/designee shall regularly consult with law enforcement officials to identify gang-related items, symbols and behaviors, and provide each principal with this information.

No student shall commit any act that furthers gangs or gang-related activities. A gang is any ongoing organization, association, or group of three or more persons, whether formal or informal, having as one of its primary activities the commission of criminal acts, or the purposeful violation of any WCPSS policy, and having a common name or common identifying sign, colors or symbols. Conduct prohibited by this policy includes:

A. Wearing, possessing, using, distributing, displaying, or selling any clothing, jewelry, emblems, badges, symbols, signs, visible tattoos and body markings, or other items, or being in possession of literature that shows affiliation with a gang, or is evidence of membership or affiliation in any gang or that promotes gang affiliation;
B. Communicating either verbally or non-verbally (gestures, handshakes, slogans, drawings, etc.), to convey membership affiliation in any gang or that promotes gang affiliation;
C. Tagging, or otherwise defacing school or personal property with gang or gang-related symbols or slogans;
D. Requiring payment of protection, money or insurance, or otherwise intimidating or threatening any person related to gang activity;
E. Inciting other students to intimidate or to act with physical violence upon any other person related to gang activity;
F. Soliciting others for gang membership;
G. Conspiring to commit any violation of this policy or committing or conspiring to commit any other illegal act or other violation of school district policies that relates to gang activity.

Before being suspended for a first offense of wearing gang-related attire (when not involved in any other kind of gang-related activity or behavior), a student may receive a warning and be allowed to immediately change or remove the attire if the school administration determines that the student did not intend the attire to show gang affiliation. Reference policy 6400 for disciplinary action.

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2. Examples of state legislation related to gangs and schools
[from http://www.iir.com/nygc/gang-legis/gangs_and_schools.htm]

>**California 51264.** Guidelines for Incorporating In-Service Training in Gang Violence and Drug and Alcohol Abuse Prevention; Assistance in Developing In-Service Training Programs and Qualifying for Funding; Encouragement to Develop Single Plan; Consultation With Office of Criminal Justice Planning

(a) The State Department of Education shall prepare and distribute to school districts and

county offices of education guidelines for incorporating in-service training in gang violence and drug and alcohol abuse prevention for teachers, counselors, athletic directors, school board members, and other educational personnel into the staff development plans of all school districts and county offices of education.

(b) The department shall, upon request, assist school districts and county offices of education in developing comprehensive gang violence and drug and alcohol abuse prevention in-service training programs. The department's information and guidelines, to the maximum extent possible, shall encourage school districts and county offices of education to avoid duplication of effort by sharing resources; adapting or adopting model in-service training programs; developing joint and collaborative programs; and coordinating efforts with existing state staff development programs, county gang violence and drug and alcohol staff development programs, county health departments, county and city law enforcement agencies, and other public and private agencies providing health, drug, alcohol, gang violence prevention, or other related services at the local level.

(c) The department shall assist school districts and county offices of education in qualifying for the receipt of federal and state funds to support their gang violence and drug and alcohol abuse prevention in-service training programs.

(d) Each school that chooses to utilize the provisions of this article related to in-service training in gang violence and drug and alcohol abuse prevention, is encouraged to develop a single plan to strengthen its gang violence and drug and alcohol abuse prevention efforts. If a school develops or has developed a school improvement plan pursuant to Article 2 (commencing with Section 52010) of Chapter 6 of Part 28, or a school safety plan pursuant to Article 5 (commencing with Section 32280) of Chapter 2.5 of Part 19, it is encouraged to incorporate into that plan, where appropriate, the gang violence and drug and alcohol prevention plan that it has developed.

(e) The department shall consult with the Office of Criminal Justice Planning regarding gang violence.

>California 51265. Priority to Be Given to Gang Violence and Drug and Alcohol Abuse Prevention In-Service Training Programs

It is the intent of the Legislature that school districts and county offices of education give high priority to gang violence and drug and alcohol abuse prevention in-service training programs, which shall be part of the overall strategy for comprehensive gang violence and drug and alcohol abuse prevention education.

"Gang violence and drug and alcohol abuse prevention in-service training" for purposes of this article means the presentation of programs, instruction, and curricula that will help educators develop competencies in interacting in a positive manner with children and youth to assist them in developing the positive values, self-esteem, knowledge, and skills to lead productive, gang-free, and drug-free lives; develop knowledge of the causes of gang violence and substance abuse, and the properties and effects of tobacco, alcohol, narcotics, and dangerous drugs, including the risk of contracting acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) associated with intravenous drug use; receive training regarding available information and resources concerning gang violence and drug and alcohol abuse prevention as well as antigang and antisubstance abuse crime trends; develop familiarity with teaching social skills and resistance skills to children and youth; and develop skills in conducting effective education, which includes methods and techniques for helping children and youth to freely express ideas and opinions in a responsible manner and to understand the nature and consequences of their decisions as they relate to gang involvement and drug and alcohol abuse.

>**California 51266.** (Operation Contingent) Model Gang Violence Suppression and Substance Abuse Prevention Curriculum

(a The Office of Criminal Justice Planning, in collaboration with the State Department of Education, shall develop a model gang violence suppression and substance abuse prevention curriculum for grades 2, 4, and 6. The curriculum for grades 2, 4, and 6 shall be modeled after a similar curriculum that has been developed by the Orange County Office of Education for grades 3, 5, and 7. The Office of Criminal Justice Planning, in collaboration with the State Department of Education, may contract with a county office of education for the development of the model curriculum. The model curriculum shall be made available to school districts and county offices of education and shall, at a minimum, provide for each of the following:

(1) Lessons for grades 2, 4, and 6 that are aligned with the state curriculum frameworks for history, social science, and English and language arts.
(2) Instructional resources that address issues of ethnic diversity and at-risk pupils.
(3) The integration of the instructional resources of the Office of Criminal Justice Planning and the School/Law Enforcement Partnership in order to support the school curriculum and assist in the alignment of the state curriculum framework.

(b) The Office of Criminal Justice Planning shall develop an independent evaluation of the pupil outcomes of the model gang violence suppression and substance abuse prevention curriculum program.

>**Indiana 20-10.1-27-8**. Sec. 8. The department shall establish the anti-gang counseling pilot program to provide financial assistance to participating school corporations to establish pilot projects designed to do the following:

(1) Educate students and parents:
(A) of the extent to which criminal gang activity exists in the school corporation’’s community;
(B) on the negative societal impact that criminal gangs have on the community; and
(C) on methods to discourage participation in criminal gangs.
(2) Encourage the use of community resources not directly affiliated with the school corporation, including law enforcement officials, to participate in the particular pilot project.
(3) Enable the participating school corporations on a case-by-case basis and with the prior written approval of the student’’s parent or guardian to contract with community mental health centers to provide appropriate anti-gang counseling to a student identified by the student’’s school guidance counselor as being at risk of becoming a member of a criminal gang or at risk of engaging in criminal gang activity.

>Nevada 392.4635. Policy for Prohibition of Activities of Criminal Gangs on School Property.
1. The board of trustees of each school district may establish a policy that prohibits the activities of criminal gangs on school property. The policy may prohibit:
(1) A pupil from wearing any clothing or carrying any symbol on school property that denotes membership in or an affiliation with a criminal gang; and
(a) Any activity that encourages participation in a criminal gang or facilitates illegal acts of a criminal gang.
2. Each policy that prohibits the activities of criminal gangs on school property may provide for the suspension or expulsion of pupils who violate the policy.
3. As used in this section, "criminal gang" has the meaning ascribed to it in NRS 213.1263.

>Oregon 336.109. Policy to Reduce Gang Involvement, Violent Activities and Drug Abuse

(1) After consultation with appropriate agencies and officials, including the Department of Education, each school district is encouraged to develop and adopt a comprehensive policy to reduce gang involvement, violent activities, and drug abuse by public school students in the school district, including but not limited to:
   (a)A statement that evaluates: (A) The nature and extent of gang involvement, violent activities, and drug abuse by public school students of the school district and (B) The impact of gang involvement, violent activities and drug abuse on the ability of public schools in the school district to meet curriculum requirements and improve the attendance of public school students.
   (b) A statement that emphasizes the need to reduce gang involvement, violent activities, and drug abuse by public school students.
   (c) Strategies to reduce gang involvement, violent activities, and drug abuse by students of the school district considering the needs of the public school students.
   (d) Methods to communicate conflict resolution skills to the teachers and public school students of the school district.
   (e) Strategies to inform the teachers of the school district, the parents of public school students, and the public about the policy the school district developed pursuant to this section.

(2) As used in this section, "gang" means a group that identifies itself through the use of a name; unique appearance or language, including hand signs; the claiming of geographical territory; or the espousing of a distinctive belief system that frequently results in criminal activity.

Appendix C

Examples of Model Programs

A sample of programs from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Model Programs Guide

> Effective Programs:

>> **Comprehensive Gang Model** – Calls for community institutions to work together to achieve a more integrated, team-oriented approach. Includes community mobilization, social intervention, provision of social opportunities, and suppression. Contact iasperge@midway.uchicago.edu

>> **Gang Resistance Education and Training** – Curriculum taught by uniformed law enforcement officers. Cognitive approach that seeks to produce attitudinal and behavioral change through instruction, discussion, and role-playing. See: http://www.great-online.org

> Promising Programs:

>> **Boys and Girls Club Gang Prevention through Targeted Outreach** – Includes community mobilization of resource, recruitment of youths at risk, positive developmental experiences through interest-based programs, individual case management. Contact: info@bgca.org

>> **Broader Urban Involvement and Leadership Development Program** – Includes streetworkers, afterschool sports, violence prevention curricula, career and college counseling, working with community leaders. See http://www.buildchicago.org

>> **Gang Resistance is Paramount** – Includes a school-based curriculum, parent education, counseling of parents and youth, recreational activities, and neighborhood watch. Contact: Tony Ostos (tostos@paramountcity,com)

>> **Supporting Adolescents with Guidance and Employment** – Program is based on the theory that positive gains in personal and social responsibility, educational aspirations, and academic achievement – in tandem with employment training and opportunities fostered by community mentors– will make a positive impact on reducing violence among participants. Contact: Program developer Arnold Dennis (adennis@dsscar.co.durham) Training & TA provider Bob Flewelling (flewelling@pire.org)