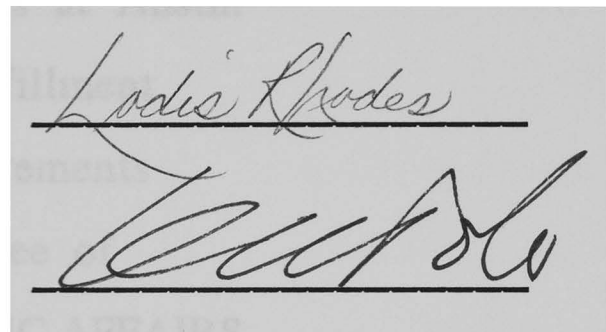


A GANG PREVENTION MODEL FOR COMMUNITIES IN SCHOOLS
OF TEXAS

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**A GANG PREVENTION MODEL FOR COMMUNITIES IN
SCHOOLS OF TEXAS**

by

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REPORT

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In September of 1991, I began work as an intern with the Texas Communities In Schools (CIS) State Office. My main duties have centered around the research and dissemination of funding information, including both private and public funding opportunities. In the process of identifying potential funding sources for the Communities In Schools programs, I have become familiar with the diversity of needs and services that characterize the CIS organization.

The CIS State Office is in the unique position of being able to identify the kinds of issues and trends which are common across the state, as well as those that are particular to certain areas or school-age groups. Over the past couple of years, problems springing from gang activities, affiliation and violence have increasingly encroached upon schools around the state. CIS professionals and school staff all recognize that gang involvement is a definite risk factor in the potential for young people to drop out of school. CIS is specifically designed to address the challenges and needs of young people at risk of dropping out of school and their

families, and therefore, must address the issues related to the risks and challenges of gangs.

The growing awareness of gangs in all of the Texas CIS cities, along with the availability of state and federal funds to address the problems of gangs in our communities, prompted the CIS State Office to recommend that I prepare a report which would lay the groundwork for a gang prevention model for Communities In Schools. This model is based on an understanding of the broad community which must work with and through CIS, and a basic understanding of the gang phenomenon as it relates to school age youth.

On the basis of my initial research into the general problems and issues related to gang behavior, and conversations with Austin education and community leaders, it became clear that gang prevention efforts in Austin and around Texas were not highly coordinated or broad-based. Indeed, the predictor of success for existing efforts seemed to be the presence of a motivated and dedicated individual who took on the task of gang prevention basically on his or her own.

Such an individualistic approach to the widespread problems of gangs does not seem to tap into the potential of an organization like Communities In Schools whose

philosophy it is to bring a wide range of community services and resources to young people at risk of dropping out. Therefore, this report will serve as a blueprint for CIS communities to begin thinking about the best strategies for local gang prevention.

The examples of other community efforts I have selected constitute my compilation of some of the best practice and knowledge from around the country. With the help of David Dawley, Chair of the National Center for Gang Policy and former gang member, I learned of and contacted a number of gang prevention programs in other states. The lessons extracted from the successes and setbacks of other communities are presented as essential components of a Communities In Schools model which can be implemented through the existing design for CIS services for at-risk youth.

Recognizing the need for community responsibility and coordinated action to deal effectively with young people involved or affiliated with gangs, this report explores the rationale for community regulation of "bad" gangs, the general characteristics and sociology of gang behavior in the Austin community, and several successful community strategies from around the county which provide valuable

lessons for Communities In Schools in its efforts to serve at-risk youth.

Chapter 2: The Gang Phenomenon: “Good” or “Bad”?

[Perhaps] the most important primary good is that of self-respect. We must make sure that the conception of goodness as rationality explains why this should be so. We may define self-respect (or self-esteem) as having two aspects. First of all, it includes a person's sense of his own value, his secure conviction that his conception of the good, his plan of life, is worth carrying out. And second, self-respect implies a confidence in one's ability, so far as it is within one's power, to fulfill one's intentions. When we feel that our plans are of little value, we cannot pursue them with pleasure or take delight in their execution. Nor plagued by failure and self-doubt can we continue in our endeavors. It is clear then why self-respect is a primary good. Without it nothing may seem worth doing, or if some things have value for us, we lack the will to strive for them. All desire becomes empty and vain, and we sink into apathy and cynicism (Rawls, 1971, p. 440).

The school has an unwritten covenant with its local and extended community to provide a safe campus with a climate that is conducive to teaching and learning (Rattay and Lewis, 1990, p. 18).

According to the Criminal Justice Division of the Governor's Office, gang-related criminal activity is one of the most tragic and understudied offenses in Texas (1992, p. 3).

Gang activity is predominantly a juvenile phenomenon which has contributed to the rise in violent crime and in drug crime in Texas, but youth gangs are by no means a new phenomenon in our society. The historical references to gangs in this country extend back to the eighteenth century when gangs associated with immigrant groups in large cities were common.

In cities and towns across the country, including Austin, Texas, there have always been gangs of some kind (Hipolito, Interview, January 30, 1992). Generally speaking, gangs of Irish, Polish, Mexican or Jewish youth in many cities were regarded as integral parts of immigrant communities, and membership in them was a normal rite of passage in the lives of young men in those cultural settings (Morales, 1992, p. 1).

Much of the traditional nature of gangs, including the leadership, status and camaraderie common to these kinds of social groups, is preserved in the types of gangs which exist today. There is one very significant difference between the gangs and tight-knit groups of young people which have existed throughout history and the gangs that are present today in most urban areas and many smaller cities and towns around the country, however, gangs today

are largely considered to be an extremely serious threat to the general public, to a free and safe way of life, and to those persons charged with enforcing the laws of our communities and our society as a whole. When people are scared to walk down the streets of their own neighborhood and are forced to move their living rooms to back bedrooms which do not face the street for fear of drive-by shootings, it is clear that criminal and violent gangs are changing lives and lifestyles (Martinez, Interview, April 14, 1992).

This shift, in both the perception and the behavior of many gangs, is attributable to numerous social changes and the realities of present day life in America and around the world. Drugs, weapons, the disintegration of family and institutional networks of support for children as they grow up, the lack of opportunities for many young people, both educational and economic, all of these factors seem to be feeding the inevitable cycle of gangs which often passes from one generation to the next. The apparent lack of political will and resources needed to address the most serious and pressing public issues facing our children, our families, our communities and our society are also part of the explanation for the rise in "bad" gangs that seem to exist for and thrive on destructive, criminal and violent behavior.

It is important at the outset of any discussion of gangs and gang-related activities in our communities to draw a clear distinction between “good” and “bad” gangs, because gang prevention and intervention programs are founded on the assumption that gangs are inherently “bad” affiliation groups for young people. While there is a general tendency to label all youth gangs as “bad” and set them apart from other groups in society based on their appearance and behavior, it is a practice which deserves greater scrutiny and clearer differentiation. It must be recognized and understood that gangs are meeting significant social and emotional needs of our young people, while our society is failing to offer positive alternatives to meeting these needs. The traditional gang experience fills a variety of purposes for young people, including ego needs, group belonging, family needs, affirmation of cultural values, emotional needs, recreation, recognition, success, rites of passage into adulthood, and sometimes even housing and financial needs.

The friendship, support and camaraderie of gangs provide young people with positive, even if only temporary, relief and outlets that all young people need at critical stages in their adolescent development. It is striking to observe that most young people between the ages of ten and

fifteen interact in social groups that closely resemble gangs in almost every respect. After all, adolescence is the normal period of search for self-identity through group membership (The Mayor's Task Force on Gangs, Crime and Drugs, 1991, p. A-IV). Members of a school band, language club, church youth group, or self-formed groups of friends are all examples of "gangs" of young people whose group behavior and peer relationships often closely resemble those of typical street youth gangs that seem to pose such serious threats to our young people, their communities, and the entire society. Young people associated with these peer groups often hang out together, both in and out of the school setting; they sometimes have a group name and nicknames by which they identify themselves; they often dress alike and may have special handshakes or slang which they use only with each other. Therefore, in the gang prevention processes, the distinction between "good" and "bad" groups of young people in our society must be carefully drawn so that social and emotional needs of young people are recognized, understood and met while the community's (and society's) reliance on self-respect, respect for others, the concept of the rule of law and governmental legitimacy are upheld.

The key identifying characteristic of "bad" gangs which do threaten the well-being of young people and the communities in which they live is the removal of the individual members and the gang from the social mainstream, i.e., a general acceptance of the notions and ideals of equal basic liberties which underpin our concept of the rule of law in a democratic system. Individual rights in our society entail not only freedoms to do, but also avoidance of interference and injury by others. Limitations and responsibilities, therefore, attach to government and individuals in our society. David Dawley, Chair of the National Center for Gang Policy, has observed firsthand the fine line that separates some gangs from the acceptance of these societal values as their own:

What pushes people over that line?
What are the factors that make kids go from being a socially acceptable group to a gang involved in delinquency? Conditions. The conditions they live in -- that they grow up in. Part of any strategy to prevent gang problems has to change the street to change the gang (Family and Youth Services Bureau, 1991, p. 4).

If young people do not experience the values, notions and ideals on which the laws and rules that govern their lives

are premised, clearly their own conditions and experiences can easily defy and nullify the legitimacy of relying on a system that does not seem to be their own.

Gangs which rely on criminal means to satisfy their survival, security and emotional needs create a culture which is dependent on illegal activities and violence as the measure of success and gang-defined "values". The gang, while offering an automatic friendship group and a "system" to call its own, likewise brings an automatic group of enemies which creates a continual expectation of violent and criminal activities and a constant need for vigilance and retaliation. The gang member who relies on this type of group allegiance and culture becomes trapped within an isolated system, increasingly alienated from positive routes to success such as education, jobs, sports or other legally and ethically successful affiliation groups and careers. Delinquent, violent, criminal and illegal activities are, therefore, outward signs of clearly "bad" gangs, but not the only ones.

Any gang or group which rejects or dismisses the basic values which attach to the rights and responsibilities of all members of any community threatens the structure and well-being of that community. The social isolation and

alienation of values related to the rise in "bad" gangs are the core dilemmas which face any community attempting to develop a program of gang prevention and intervention. However one describes the fundamental problem of gangs that "cross the line" -- isolation, removal, alienation, rejection -- the solution is not to be found on just one side of that line. Loneliness, isolation and alienation are countered with the help and support of others, not by remaining separate. This basic understanding lies at the heart of the call for community response and responsibility for all kinds of issues, from clean air and water to drugs and gangs.

As evidenced by the following comments, community and opinion leaders in Austin, Texas concerned with the proliferation of violent and criminal gangs recognize the entire community as the agent for change and solutions to our gang problems.

As we head into 1992, some of my main priorities are to make Austin a safe place to live and to continue to improve the quality of life for our citizens. We will do this by emphasizing *community* policing, a plan which enables officers to work more closely with residents to solve and prevent neighborhood problems (Todd, 1992, p. F11).

It's going to be a matter of the *community* getting involved in the areas where there are crack houses. It's going to take a multifaceted approach. Getting more *community* involvement. I see more churches getting involved. More communities getting involved. We'll see what happens this coming year. We'll keep our fingers crossed (Martin and Haglund, 1992, p. A8).

Our government leaders are frustrated knowing that there are not enough dollars to keep drugs out of the city, to combat gang activity that revolves around drugs, to provide rehabilitation and to give business the kind of security and support necessary to keep them viable. But it is precisely all of these different segments of the community - government leaders, social and human service agencies, the police and individual citizens - who must work together to find solutions to the complex drug problem that is slowly eating away at the fabric of many Austin neighborhoods. There is no easy answer. There is no one, right answer. But the entire *community* must take responsibility for the problem before we begin to address it ("City's drug problem involves whole community," Austin American-Statesman, 1992, p. A6).

We need a coordinated effort similar to Desert Storm that mobilizes a collective force. Some of the gang programs today show that a coordinated, comprehensive

community effort can be successful (Youth Services Bureau, 1991, p. 5).[Emphasis added in all above quotes]

Recognizing that the common rallying cry for community responsibility and action is both sound and valid, but vaguely defined and understood, this report explores the sociology of gang behavior in the Austin community, the rationale for community regulation of "bad" gangs, and an overview of several successful community strategies from around the country. The analysis and conclusions which follow are intended for use by Communities In Schools (CIS) of Texas, a statewide dropout prevention program which operates to bring community services and resources to at-risk students in the schools.

Chapter 3: Understanding the Moral Gap

Historically, the term *gang* has often been used to describe certain social groups considered to be problems of the time. Social scientists and observers over the years have approached gangs as just that: social problems. When one thinks of the Western outlaws of the nineteenth century there is no question that society at large considered these groups a social, economic and moral problem. The famous Dalton and James gangs, along with other less famous gangs, posed a threat to social stability, control and order. People were very concerned with understanding who these people were and what made them become outlaws. These questions were posed with the intention of helping authorities and communities figure out how to control them and regulate their actions. Rather than defining clear solutions, such inquiry simply added to the myth and mystique of the frontier gangs. The dilemmas of social regulation and the romance of the gang life have both carried forward through today (Jankowski, 1991, p. 2).

Urban youth gangs are not a new phenomenon either. In the late nineteenth century, young Irish street gangs were reported to be operating in New York City, and the southern United States was experiencing an influx of Mexican-American migrants who often formed gangs which became culturally institutionalized within their own communities. The post-World War II era saw a resurgence of gangs spurred by a major shift in the population from rural areas to urban centers. Racial and ethnic youth often sought out each other in their new urban environment and created gangs for support and self-protection (Department of Education, 1992, p. 9866).

In the late 1970s and the 1980s, youth gangs experienced another transformation. Many gangs started to specialize in marketing and distributing illegal drugs such as heroine, crack and cocaine. The migration and franchising phenomena of these gangs have led to a dramatic increase in their ability to traffic in drugs and weapons across the country. Gang crime and violence, which used to be restricted within certain urban neighborhoods, is now evidenced in urban, suburban and rural areas alike.

For as long as gangs have been around, public policies have sought to counteract and regulate their activities. Yet

the impact of such policies has been minimal. If it is generally accepted that violent or criminal gangs undermine the morals and values of the society as a whole (as gangs are commonly depicted and understood), then a community-wide effort to solve the gang problem implies a moral, value-based and regulatory obligation. According to Alan Wolfe, ordinary people create moral rules through everyday interaction with others, interaction which demonstrates people's mutual dependence on others and out of which emerges the complex social organizations which define our civil society (1989, p. 12). Gangs are clearly an organizational phenomenon, but their organizational decisions and behavior differ from the generally agreed upon principles for how to act and interact in society. The difference lies in the lack of any sense of connectedness to the values, responsibilities and benefits of organized community and democratic society. There is essentially a *moral gap* which must be bridged to bring "bad" gangs and gang members into the mutual obligations of civil society, and this bridge must be built in and by each and every community.

Gangs are not isolated from their communities. On the contrary, a working relationship must exist if gangs are to

survive at all. This relationship can be active and antagonistic toward official authority and social controls, or it can be a relationship of accommodation and avoidance. Either way, it is a relationship which emphasizes the gangs' disconnectedness from community decisions and social consequences. Gang members often defend and portray themselves exactly this way, as victims of society, not moral participants in it. Martin Sanchez Jankowski, in his ten-year study of 37 gangs from a variety of geographical areas and ethnicities, included excerpts from numerous interviews in his book *Islands in the Street*. The following comments by two individuals interviewed by Jankowski illustrate today's gangs' sense of disenfranchisement.

I know people think gangs are terrible and that the kids are just disgusting individuals, but that just ain't what's going down with these kids. Hell, they ain't bad kids, sure you gots some, but most ain't bad, they just not willing to quietly sit back and let the society take everything and give them nothing..... Sometimes I think some of the gangs go too far, but I understand where they're coming from, and I say, they ain't bad, they just made a bad decision that time, that's all (Jankowski, 1991, p. 182).

Those who are in gangs do a lot of things that a lot of people think is terrible, but I am not against them because I know how they feel. You see they are just not going to sit around and accept what society says is your place. They going to resist that stuff all the time.....So I don't get down on them because I know how frustrating it can be to think that all you going to have in life is poverty (Jankowski, 1991, p. 182).

Gangs are organizational and institutional options for identity, relationships, emotional support and physical protection in our community and our society. Therefore, they must be addressed as such. Policies which only target individual behavior do little to regulate or redirect the organizational decisions and behaviors of the group. If the economic and governmental systems of modern society have consistently excluded entire groups of disadvantaged people from the responsibilities and benefits of our society, it seems natural that these disenfranchised groups, among them most of the gangs that exist today, will disconnect and disassociate themselves from the society at large to set up their own system of decision making, rewards and responsibilities. Thus, the moral gap which severs gangs' sense of mutual dependence on and responsibility to people outside of the gang, to the community and the society at-

large is created and sustained from within, by the gang members themselves, and from outside the gangs and gang-dominated neighborhoods by those in the community who want nothing more than to keep gangs out of their own neighborhoods and schools.

Combating gangs requires that the community reestablish in itself and in the gangs the sense of moral obligation and mutual dependence which underlies civil society. In a civil society everyone has a personal stake. Good and bad decisions, by individuals and organizations alike, matter. Their consequences cannot be artificially contained or restricted from affecting the lives of many others, and therein lies the legitimate foundation for moral community regulation.

Chapter 4: Communities In Schools: Ideally Positioned to Break Up the Bad

With the morality of community, value-based regulation in mind, and with the understanding that a multiplicity of moral, social and economic issues lead to youths becoming involved in violent or criminal gang activity, a comprehensive community plan is essential. Programs that address youth and their families through education and caring relationships are a recognized way to begin addressing the problems associated with “bad” gangs. Communities In Schools (CIS), therefore, is ideally situated on the campuses of public schools to be a powerful force in breaking the cycle of gang violence and delinquency which plagues many Texas communities.

The development of a Communities In Schools gang prevention model in a community relies on an understanding of the gang phenomenon, the community and its resources, and how they must all work together for social and moral change to foster positive group experiences and

identities, self-respect, leadership, empowerment and worthy life choices for our youth.

The purpose of Communities In Schools is to improve academic, vocational, social and personal skills of at-risk students to enable them to graduate from high school, enter further training or the labor market after graduation, and stay out of the criminal justice system.

The Communities In Schools program began in Houston in 1979 when it was part of the national Cities In Schools dropout prevention program. In 1984, then Governor Mark White adopted Cities In Schools as a state model which became Communities In Schools (CIS). Continued legislative and philanthropic support have allowed CIS to expand to fourteen Texas cities in 1992.

Communities In Schools is a multi-service, multi-sponsor program for in-school youth, especially those youths who are at risk of dropping out of school and/or becoming involved in criminal activity. The philosophy behind the model is that services to in-school, at-risk youth can best be provided in the school setting and that an array of service agencies and organizations must work cooperatively to provide comprehensive services to this group. Texas CIS is designed to provide a holistic approach addressing the

multiple needs of at-risk students (Texas Research League, 1992, p. 96). Each program is established and administered as a private, non-profit entity; local CIS board and program initiatives respond to and reflect local needs, concerns and resources. At the same time, local CIS programs benefit from the shared goals, lessons, resources and expertise of the statewide network.

Services provided by CIS at the high school level include pre-employment and work maturity skills, personal and vocational counseling, and academic tutoring. Emphasis is on personal development, educational advancement and school-to-work transition. Repositioned staff from the Texas Employment Commission on CIS school sites assist with employment related activity for participants and family members. All of these components are vital to the success of Communities in Schools throughout the school year.

CIS programs do differ, not only from city to city, but also from site to site. Campus sites are autonomous, and can set goals that are indicative of school needs. The Texas Research League, in its study of CIS, found that the program's greatest strength lies in the ability to allow a delivery site to develop in such a way that is most beneficial to the community (1992, p. 97). This strength should work

to the advantage of CIS in dealing with gangs as it does with a host of other personal, family and community issues.

In all of the Texas CIS cities, however, the goals of decreasing disruptive behavior, decreasing contact with the criminal justice system, and promoting positive personal and social development are being challenged, both in and out of schools, by the alarming growth of criminal street gangs. All fourteen cities in the CIS network have recognized gangs as an emerging and serious problem. Since Communities In Schools is a program that addresses at-risk young people through a variety of educational and personal counseling approaches, it thus is a powerful vehicle for beginning to address the problems facing young gang members and the communities in which they live.

Chapter 5: The Sociology of Gang Involvement

We must begin by asking ourselves why children are choosing the dangerous and destructive path of “bad” gangs, as opposed to peer groups or cliques which offer positive group support and experiences. Like so many other social and personal problems, the “you know it when you see it” diagnosis seems to apply to gangs, but does little to address the reasons for or the solutions to the attraction of gangs. In many cases, kids don't necessarily choose to join a gang but do so for the lack of anything better to do or any better alternative choice. Young people turn to gangs in search of status, acceptance, companionship, recognition and a feeling of belonging.

[T]he early adolescent years, the period from [age] 10 to 15, are second only to the years of infancy in the rapid rate of change and the critical nature of the changes.

We know the early adolescent years are the critical years for the initiation of decision making around substance abuse, sexual activity, even gang involvement (Quinn, 1992, p. 6).

Typically, the most deeply involved gang members have histories of being without adult supervision for extended periods of time, on a daily basis, from an early age. No one knows where these kids are, no one is watching what they do. Gang members are normally between the ages of 14 and 24. Most have not performed well in school, and many have dropped out.

Previous studies have identified school failure as a factor correlated with involvement in youth gangs. Gang membership is one important way for adolescent youth at risk of dropping out of school to establish a positive sense of identity. The sociological literature suggests that gangs develop in schools, or students turn to gangs outside of school, when students perceive an unbreachable gap between the goal of obtaining a high school diploma and their own ability to reach this goal. These students don't believe that their own school experiences will contribute to their success later in life. Gangs, therefore, provide an alternate means of acquiring status, a sense of purpose and connection, and self-esteem for students who are at risk of dropping out.

The realities of schools and school culture play a major role in creating the need for gang involvement of at-risk youth. The irony is that attending school is essential for most students to make contact with gang members, but gang obligations make it very difficult to participate in academic and traditional extracurricular activities. Many gang challenges and inter-gang fights take place at or near the school campus. Gang members often harass students who conform to school discipline or do well in school. School success is considered a step toward attaining status above others, which is not an acceptable gang behavior. It is ironic that the school is the place where gang involvement is often initiated and reinforced, and this reality must be recognized if the school is to deal effectively with young people attracted to gang lifestyles.

Outside of the school setting, gang involvement becomes a substitute for family support. Gang members interviewed in Romo and Falbo's Austin survey of gang involvement relate that gang members provide a great deal of emotional support for other members, especially in times of crisis (1992). Major crises, such as divorce or death, are indicators of the tendency toward gang involvement. Young people seem to find sympathy, support and strength from

their friends and peers which is often not a part of their family relationships. A positive exception to this occurs in families where siblings, especially sisters, are close, attend the same school and can depend on each other for social and emotional identity. One of the most extreme examples of the gang's "family" function is the fact that many young gang members report that one or several friends are either living with them in their home or living somewhere other than with their immediate family.

Within most gangs there are characteristic behaviors and activities that set them apart, as well as fulfilling the natural psychological needs for identity and belonging among young people. Most gang members are identified by a nickname or street name. Often, members will not know each other by their legal names. The nickname is important since it suggests the gang member's psychological perception of himself or herself (U.S. Department of Justice, n.d., p. 4). Communications may take different forms among different gangs, but communication identifiers are important for dealing with gang members successfully. Clothing, guns, jewelry, hand signals, tattoos and graffiti are all forms of communication to gang members (U.S. Department of Justice, n.d., pp. 3,5) Graffiti is used by gang members to mark

territorial limits and serves as a warning or challenge to other street gangs. Challenges are made by one gang putting its graffiti on another's territory and can sometimes be considered a killing offense to gangs. Also, the crossing out of other gangs' graffiti may lead to serious retaliation measures (U.S. Department of Justice, n.d., p. 16).

More important than the characteristic behavior of gangs, recruitment is vital to the life and perpetuation of gangs, whatever their defining characteristics. Delinquent youth gangs, territorial turf-based gangs, gain-oriented, drug-dealing gangs and violent gangs all thrive and rely on one basic component: loyal membership. Why is this relevant to what is going on in schools and in CIS? Because in Travis County, and around the state, approximately one-third of all students drop out of school before graduation. Texas public schools therefore become prime targets for what is often competitive recruitment, which has escalated largely due to the lucrative illegal drug trade and the current trend of using children to transport and deliver illicit drugs because they are treated as minors in the criminal justice system and generally immune from severe punishment. The risks, setbacks and challenges faced by

any young person who drops out of school are clearly worsened when that young person is doing so to join a gang.

Gangs today do pose real threats to communities and the schools in those communities. Gang problems are no longer restricted to particular racial or ethnic groups or neighborhoods. Gangs are no longer strictly an inner-city phenomenon. Thirty-eight of the fifty largest cities in Texas report the presence of gangs on their streets, to say nothing of the smaller Texas cities not included in the first state-wide survey (Office of the Attorney General, June 1991, p. ii). No community is immune to the presence of violent and criminal gangs and, therefore, no one is outside of the sphere of moral obligation which binds everyone in the community to a public life and way of life.

Nor is it just the average adult citizen scared to walk down the street who is living in fear of gangs and gang violence. Children and adolescents are also conscious of it, aware of their own vulnerability, and they are scared, even in their own schools. A 1991 U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) study found that nearly 20 percent of all high school students in the United States carry a weapon, and 5 percent carry a firearm at least once a month (*Education Week*, 1991, p. 8). The CDC report also indicates that Hispanic and

Black adolescents are far more inclined to carry a weapon than are other students. The alarming trend has become so pronounced in Texas schools that at a recent conference on campus crime, educators from across the State of Texas asked the Texas Education Agency to find ways to address the problem of students attacking, shooting or stabbing each other and their teachers (Smith, 1992, p. A1). There is obviously a perceived and an actual risk of violence and victimization among high school students and personnel. Not all school violence is gang related, but increasingly campus incidents such as shootings, stabbings and fights are being traced to reputed gang members. The schools in every community must be made safe, because the school has an unwritten covenant with its local and extended community to provide a safe campus with a climate that is conducive to teaching and learning (Rattay and Lewis, 1990, p. 18).

The hope is that when students are able to disregard gangs members' harassment and identify with friends and peers who are doing well, staying in school, getting in special programs, and seeking out nontraditional paths to a diploma, they are more likely to do the same. This behavior can and should be promoted in the school setting and can result in

successful disengagement from gang involvement. Despite their reputation for violence and aggression, gang members do have many positive qualities, including leadership and organizational skills, loyalty to friends, and respect and honor for “family”. Effective gang prevention and intervention programs are characterized by caring adults who believe that school can provide a positive environment and alternative experience in the life of young gang members and wanna-bes, and who respect and reinforce the need for peer affiliation and identity to facilitate healthy relationships and other positive group behaviors.

As Texas searches for solutions and responses to local gang tensions, we have to learn what gangs have known for years -- the power of collective force -- and recognize the unique positions and roles of the schools, educators, counselors and social workers in reclaiming safe and vital communities for everyone living in them. Teachers and other school staff who regularly interact with students are in a unique position to see emerging gang problems. They are able to inform and work with the community at large and to develop enlightened policies that create real solution strategies for dealing with the myriad of school-age peer

groups that exist in and outside of all schools, some good and some unquestionably bad.

[There's] an ignored third leg (after family and the school) to that developmental triangle...and that is a whole set of experiences that young people have in their neighborhoods and in their communities.

[Members of youth focus groups conducted by the Carnegie Task Force on Youth Development and Community Programs] said that what they wanted was exactly what the research said they needed. They said that they needed places to go be with kids their own age and with adults. They said that they needed an interesting array of activities. They said that they needed much greater access to adults. They want to spend time with adults who care about kids, who like kids, who respect them, who listen to them, and who have standards and expectations for their behaviors (Quinn, 1992, p. 6).

Schools must adopt a solution strategy that will improve the attitudes of gang members and assimilate them into the mainstream. Gangs ultimately damage the school by fostering insecurity in students, staff and parents. To ignore the problem invites disaster (National School Safety Center, 1988, p. 25).

Assimilation into the mainstream, therefore, implies much more than the narrowly defined mainstream of school life. It encompasses the values, rewards and limitations that define the life of our communities and our society. Criminal and violent youth gangs require community and school collaboration and response not only because of the necessity for collective force or power in numbers, but because young people who *do* avoid or disengage from bad gangs must have real options and opportunities for becoming accepted, assimilated members of the community. The responsibility for fostering and developing the belief that acceptance and assimilation are desirable and feasible for everyone, gang members and outstanding members of the community alike, lies with the entire community and requires collaborative efforts.

Chapter 6 discusses gangs in the Austin, Texas community as an introduction to the analysis of successful gang prevention and intervention efforts in other communities (Chapter 7) and as a framework for recommending essential components of a Communities In Schools gang prevention model (Chapter 8).

Chapter 6: Gangs in the Austin Community

Although gangs have been of increasing concern around the state for many years, there was no systematic study of gangs in Texas cities prior to 1991. In the absence of such a study, the gang problem in Texas, though real and pressing, remained fuzzy for those charged with controlling and it (Morales and Coggins, 1992, p. 41). In December 1991, Texas Attorney General Dan Morales called together educators and officials from criminal justice, human service and youth agencies across state to discuss gang violence. The 1991 survey of eight major Texas cities conducted by the Texas Attorney General's Office in part prompted the meeting. This survey found over 700 gangs with some 13,000 gang members in those eight cities alone (Office of the Attorney General, June 1991, p. 12). In Austin, approximately 92 gangs, including 3000 hard-core members and 7000 associated or "wanna-be" individuals, have been identified by the Austin Police Department with the help of other local and county criminal justice agencies (Gil and Martinez, Interview, April 20, 1992). These 10,000

individuals in our community cannot, and should not, all be locked up. These young people are part of our community; they are our children and our future.

The simple fact that there has never been a formal, legal study of the gang phenomenon in Austin or the state should not be viewed as a roadblock to “solving” gang problems. Statistics and definitions are informative and may help to galvanize community efforts by demonstrating the scope of a particular problem, but numbers do little to convey the culture or dynamics of gangs and their relationships within a particular community. Clearly, the members of any given community who live with the gangs and the consequences of their actions are the people often most qualified and capable of really defining a community's gang problem. This is as true in Austin, Texas, as it is elsewhere.

There have always been gangs of some sort in Austin, but it was not until the mid-nineteen-eighties that the community began seeing more criminal and violent youth gangs like the ones that exist today. These youth gangs were primarily territorial, or turf, gangs who began acting and dressing the part of street gangs typical of Los Angeles and New York City. Other typical activities began to emerge,

such as the use of hand signs and the increase of graffiti. When a neighborhood or a city is marked with a gang's graffiti indicating territorial dominance, the entire community and its inhabitants become targets for violence which is often indiscriminate, and may claim innocent victims (California Department of Education, n.d., p.7).

Violence associated with gang activity in Austin during the mid-nineteen-eighties consisted almost entirely of gang-on-gang assaults. Drive-by shootings began to occur in areas of the city which were considered turf areas by rival gangs, for example, near Metz Park in south Austin. At this stage, the City of Austin did not take any official notice or make any official recognition of these activities, nor was any coordinated action taken by the city. The city, it appeared to many community leaders, was not bothered, seemingly because the gang violence resulted from gang members fighting other gang members (Hipolito, interview, January 31, 1992). The lack of official recognition and response by the Austin city officials seemed to say that the city's attitude was one of just letting the gangs get rid of each other.

There was a steady progression of gang violence and membership, however. The acts got more violent and the weapons more dangerous and deadly. Many illegal aliens

were the victims of gang murders and assaults. But it was the shooting at Fifth Street and Congress Avenue, in the middle of downtown Austin, in April 1990 that really sounded the alarm for the community and city leadership. The victimization of innocent bystanders got people to start paying attention. Cable News Network (CNN) even covered the shooting, giving Austin national exposure as a city with a gang problem. From that point on, people started to use the word gang in policy discussions and seriously to advocate the commitment of public resources to solving the gang problem.

The Austin Police Department (APD) adopted a policy of zero tolerance toward gangs and has stepped up efforts to identify gang members and arrest gang criminals. APD has an excellent reputation in the community, particularly as a result of the educational and individual efforts of gang liaison officers Robert Martinez and Mark Gil. Their one-on-one rapport with young people and their educational visits to area schools have been key to the local prevention and intervention efforts. Officers Gil and Martinez have been national leaders in the area of public awareness. They were the first to produce an anti-gang public service announcement for television; they have designed and

produced posters which speak to the realities of criminal gang life; they have recorded their own rap song with an anti-gang message that focuses on positive life choices. Recent news articles revealing the significant decrease in criminal gang activity have reinforced the police department's determination and galvanized community support for their efforts.

Statistical data, good or bad, does not change the fact that gangs have literally taken over many Austin neighborhoods, however, the fear of shootings and random violence have forced many Austin residents to change drastically their lifestyles and daily life routines. Activities are restricted to daylight hours, and many families have moved their living rooms to the backs of their houses for fear of drive-by shooting attacks. This gang-related assault on area neighborhoods is in part responsible for the new community policing strategy. Community policing is not a new idea, but really a revival of traditional policing where officers "walk a beat" and get to know the community, the people, the day-to-day life and the activities of their assigned area. The turn to community policing requires training and schooling, because many officers in the Austin Police Department are young and are not natives of the

Austin area, but transfers from other places. This means that these officers must first become accepted members of the community to develop trusting relationships with the people of that community.

The City Council has made youth a priority issue for funding, as well as numerous other community efforts aimed at youth such as recreation programs and mentoring programs. It is fair to say that Austin has made great strides toward developing solutions to a whole range of community youth issues. Nevertheless, a lot remains to be done, especially in the schools, where dedicated individuals are most often cited as the only real gang prevention and intervention that is going on. This is changing though, as groups like CIS and others look at "gang-proofing" youngsters and as more resources become available through federal and private funding sources to address gang problems among our youth.

Chapter 7: How Other Communities are Making the Difference

One of the best strategies for developing a local gang prevention initiative is to examine what other schools and communities have already done. The following program initiatives in gang prevention represent a variety of approaches which rely on different strategies, from inside and outside the school site. All speak to the need for comprehensive, communitywide efforts to ensure the positive development of young people in all kinds of communities. The following descriptions and analyses of what other communities are doing to turn young people away from criminal and violent youth gangs represent the best available knowledge from research and practice to determine the essential components of a model gang prevention program for Communities In Schools.

THE WAVE EXPERIENCE

WAVE Inc., which is an acronym for Work, Achievement, Values and Education, is a comprehensive and flexible program designed to help young people succeed in the classroom, the community and the workplace. WAVE seeks to develop dignity, self-sufficiency and the desire to achieve. Although the program was originally designed as a dropout prevention program, and many schools use it toward this end, others are using it as a school-to-work transition initiative, a gang prevention and intervention tool, or in alternative education settings.

WAVE, Inc., was founded as a private, nonprofit organization, named 70001 Ltd., in 1969 with a grant from the Thom McAn Shoe Company to develop a program for out-of-school youth. The program's name came from the accounting code for Thom McAn funds, and it just stuck. The program assisted disadvantaged youth in improving educational and social skills and preparing them for the world of work. A national program evolved from the initial effort. As a result, thousands of young people were encouraged to either return to high school or obtain a GED.

Clearly, the focus of early WAVE programs was on out-of-school youth. Over the past few years, however, schools have requested WAVE curriculum and training in developing programs for youth still in school who are at risk of dropping out. Since 1988, approximately 125 WAVE In Schools programs have been established. Currently in San Antonio, two WAVE programs are in the process of being set up, one at McCollum High School in Harlandale and another at Edgewood High School in the Edgewood School District. The 70001 Center of San Antonio is coordinating these efforts and also piloting a WAVE program on a middle school campus.

The initial success of WAVE In Schools has been documented through an independent evaluation conducted by the Institute for Educational Leadership in 1991. More importantly, contacts I have had with WAVE personnel and students have reflected a strong and positive commitment to the program and a belief in what can be achieved.

The Passkey WAVE program, which serves a tri-city area of Washington, is an excellent example of how a WAVE program can successfully influence the very challenged lives of young people, including those involved in gang activity. For example, Rene Matson, the program's director, has

provided me with insight into the specific aspects of the Passkey WAVE program which speak to the needs of gang members and so-called "wanna-bes" like Temo Rivera. Temo is a 16-year-old high school student from Pasco, Washington. He was one of four aspiring youth from around the country elected by their peers in May 1991 to serve as a member of WAVE, Inc.'s Board of Directors. The National Leadership Team, comprised of these four young people, travels around the country to speak out in support of youth-at-risk issues. Temo has come a long way from the time he had been classified by school counselors as at-risk of dropping out and he was failing three of his classes. "I've been through some bad experiences. I was in a gang and constantly got into fights. I got suspended from school," explained Temo. But since the opportunity to join WAVE, Temo has put his old life behind him and is performing much better in and out of the classroom.

How does the WAVE program create the potential to get through to young people like Temo? What does it take to help redirect the energy and ambitions of young people who are in trouble in and out of school? Three major components of the WAVE experience address the challenges

facing gang members and wanna-bes, the intrinsic needs for acceptance, recognition and belonging.

One important aspect of the program's ability to reach at-risk students is the perception, or attitude, that is created about the program. From the student's point of view, participation in WAVE In Schools is presented and supported as self-selective and exclusive. In other words, a WAVE class or program is not a dumping ground for all at-risk students or trouble-makers. Continued participation is contingent upon meeting specific performance and behavior standards. Students who do not abide by high standards or do not take it seriously are not retained. From the educator's standpoint, students should want to participate because the program offers a chance for success, it is relevant to their needs and it is a socially acceptable thing to do.

Second, the Leadership Association is an important mechanism for fulfilling the needs of affiliation. The Leadership Association is a national organization for students in WAVE programs that contributes to student growth through personal skills development, recognition, community service and leadership activities. Members of this club, or extracurricular activity, are called Associates

and participate in organized activities. The Leadership Association selects its own representatives, and the youth themselves must plan and implement the calendar of events required for a fully functioning chapter. The Association may choose to participate in traditional school activities and organizations, or seek out other opportunities in the community such as civic activities, guest speakers, and career projects. The opportunities to plan and execute activities foster student ownership and involvement. In addition, community activities usually garner support for the program, making students feel more involved, responsible and attached to their community.

Leadership Enhancement Training Seminars, a third component of the WAVE program, strengthens the group and individual identities of WAVE students. The seminars are informal learning experiences which take place outside the school setting. Like a retreat, the two-day seminars involve individual and group activities. The activities focus on learning the characteristics of an effective leader, becoming a leader in one's own life, communication skills and interpersonal relationships. All learning in this setting is reinforced by the fact that the participants feel they are part of an exclusive group on a special trip.

The impressive accomplishments of several WAVE students seem to demonstrate the potential of WAVE In Schools as a viable agent for change and success. The program's success in effecting positive changes in attitudes, behaviors and academic achievement for the majority of students in WAVE is instrumental in the program's ability to be a tool for gang prevention in the schools.

THE CITY, INC.

The City, Inc. operates out of two locations in the inner-city of Minneapolis. Each of the neighborhoods where The City, Inc. is located is a very distressed area experiencing the social and economic hardships of poverty, racial diversity, substandard housing, crime, drug trafficking, abuse and gang activity and focuses its programs and efforts on the people of these communities. The City, Inc. runs The City School, alternative high schools for dropouts and at-risk referrals from the public schools, and a variety of other healing, shelter, growth and advocacy programs (The City, Inc. 1991, pp. 1,12).

The City, Inc. was started in 1967 by a small group of parents who wanted to provide programs for their troubled teenagers involved with the judicial system. Since that time, The City, Inc. has expanded and combined services to bring a variety of educational, social and counseling services to the challenged youth of Minneapolis. In addition to the students attending the alternative schools, hundreds of young people drop into the youth centers for employment counseling,

survival skills, personal counseling, day care and parenting classes and summer recreation leagues.

The City Inc., has an advocacy program for young people involved with the juvenile justice system. The Project, as it is known, advocates for inner-city youths and families by thoroughly assessing each individual situation and developing a plan for preventing involvement and re-involvement in criminal activity. In addition to helping youths get a fair shake in the legal system, The City, Inc. has a policy of facing gang issues head-on. At-Risk Youth Services (ARYS) is a community wide program that reaches out to high-risk and gang-involved youths and their families by developing caring relationships with them. Efforts are focused on linking them to longer term services relevant to educational, social and spiritual needs. ARYS also works to raise public awareness of gang issues, mediate potential conflicts, prevent gang-related disorders, and reduce negative gang-related behavior.

COMMUNITY RECLAMATION PROJECT

The Community Reclamation Project (CRP) of Lomita, California was funded through a Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors discretionary grant in 1990 to develop a gang and drug prevention program to be used as a model for replication countywide, statewide and nationwide (Community Reclamation Project, 1990, p.11). The project began by assessing existing community resources and bringing the various groups together, galvanizing the community to work together to “rise above gangs and drugs.” The project is assisting public schools with anti-gang and anti-drug educational materials and methods. Another important function of CRP is to communicate with parents and business people, keeping them educated and informed of the latest gang activities and local trademarks. CRP has produced an informative and catchy brochure which educates adults about the culture, slang, dress and behavior of gangs.

The strategy for offsetting the violent and criminal gang presence has included helping to coordinate existing

recreation and intervention programs and supporting the creation of new alternatives through recreation, tutoring and career development activities. The Rites of Passage is one such alternative program. It is a mentor-based program which teaches skills and provides experiences related to adult responsibility. CRP staff serve as trainers for community and school mentors in the Rites of Passage program.

CRP has become an active and visible part of the community. Sponsorship of highly visible events, including community clean-ups and parades, has emphasized the impact and influence of CRP in the community. Groups such as Mothers Against Gangs have been able to organize and join forces with like-minded groups, law enforcement personnel and other concerned adults to make the mission of CRP clear to everyone. With private support, CRP has been able to continue its work beyond the time limitations of the original grant.

RINCON VALLEY JR. HIGH SCHOOL

Rincon Valley Jr. High School is located in Santa Rosa, California, a city of about 100,000 people one hour north of San Francisco. Rincon Valley Jr. High serves 800 seventh through ninth graders. As in many other suburban communities around the country, circumstances unfolded in February 1990 which alerted the community to the possibility that several students were actively involved in gangs. The school's initial response centered around the reevaluation of the existing policies of their "school climate plan." Incidents and complaints about crime and graffiti were clearly on the rise, both in and out of the school setting. The school administrators involved in the initial strategy sessions recognized that there was a generally accepted public perception in Santa Rosa that gangs were strictly an inner-city phenomenon which attracted only youths from low socioeconomic backgrounds who suffer from boredom and a sense of alienation (Nielsen, 1990, pp. 2-4).

At about the same time that school personnel were beginning to formulate a response to gang issues on the

junior high school campus, the Santa Rosa City Council officially recognized that there was indeed a gang problem. Two full-time police liaison officers were hired to work in the junior high and high schools to educate the students on the dangers of gang involvement and publicize their enforcement efforts. More signs of gang activity on the junior high campus became noticeable. There were several incidents of vicious fighting between girls, most of whom were displaying matching tattoos and jackets with insignias that identified their group as a "posse."

As a result, regular weekly meetings were planned by the junior high administrative team to discuss the problems. A two-fold strategy was adopted. The first element was a comprehensive plan that focused on ensuring a safe school campus; enforcing consistent and uniform schoolwide discipline, including a system of redress for the students; and individual intervention. As one school administrator explained, "there is never enough care that can be given to the ramifications of school policy and the effects of decisions on the student body, staff, parents, and the community, especially when these decisions involve issues which are interwoven into the student culture" (Nielsen, n.d., p. 19). The school personnel of Rincon Valley Junior High School felt

strongly that proper individual intervention depended strongly on the accurate identification a student's "status" in relation to a gang, whether he or she were a full-fledged member, a relatively uninvolved associate, a wanna-be or simply an individual emulating gang behavior to gain attention and acceptance.

The amount of parental involvement in the school plan was significant and appeared to be a factor in the case of students who successfully disengaged from the negative gang behavior. A Student-Parent-Teacher Club was formed to encourage open communication and also to identify outsiders on the school campus and remove any graffiti.

One of the apparent strengths of the gang intervention strategy of the Rincon Valley Junior High School was the ability of the school personnel to step out and take the lead in dealing with the local gang situations. Rather than waiting for other sectors of the community to approach the gang issue, the local educators acted on the belief that educators are often in the best position to see and address emerging gang behavior.

GRANADA HILLS HIGH SCHOOL

Granada Hills High School is located in the suburban northern section of the San Fernando Valley and serves a population of 2400 students. Over the past several years, Granada Hills High School made the establishment of the school campus as a neutral territory the number one policy priority. The Granada Safe Campus program evolved with an emphasis on discipline standards, dress codes, counseling, and tutoring as the major components of the program (Rattay and Lewis, 1990, p. 17).

The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and local police officers have been an integral part of the campus program. The LAPD gang task force was invited to address the faculty of Granada Hills High School. The identification and prosecution of gang members carried out by the local police force is shared with the school faculty on a regular basis. Photographing and immediate removal of all graffiti found on the school campus also became school policy as part of the safe school program.

Intervention with individual gang members at Granada Hills High School is accomplished through individual interaction. Under this approach, an adult will have daily contact with a student in order to develop a trusting relationship and be able to act as a liaison between the student and the school system. Credibility is essential to the success of that relationship, and help in obtaining a job is a good way of gaining the necessary credibility. To this end, Granada Hills High School formed a resource room which provides a space and place for the students to come and talk with each other and with adults. Information on issues related to the criminal justice system, job openings, law enforcement and counseling is also available to students. The students' role in designing and maintaining the area has contributed greatly to the success of the effort to deal with identified gang members and wanna-bes on a one-to-one basis.

Chapter 8: Essential Components of a CIS Gang Prevention Model

The overview of gang prevention efforts from around the country in Chapter 7 provides a framework for focusing on the essential components of a model approach to gang prevention appropriate for Communities In Schools of Texas. While there is no single prescription for success, the schools, with the help of the community, law enforcement, and business sectors, can work together to ensure that all students develop a meaningful and positive sense of affiliation and identity which contribute to self-respect and a successful future.

So far, there are few proven solutions to the problems presented by the growth of gangs in the United States or Texas. The general law enforcement atmosphere is that of containment. In some areas, law enforcement agencies cannot begin to match the weapons and manpower of the street gangs. The strategies employed by Communities In Schools must reach beyond the outward and superficial symptoms of criminal and violent youth gangs, beyond the

notion of containment or eradication, and to address the underlying values and relationships that create a broad-based community of shared values.

The first step for all local Communities In Schools programs is to create a regular forum for openly discussing and determining the issues and acceptable approaches to dealing with problematic gang activity in the community. Successful local law enforcement relies on the sharing of information -- incidents, successes, failures and trends -- between the various criminal justice departments. A community strategy for gang prevention must involve the input of people from all parts of the community who represent a variety of interests and perspectives on gang issues. Regular interaction between individuals focused on the root causes and broad implications of gang violence and delinquency creates the ability not only to learn from others, but also to revisit and continually adjust the strategies as changing needs and crises warrant. Most importantly, an open and public community forum reinforces the democratic principles of compromise and consent which characterize the public policies and moral community for which we strive. Clearly, an essential component is a committed CIS leader and liaison who will

continually work to ensure that Communities In Schools is acting on behalf of the local community it purports to represent in the schools.

In addition to community input, continual interaction between school personnel and CIS staff is crucial to the effectiveness of gang prevention efforts. Each campus should be responsible for compiling and maintaining a detailed and ongoing list of gang incidents and trends its campus. This information does not need to be stored in a formal database, but gang-related behaviors, clothing preferences, slang, nicknames, signals and graffiti should be closely monitored by school and CIS personnel and all this information should be shared within the school and with the community of parents and citizens outside the school setting.

The fundamental basis of the Communities In Schools efforts to prevent young people from choosing the detached and dangerous path of gangs is the establishment of ongoing and caring relationships between at-risk youth, interested adults, and peers who are doing well in school. Communities In Schools staff are not solely responsible for this necessary support, but should be actively involved in identifying adults and peers who can form part of the support network for each CIS student. These can be relationships which

already exist with a teacher or counselor, or which are initiated in the context of the CIS program. Adults involved in this function must understand that their roles go beyond traditional mentoring and participation in social activities. A challenged youth who is having difficulty in school and is in trouble with gangs needs more than a role model. Each youth needs an advocate, an intermediary between that young person and the educational and economic systems, who can represent the young person's interests with respect and legitimacy. Young people also need peers, other young people who perform the role of a sister or brother in the school; who know the school culture, the cliques, what's in and what's out; who can provide emotional support and a school identity. This recommendation is based on the finding that siblings develop relationships which fulfill the same needs as a gang: camaraderie, friendship, and support.

A second essential component of gang prevention for CIS is a consistent and ongoing network of relationships between young people and adults. While it is impossible to guarantee a positive and successful relationship between people, even when dedicated professionals are involved, CIS can be a catalyst for success by offering guidance,

suggestions and support for outside adults and incentives for student initiated activities.

Activities which provide youths with things to do other than "hang out" together are important. But it is equally important to get beyond the belief that recreational programs are enough to counter the allure of gangs. The relationship between gangs and their communities makes it very easy to develop an uneasy alliance based on the underlying mutual dependence of the two sides. Eight Texas cities have model parks and recreation programs which offer alternatives to gang activity (Office of the Attorney General, September 1991, p. 4), and The City, Inc. of Minneapolis has developed recreational programs targeted for gang members. The team experience and identity are reinforced through regular competition and team uniforms, but they can just as easily be coopted and used by gang members, not as a substitute, but as part of the whole gang identity.

The kinds of activities which must be pursued involve getting kids to parts of the community where they have never been and opening up the horizon of career opportunities not only through employer visits, but through opportunities for volunteer experiences and paying jobs.

A sense of connectedness to the world of work and potential for success must be fostered through efforts which focus on school-to-work and life transition issues. With gang members, however, simply teaching basic skills or telling them why school is important is not enough. In fact, it is usually more discouraging and alienating. School must be made to seem "worth it" on a very personal and individual level. This must be communicated through experiences with adult professionals and in a variety of settings. WAVE has produced impressive students who have overcome deep feelings of purposelessness, inferiority and inability and gone on to successful graduation and continuing achievement.

Positive group affiliation through an in-school student organization which focuses on leadership capabilities, the ability to plan, organize and implement activities which make a difference in the school and the community is a vehicle for allowing young people to forge their own community identity. The WAVE In Schools Leadership Association has proven this to be a very successful approach for dealing with gang members. Certainly, a third essential component of the CIS model, after establishing a community liaison and forum, and a network of relationships with peers

and adults, is student-led, community-based activities and opportunities for participants to achieve mainstream success and realize a connection between their own interests and problems and the responsibilities and benefits of their community.

The essential components of gang prevention which I have suggested for Communities In Schools is by no means a rigid structure of clearly defined events and programs, but an invitation to recreate, redefine and forge a more meaningful application of the notion of communities' roles in their schools. A Communities In Schools gang prevention program must continually expand and revisit not only the meaning and composition of the community of interests that impacts its schools, but the ways in which the community of diverse resources and services responds to the individual needs of young people who are choosing a life of certain disenfranchisement and detachment from the shared values that underpin a safe and democratic society.

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