

December 3, 2006

Mr. Kelson Ettienne-Modeste
District Health Education Coach
960 Main Street
Hartford, CT, 06103

Dear Mr. Ettienne-Modeste:

We are students at Trinity College working on a public policy project for our child development class on gang involvement. Our specific goal was to find a way to minimize children's involvement in gangs in Hartford. As you know, gangs are a significant social problem. According to Knox (1998), there was an estimated 1.5 million gang members in the United States. This number will most likely continue to grow.

The high levels on poverty and unemployment in Hartford are significant contributing factors in gang involvement. After talking with experts in the Greater Hartford area, we have learned that there is a lack of awareness about gangs in schools where children at younger ages have become much more susceptible to joining gangs. We feel that these children have not been sufficiently educated to recognize the dangers of gang involvement. For these reasons, we have created an addition to the current 5th grade Hartford health curriculum to be implemented in elementary schools, aimed at teaching children about the dangers of gangs.

Enclosed, you will find four lesson plans and activities designed to equip students with the knowledge to understand the negative consequences of gang involvement. We hope you will consider including our lesson plans in your already established Hartford curriculum. We believe the specific aspects of these four lessons will help kids make positive and informed choices and choose not to join gangs.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any questions or concerns, or would like more copies, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

Katie McGuigan
Trinity College
#702250
katherine.mcguigan@trincoll.edu

Chardae Golding
Trinity College
#700201
Chardae.Golding@trincoll.edu

Gang Awareness and Prevention Curriculum

The curriculum will be put in place after unit 3, Social health: Family and Peer Relationships, in the 5th grade health curriculum used at all Hartford public schools. Each lesson will take up one hour across a month of the curriculum.

Overall Goal: To equip students with the knowledge to understand the negative consequences of gang involvement.

LESSON PLAN 1:WHAT ARE GANGS?

- A gang is a group of individuals who share a common identity and, in current usage, engage in illegal activities. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gangs>)

Learning Objective:

- Upon completing this lesson, students will be able to define the term gangs.
- They will also be able to distinguish the difference between gangs and other groups/clubs.

Materials:

- Pictures of groups, both positive and negative. i.e. boy scouts, KKK

Procedure for Teaching:

1. Present class with a question
2. Children should freely respond, as teacher records information chalkboard
3. Teacher should provide the correct definition or answer

Example:

- **Question:** Can anyone tell me the difference between a good group and a bad group?
- **Reply:** A good group is a group of kids, adults, or both who gather together to do positive things (such as the Girl Scouts or the Boy Scouts.) A bad group is a group that gets together to do bad things such as break the law or hurt people. An example would be a group of kids who get together and spray paint the neighbor's garage, or a group that bullies other kids.

- **Question:** Can anyone tell me what a criminal gang is?
- **Reply:** A criminal gang is a group of three or more people that may all use the same symbol, wear the same colored clothing, and who get together on a regular basis to break the law and do bad things. A criminal gang is a bad group who does bad things. A gang is not a family. When kids get into gangs, they get into trouble. Many bad things can happen to gang members. Some members get hurt, beat up, arrested and sent to jail, or even worse, killed. Gangs are responsible for a lot of crime, violence, and destruction.

Activity:

1. Break students into small groups
2. Give each group a set of pictures
3. They should determine which picture fits into a “good” group or “bad” group
4. Class comes together to discuss their choices

Source: http://www.ag.state.oh.us/citizen/pubs/education/Grade_Level_3.pdf

Assessment:

- Teacher will walk around while groups discuss and see if they understand the difference between groups, based on prior discussion

LESSON PLAN 2: WHY DO CHILDREN JOIN GANGS? WHO IS AT RISK?

- Young people join gangs for a variety of reasons, some of which are the same reasons children join other pro-social groups such as 4-H and Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts.

Learning Objective:

- Students will be able to identify reasons for gang involvement.
- Students will be able to express informed judgments about peer pressure

Concepts to Convey:

Some of the reasons for joining a gang may include:

- A search for love, structure, and discipline
- A sense of belonging and commitment
- The need for recognition and power
- Companionship, training, excitement, and activities
- A sense of self-worth and status
- A place of acceptance
- The need for physical safety and protection
- A family tradition

Risk Factors for Joining a Gang

- **Racism:** When young people encounter both personal and institutional racism (i.e., systematic denial of privileges), the risks are increased. When groups of people are denied access to power, privileges, and resources, they will often form their own anti-establishment group.
- **Poverty:** A sense of hopelessness can result from being unable to purchase wanted goods and services. Young people living in poverty may find it difficult to meet basic physical and psychological needs which can lead to a lack of self-worth and pride. One way to earn cash is to join a gang involved in the drug trade.
- **Lack of a support network:** Gang members often come from homes where

they feel alienated or neglected. They may turn to gangs when their needs for love are not being met at home. Risks increase when the community fails to provide sufficient youth programs or alternatives to violence.

- **Media influences:** Television, movies, radio, and music all have profound effects on youth development. Before youth have established their own value systems and are able to make moral judgments, the media promotes drugs, sex, and violence as an acceptable lifestyle.

Source: <http://www.focusas.com/Gangs.html>

Procedure for Teaching:

1. Teacher will ask questions below to class
2. Students will respond freely, while teacher writes down their responses on chalkboard
3. Teacher will then give correct answer below to question, while students take notes

Discussion:

- **Question:** Teacher will ask: Does anyone know what it means to *recruit*?
or

Does anyone know what the word *recruit* means?

The teacher will write down answers given by students.

- **Reply:** To recruit means to convince someone to join an activity or group. Recruitment can be done by talking someone into doing something or by threatening to hurt someone if they don't agree. Many bad groups try to recruit children to do bad things and/or break the law. Throughout this program, you will learn how to avoid this situation and what to do when you find yourself in such a situation. We will also discuss who you can go to for help, such as teachers, parents, police officers, etc.

Activity:

Recruitment Scenario:

1. Read the following scenario aloud to students, immediately following discussion:

Shawn and his little sister Monique are walking home from school one afternoon. As they are walking, Shawn and Monique are approached by a gang member named Big T and are asked to join his gang. Big T shows Shawn and Monique a pocket full of money he made by selling drugs for the older gang members. Big T tells Shawn and Monique that they can also make money by joining his gang.

Shawn and Monique know that gangs are bad and can lead to trouble so they tell Big T that they don't want to join his gang. Big T then tells Shawn and Monique that if they don't join his gang, they'll get hurt or beat up.

2. Discussion

- Ask students the following questions.
- Students will write down answers to the following five questions.

1. What should Shawn and Monique do?

Answer: Run away and get help.

2. Who should Shawn and Monique tell?

Answer: Parent/adult, police officer, teacher, pastor, or other adults they trust.

3. Why are gangs bad?

Answer: Because they hurt people; because they're involved in crime and violence.

4. What can happen to you when you're in a gang?

Answer: Prison/jail, violence, death.

5. What fun things can you do when you're not in a gang?

Answer: Sports, hobbies, anything positive that the students enjoy.

Source: http://www.ag.state.oh.us/citizen/pubs/education/Grade_Level_3.pdf

Assessment

- Teachers will collect and grade written assignment. Grade given based on how close to correct answer.

LESSON PLAN 3: LIFESTYLES OF GANG MEMBERS AND GANG ACTIVITIES:

Learning Objectives:

- Students will be aware of the negative outcomes of becoming a gang member.
- Students will recognize that gang members do not live a healthy life.

Materials:

- pictures of dead gang members, and members in jail
- projector

Procedure for Teaching:

1. Teacher will read and explain the following information, emphasizing words in bold.
2. Students will engage in open discussion with teacher

Concepts to Convey: Gang Culture

-Most commonly, the word "gang" refers to *street gangs* or sometimes "youth gangs", groups who take over territory or "**turf**" in a particular **city** and are often involved in "providing protection", often a thin cover for **extortion**, as the "protection" is usually from the gang itself, or in other **criminal** activity. Since roughly the **1970s**, **street gangs have been strongly connected with drug sales (especially crack cocaine)**. **Some commit burglaries, car theft, and armed robbery**. Most members retain their gang affiliations when sent to prison (see **prison gang**). Many gangs use **fronts** to demonstrate influence and gain revenue in a particular area.

-Entry into a gang often entails being "jumped in", where other members beat up the recruit in order to test his dedication. Sometimes the recruit may be given a crime to commit (robbery, rape, or murder) as another route of entry.

-In other situations, new gang recruits are canonized, meaning he or she has to fight with a current member, joining by: one, proving his/herself by being beaten up; or two, beating up their opponents.

-Often, the decision to join a gang is purely practical, where the danger of being unaffiliated, and thus unprotected, outweighs the risks of gang banging. Unfortunately, **this perpetuates a vicious cycle, only contributing to the violence and corruption of a neighborhood**. Other temptations such as obtaining money, drugs, power, and pride for the neighborhood are certainly also another sociological reason for such an affiliation.

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gang#Gang_activities

Assessment:

- Quiz based upon past three lessons.

Pictures of dead gang members:



LESSON PLAN 4: PREVENTION

Learning Objectives:

- Students will be able to differentiate the consequences between good and bad behavior.
- Students will see the benefits of leading law-abiding lifestyle.

Material:

- permission slips
- packed lunch
- notebook and pen/pencil

Procedure for Teaching:

1. Teacher will gather students together to exit school
2. Teacher will meet with contact in the court house
3. They will go on a tour with guide
4. After tour, a discussion will follow, led by teacher

Activity:

Field trip to juvenile court: talk with juvenile judge, bailiff, and/or juvenile probation officer. Victim witness advocates can help facilitate. *Topics to be addressed: Outline of criminal justice system, consequences of breaking the law, and the continuum of sanctions.*

Ask students the following questions:

1. Who makes the rules at home? Do you like all the rules at home?
2. Imagine if you get into trouble and break the law. You will have people like probation officers, judges, etc. making all the rules *for* you.
3. Do you get to make some decisions at home, like deciding what you will wear to school, or what kind of snack to eat?
4. What happens if you get involved with a criminal gang or bad group that breaks the law and/or hurts people?
5. When you get involved with gangs/bad groups engaging in criminal behavior, you will lose the ability to make decisions or choices for yourself.
6. If you get placed on probation, or put in jail, will you still have the ability to make decisions for yourself?
7. When on probation, the judge can tell you who you *can* and *cannot* be friends with.
8. Imagine not getting to decide what you will wear, what you will eat, or even when you will eat. Imagine having someone tell you when to shower. This is what happens in jail.

Source: www.ag.state.oh.us/citizen/pubs/education/Grade_Level_3.pdf

Assessment:

- Journal Entry: Write two paragraphs explaining why you would not join a gang, if approached by a member. Be sure to include specific references to past classes.

Background Information for the Instructor:

Disclaimer: The following information is a supplement to the curriculum, and is intended to provide factual background for the instructor.

Lesson 1:

It is possible that some children may come into contact with bad/criminal groups, while other children may never come into contact with such groups. Most kids, however, have been exposed to universal media influences that glamorize criminal or gang behavior. It is imperative that children learn the difference between good and bad groups and why it is important to associate with these positive groups.

A) Myths

Myth 1: Gangs are made up of only African Americans and Hispanics.

Fact: Gangs attract all races, genders, ethnic backgrounds, and socio-economic classes.

Fact: Interracially mixed gangs do exist.

Myth 2: Gangs are only found in inner-city areas.

Fact: Criminal gangs are found in rural, urban, and suburban areas.

Fact: After the conclusion of 22 Local Gang Prevention Summits hosted by the Ohio Attorney General's Office, the Anti Gang Unit found that nearly all 88 counties in Ohio have been affected by criminal gangs.

Myth 3: Females are not allowed to join gangs.

Fact: Females are increasingly becoming involved in gangs as associated members of male gangs and often carry the weapons and drugs.

Fact: Females are also known to form their own gangs.

Fact: Females are showing an increased amount of involvement in gang-related crimes, violent and otherwise. (*L.A. Style*, Leroy D. Baca at 66, May 2000).

Lesson 2:

Recruitment

Some students will have to deal with being asked to join or take part in criminal gangs or bad groups. Others may be asked or urged to take part in criminal activity. It is important for students to learn how to recognize recruitment tactics of criminal gangs and empower students with the idea that it is "OK" to say no. It is also important for students to know how to say no, as well as to have options if they feel they cannot say no.

Source: http://www.ag.state.oh.us/citizen/pubs/education/Grade_Level_3.pdf