

NORRISTOWN AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Gang Prevention Initiative

NASD- 2008 Grant Site

- Suburban Philadelphia/Montgomery County
- Distinct Communities- Urban & Suburban (Norristown/E & W Norriton)

Demographics

- 7,000 Students K-12
- 47% African-American 26% Caucasian 23% Latino 4% Other
- Largely Segregated Neighborhoods & Little Sense of 'Community'
- Three Police Departments

Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Context

Perception vs. Reality

Perceptions- Political Considerations

- Norristown PD- Denial of 'gang' presence despite sporadic episodes
- E & W Norriton- recognition of gang-related indicators in the townships
- Agreement that focus needed to center on PREVENTIVE STRATEGIES

Realities- NASD & Communities

- ✓ Symptomatic- 'Wannabe' element in middle school settings- glorification of 'Gangbanger' mentality/peer group bonding & associations
- ✓ NAHS- Recognition by school staff & School Resource Officer of some level of gang identification
- ✓ Community Presence- 'Chain Street' (a.k.a. 'Bang Bang') 'L Block'
- ✓ Periodic organized scuffles, boxcutter incident, beating, fatal shooting
- ✓ Gang affiliations by former MC Correc. Facility inmates reported by Adult Probation Officers- Bloods, Crips, Surenos 13, Latin Kings
- ✓ Apparent 'recruitment' of younger youth in neighborhoods through intimidation & threats
- ✓ Latino community- marginalized in communities and school settings
- ✓ School & Community- Tagging & graffiti, wearing of colors & paraphernalia

Response

- ❖ Middle and High School Settings
 - Assignment of **School Resource Officers**
 - Advisor/Mentor/Role Model/Instructor/Law Enforcement Capacities
 - Possess 'It' factor in ability to engage students
 - Promote **alternative activities**- **after-school hoop**
"Science On Patrol"
 - Directly address **gang tagging** & **glorification of 'thug' mentality**
- ❖ **Quarterly Violence Prevention Committee- not Task Force**
 - Participants- school district administrators, PD supervisors & SROs, adult & juvenile POs, county detectives, social service reps
 - Prevention Coordinator from U.S. Attorney's regional office (anti-gang initiatives along Lancaster/Allentown/Easton/NYC corridor)
 - Intent-** to share information, proactively address gang-related indicators, and develop viable preventive strategies
 - Progress- initiated in **January 2009**, two subsequent meetings

Challenges

- ✚ Address **Risk Factors** Impacting Communities
 - Poverty, Social Alienation** & Disaffection & **Inertia**
 - Lack of Constructive **Community-Based Alternatives** for Youth (PAL)
- ✚ Encourage **Community Organization Investment** in Gang Prevention Efforts
 - Communities That Care
 - NAACP Youth Council
 - ACLAMO
 - Weed & Seed

✚ **Political Will to Embrace Prevention as opposed to Responding to Tragic Events**