

Families In Schools  
Advancement Project  
Gang Activity Reduction Strategy (GARS)  
Phase III

December 1, 2006

The proposed City Entity and Regional Entity Charts identify a Neighborhood Task Force/Entity structure that effectively will allow schools within a high school feeder pattern to organize (as some already have) into a “school/neighborhood safety” collaborative. Members of this collaborative would include representatives of the high school, its feeder middle and elementary schools in addition to key civic, business, and law enforcement representatives. These collaboratives could be sub-units of larger school cluster/community-based organizations, as in the Boyle Heights Learning Collaborative (BHLC), or could be stand alone entities as in the San Pedro School Safety Collaborative. In Boyle Heights, a BHLC Steering Committee comprised of school and community leaders, is co-chaired by the City Councilman, Jose Huizar, and the School Board representative, Monica Garcia. Active participants include representatives of the Hollenbeck Police Department, White Memorial Hospital, PUENTE Learning Center, Proyecto Pastoral at Dolores Mission, Inner City Struggle, California State University, Los Angeles, East Los Angeles Community College, Hollenbeck Bridges Program, Youth Opportunity Program, Junior Achievement, East Los Angeles Community Corporation (ELACC), New Schools Better Neighborhoods, and other organizations important to the health and welfare of the community. The BHLC Steering Committee receives a report at every meeting from law enforcement, which is amplified/clarified and improved upon by school and community members. Each principal and community leader makes appropriate use of the information within their own organization to take action in reducing and/or eliminating gang activity. The essential element of a

“school/neighborhood” safety task force would be planning, implementation/coordination, and evaluation at a grass roots level of gang violence prevention and intervention strategies which incorporates and integrates the reality and the challenges within the schools, its turf, and its community. Information sharing, joint planning, and shared resources would help streamline disparate and sometimes smaller and isolated efforts that exist within the neighborhood “system.” The outcomes of such a strategy could result in the following:

- 1) A reduction in school truancy; which limits gang activity and helps improve academic achievement;
- 2) Development of cluster-wide commitment/action to address gang related problems by sharing resources and information;
- 3) Increased information for parents and pooled resources for parental support and involvement;
- 4) Communication and engagement with neighborhood business and civic leaders; and
- 5) Increased advocacy for prevention programs within schools and neighborhoods.

The current strategy proposed by Mayor Villaraigosa to manage 3 of the lowest performing clusters of schools would fit well with this proposed strategy. These clusters are surely to be located in communities that suffer from the lack of organized social capital, bookstores and libraries, after-school enrichment opportunities, parental engagement in schools and other community/school educational and enrichment opportunities for children and their families. These three school clusters will also gain the support and involvement of important civic, business and community leaders and make gang prevention an issue that can be embedded and

addressed throughout the education, family, and community development that would accompany the Mayor's strategy.

A quality education is the best antidote to gang involvement. Education is a 24-hour enterprise taking place at home, in the community and in the schools. Yet schools have been charged to do all things for students who can't depend on their families and their communities to provide fully for all their needs. This initiative provides yet another opportunity to communicate that education and gang prevention are inter-related, that they are everybody's concern, and that accountability for use of funds and for outcomes produced by these must be shared by members of the neighborhood and its schools.