



A Union of Professionals

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A Professional Development Program

Gang Assessment Tool

Answer the questions below. For every “yes,” give your school the number of points indicated in the parentheses. When you are finished, total up your score and compare it with the key at the bottom.

1. Do you have graffiti on or near your campus? ____ (5)
2. Do you have crossed-out graffiti on or near your campus? ____ (10)
3. Do your students wear colors, jewelry, clothing, flash hand signals, or display other behavior that may be gang related? ____ (10)
4. Are drugs available near your school? ____ (5)
5. Has there been a significant increase in the number of physical confrontations or stare downs within the past 12 months in or around your school? ____ (5)
6. Is there an increasing presence of weapons in your community? ____ (10)
7. Do your students use beepers, pagers, or cellular phones? ____ (10)
8. Have you had a drive-by shooting at or around your school? ____ (15)
9. Have you had a “show-by” display of weapons at or around your school? ____ (10)
10. Is the truancy rate at your school increasing? ____ (5)
11. Are there increasing numbers of racial incidents occurring in your community or school? ____ (5)
12. Is there a history of gangs in your community? ____ (10)
13. Is there an increasing presence of informal social groups with unusual names, e.g., Woodland Heights Posse, Rip Off and Rule, Females Simply Chillin’, or Kappa Phi Nasty? ____ (15)

Score:

- 0-15 points indicate no significant gang problem; however a prevention strategy may be wise if there are gang problems in nearby cities or towns.
- 20-40 points indicate an emerging gang problem. A prevention strategy should be developed.
- 45-60 points indicate a significant gang problem. An intervention strategy should be developed.
- 65 points or higher indicate an acute gang problem that requires urgent attention and intervention.

Source: National School Safety Center, 1992. Cited in Walker et al., 1995, p. 375.

Developing Consequences for Problem Behavior

The functions of a continuum of negative consequences:

- Minimize the reward students experience for antisocial behavior.
- Minimize the extent to which antisocial behavior interrupts active instruction.
- Increase the predictability and consistency of consequences for problem behavior. Students, faculty, and administrators all know what is expected, and what will happen if antisocial behavior occurs.
- Negative consequences should be designed to (1) prevent rewards for problem behavior, (2) allow the day-to-day functions of the school to continue, and (3) deliver a clear message to the student and his/her family that the problem behavior was unacceptable.
- Negative consequences should not be expected to change the behavior pattern of the student. Only when negative consequences are combined with active instruction and support should durable change in student behavior be expected.

Define unacceptable behaviors:

- Keep definitions simple, clear and operational.
- Use a small number of mutually exclusive definitions. If a problem behavior fits more than one definition, change the definitions or drop one of the problem behavior categories.
- The set of definitions needs to be comprehensive. Any problem behavior needs to be represented by a category and definition.

Consequences for unacceptable behaviors:

- All faculty members should be clear on which problem behaviors are managed in the classroom versus which problem behaviors result in an office discipline referral.
- Consequences should be defined that result in minimal interruption of instruction.
- Establish a continuum of consequences that match the level or intensity of the problem behavior.
- There should be consistency across faculty and administration when using negative consequences.
- Consequences for antisocial behavior should protect the safety of students and adults.

Fact Sheet on Gang Characteristics, Types, and Activities

- ◇ Gangs have been with us since the beginning of organized society. The Book of Proverbs contains descriptions of elders being victimized by youth groups.
- ◇ Gang proliferation and growth are associated with a breakdown of the family; increased urbanization; the advent of crack-cocaine; tax limitation measures that eliminate youth programs; reduction of meaningful jobs for youths and young adults; and racial discrimination, alienation, and conflict.
- ◇ Gang members are three times more likely to be violent than nongang members.
- ◇ Gang violence is a community problem that requires a multi-agency, community-based solution. It is not exclusively a police or school problem.
- ◇ Incarceration and suppression strategies alone will never solve the U.S. gang problem; community organization, outreach programs, and vocational training programs are also required to effectively treat and prevent gang problems.
- ◇ Much of gang activity is driven by control issues (of members, neighborhoods, and turf) and by manipulation of others' fear. Gangs capitalize on the natural fears community members have of them.
- ◇ In the past decade, gang members have murdered 11,000 individuals and seriously injured 15,000 others.
- ◇ Gangs are highly cohesive and communicate through marking, graffiti, dress, language (verbal and nonverbal), tattoos, hand signs, and behavioral codes or rules.
- ◇ 83 percent of the largest U.S. cities (n=79) report having a gang crisis.
- ◇ Male gang members outnumber female gang members by 20 to 1; however, female gangs are a fast-growing problem.
- ◇ There are two major types of gangs: traditional (neighborhood based) and nontraditional (profit oriented and organized around drug dealing, car theft, and burglary).

- ◇ Ethnic orientation, among other factors, can be an organizer for gang development and identification and often leads to gang-related, racial violence.
- ◇ Schools are heavy recruiting sites for new gang members. Gangs are often the leading competitors with communities for the hearts and minds of young people. Peer pressures to join gangs can be extremely powerful and difficult to resist.
- ◇ Incentives for gang membership include: recognition, peer status, social support, shared values, family tradition or history, protection, real and perceived opportunity.
- ◇ In the past two decades, the U.S. gang problem has worsened significantly: (1) instruments of war (Uzis, AK-47's) are now being used by gangs; (2) victims are often shot multiple times with powerful, automatic weapons; (3) many gang members are totally desensitized to violence and care nothing for their victims.
- ◇ Gang members generally range from 12 to 40 years of age. The length of gang membership is increasing, with many members maintaining their gang membership well into their thirties.
- ◇ Hate crimes committed by loosely affiliated youth groups and gangs are increasing rapidly in our society.
- ◇ Gang members have a low rate of participation in school activities. Rarely do gang members bond or identify with a positive significant adult at school.
- ◇ Individual gang members must see a window of opportunity to change, and they must be supported in that decision. Youth need alternatives to gang membership that are attractive and accessible.

Source: Walker et al., 1995, *Antisocial Behavior Practices in School: Best Practices*, pp. 376-377.)

Preventing and Intervening in Gang Problems

Recommendations for Schools in Preventing and Intervening in Gang Problems

- ◇ Gang-prevention efforts must begin as early as possible in a child's school career—some kindergartners and first graders show clear signs of emerging gang involvement. Early intervention is more likely to divert children from later gang involvement.
- ◇ The social cohesion of neighborhoods and communities must be improved if gangs are to be controlled. Schools are important partners with families, police, churches, courts, corrections, and social service agencies in working toward this goal.
- ◇ A comprehensive, interagency system for sharing records and information must be developed that will allow early intervention and guide prevention efforts to effectively address gang problems.
- ◇ Any successful gang prevention-intervention strategy must have three components:
 - ◇ A strong law enforcement component that allows detection and detention of chronic gang members
 - ◇ An intervention component that controls gang activity on school campuses and allows gang members to escape gang involvement
 - ◇ A prevention program to positively influence vulnerable children and youths who are on the cusp of gang activity
- ◇ Students vulnerable to recruitment by gangs should be exposed to:
 - ◇ Adult and peer monitoring
 - ◇ Academic tutoring and added support as needed
 - ◇ Strategies to fully engage them in the schooling process including participation in school activities
 - ◇ Social skills training geared toward recruiting and maintaining friendships

- ◇ Effective home-school communication and collaboration
- ◇ Sensitivity, awareness, tolerance, acceptance, and respect for diversity must be taught. Ensure that these values are reflected in school on a daily basis.
- ◇ The teaching of morals, values, and socially responsible decision making should be reinstated in school curriculum.
- ◇ After-school recreation and leisure programs should be available to students and their families.
- ◇ Sports programs should be maintained whenever possible.
- ◇ At-risk students should have access to computers, labs, and instructors.
- ◇ School service clubs should be strengthened and made broadly accessible.
- ◇ A reasonable and enforceable dress code should be developed.
- ◇ A false sense of security that leads to the denial of the subtle signs of emerging gang activity should be avoided.
- ◇ Strong, positive role models must be available at school.
- ◇ Transferring gang members between schools should be carefully considered; as such transfers may help spread gang activity.
- ◇ Consider developing a gang prevention policy on the school campus in collaboration with law enforcement officials and other agencies as appropriate. Implement a gang-prevention curriculum as part of this effort.
- ◇ All graffiti should be confronted and immediately removed on school buildings. Gang-related graffiti found on students' should be confiscated. Building graffiti should be removed within 12 hours.

- ◇ A comprehensive set of gang prevention/intervention school strategies should include:
 - ◇ Clear behavioral expectations
 - ◇ Visible staff
 - ◇ Parent involvement
 - ◇ In-service training
 - ◇ Graffiti removal
 - ◇ Cooperation with law enforcement
 - ◇ Existence of a gang prevention plan
 - ◇ Community involvement and coordination

Source: Walker et al., 1995, pp. 378-379. Also see Gaustad, 1990; Goldstein and Huff, 1993; Quinn and Mathur, 1995; Stover, 1987; Thompson & Jason, 1988.