UPDATE: Gang Activity in Schools
2013

Authorizing legislation: RCW 28A.300.490

Secondary Education and Student Support
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Executive Summary

Gangs have been in schools for decades. Understanding how they affect school safety is an important question: a gang could, for example, create such an atmosphere of fear in a school that education is impacted.

With that in mind, in 2007 the state Legislature required the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction to convene a task force to examine gangs and school safety. The task force was directed to outline methods for preventing new gangs, eliminating existing gangs, gathering intelligence and sharing information about gang activities. The task force also was directed to annually report its findings and recommendations to the education committees of the Legislature.

But because of a lack of state support, as well as changes in staffing and task force membership, the Gangs in Schools task force was not able to meet in 2013. As a result, the task force is carrying forward its recommendations from 2012 to 2013.; those recommendations can be found in the task force’s 2012 summary report.

This report summarized the progress that has been made since that report was submitted. The taskforces 2008 through 2011 reports can be found on the School Safety Center Gangs in Schools website at http://www.k12.wa.us/Safetycenter/Gangs/default.aspx.
Background

In 2007, the legislature passed Substitute Senate Bill (SSB) 5097, which required the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to convene a task force to examine how gangs are affecting school safety. The task force was directed to report its findings and recommendations to the education committees of the Legislature on an annual basis. The Gangs in Schools Task Force has submitted legislative recommendations for several years. Ultimately, the task force chose to focus on three primary areas of activity with direct impact on gang activity in schools: data, policy guidance and training.

Update Status

1. **Data:** Eight potential questions were identified for inclusion on the Healthy Youth Survey 2014 survey. The questions relate to youth gang affiliation and activity. Ultimately, one question was selected for inclusion in the updated 2014 survey.

   To date, there is no category for gang activity in federal or state reporting, nor is there a plan to add or include such reporting data. Throughout drafted materials such as those noted in No. 2 below, there is the recognition that gang affiliation *per se* is not a disciplinary offense. Rather, it is school-related disciplinary behaviors that are motivated by or the result of gang affiliation.

2. **Policy guidance:** The task force examined local, regional and national policies and guidance for dealing with gang activity in schools. The information was used to draft policy guidance that districts and communities might use. The guidance includes definitions and identification criteria for recognizing gang activity within a school setting.

   When finalized, the guidance can be used by districts to create their own, local gang activity in schools policies. It is expected that the policies would be accompanied by a detailed set of model procedures and training elements including, but not limited to, awareness, recognition, prevention, intervention and reengagement activities. Early identification of potential street-gang affiliation could lead to early interventions to reduce future negative behaviors. The guidance documents will be posted on the OSPI [Gangs in Schools](#) website.

3. **Training:** Since the previous report, there has been one training offered. On April 26, 2013, a basic gang identification training was provided by Randy Town, Criminal Justice Training Commission and ESD 105. The training was part of the School Administrative Assistants’ Conference in the Tri-Cities.

   A “Gangs in the Northwest” training will be offered by Detective Joe Gagliardi on December 4, 2013, at Cabela’s in Lacey.

4. **Meetings:** As noted above, the Task Force did not have any official meetings in 2013.
Conclusion and Next Steps

The Gangs in Schools Task Force has three recommendations to the legislature:

1. Provide funding to support the work of the task force to include:
   a. Membership from all corners of Washington (many former and potential task force members are not able to participate due to lack of funding to support travel);
   b. Staff costs related to administrative support; and
   c. The costs of time, materials and travel to provide adequate training opportunities across the state.

2. Provide funding for innovative, community-based programs and promising practices. The task force recommends that funding be allocated to support the work of promising, community-based efforts.

3. Provide a dedicated apportionment for transition/re-entry programs for adjudicated youth. As a component of its draft policy and procedural guidance, the task force recognizes the importance of wrap-around educational and reengagement services for students who are suspended or expelled for gang-related activity. The task force recommends funding such activity.
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