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National Association of School Safety and Law Enforcement Officials NASSLEO

NASSLEO NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2011

Don't Know What To Do About Troubled Youth? Memphis May Have an Answer.

Many American cities have been facing serious problems in the past few decades with the growing number of angry defiant students in our schools. Exacerbating the problem is the lack of support for many of these troubled youth by parents who appear unwilling or unable to do the things that parents have traditionally been expected to do (read to them, pay attention to them, discipline them, spend quality time with them, etc.). As a result, school districts have been forced to educate a growing number of troubled students with little support, if any, from far too many parents. Thus, the difficult job of school administrator has grown increasingly more difficult.

Those of us who get around the country are no longer surprised at the sights we see around the urban school house: students wearing gang colors and garb, graffiti, bullying in the halls **and** in the classroom, and the issue that has plagued our "persistently dangerous schools" for years - our persistently dangerous neighborhoods. What **has** surprised many, however, is the growing problem we are now seeing in suburban and rural schools, as well. In many of these locations we have been witness to the same cancers suffered by the large city schools. And that is a serious concern to many. Now, if you are looking for this article to present a magic potion to add to the school drinking water, or a silver bullet with which to slay this demon, you won't find it here. My limited space and my even more limited expertise on the topic, precludes this. Besides, library shelves are filled with books that have been written about one enlightening program after another, and yet the problem persists. I join a number of my colleagues who believe the problem of educating troubled youth is growing, with little hope it will be resolved in the near future.

While I do not claim to have an answer to this problem, a report recently released by the Memphis City Public Schools may provide some hope. Memphis recognized the problem with troubled youth in 2008 and began a project that appears to be making some headway in this matter. **The Memphis report is attached to this newsletter (Newsletter 2 of 2).**

For those still not convinced we have a problem with failing parents, please refer to the October 2011 Newsletter wherein my NASSLEO Board colleague from Michigan opines on the need for more parental involvement in our schools. Based on my own personal observations, in addition to his, I believe this need has never been greater, the void never more apparent, the damage never more extensive, and relief less likely - than today. Further evidence of the decline in parental support is the increase in the number of parents opting out of medical shots for school children. A recent Associated Press analysis identified this trend and experts across the country are concerned that **all** students are in jeopardy, due to the action or inaction of a few adults.

Some parents have halted shots through use of "personal conviction waivers" for religious, medical, or personal reasons. Others, rather than making the effort to get the shots and/or provide the records that schools require, find it easier to simply opt out of the shots for their kids by checking the "no thanks" box on the school form. According to one state's secretary of health, "the problem has 'really gotten much worse.'" In California last year, more than 2,100 cases of whooping cough were reported and 10 infants died. Only one had received a first dose of vaccine. In a time when only 10% of the parents show up for parent teacher conferences in many schools, are you really surprised? Maybe this helps explain the problems we have had with so many of our troubled kids today - the acorn doesn't fall too far from the tree.

Peter Pochowski, Secretary and Editor



“24 hours a day seven days a week, holidays included”

The Memphis City Schools Security Services Department



The Memphis Way

Comprehensive Approach to Addressing Youth Violence and Crime in Memphis City Schools

Memphis City Schools not unlike other large urban school districts is continually faced with issues and concerns that require unique strategies and approaches to address. In this school environment, external and internal variables impact the day to day function of schools and seriously impact the safety of students and staff.

Memphis City Schools' knowledge and understanding of these factors lead us to develop and implement a comprehensive approach to address these concerns. In analyzing the data in 2008, we discovered several fault-lines that would negatively impact any approach or strategy to address youth violence and school incidents. Some of the fault-lines included:

1. A high incident in overage for grade students in all grades who were one to two years behind grade level.
2. High suspension rate - over 40,000 suspensions within a year of a 105,000 student population.
3. High arrest and transport rate of students for level four and five violations on an average of 75 per week.
4. High incidents of internal gang involved youth influenced by external gang involved youth.

5. Lack of adequate prevention and intervention programs to address youth violence and incidents.

These fault-lines along with societal ills of poverty and crime within the community were recognized in the analysis as areas that would have to be addressed to positively impact the district's effort to reduce crime and incidents in Memphis City Schools.

Our data and research showed that the majority of the serious incidents in all of our schools were being committed by students that exhibited similar traits. The prevailing variable in almost all of the serious incidents were that the students were overage for grade and failing the current year that they were enrolled.

Further research revealed that this population of students had so much influence on the school environment that they could jeopardize the safety of all students. Addressing the issue would be paramount if a safety strategy would have any opportunity to be effective. It was obvious that we were not going to be able to suspend or arrest our way out of this problem. The data showed that this impacted over 30,000 students. This issue was addressed by establishing specific school environments for this population of students. This

approach allowed us to establish four Prep Schools for this population with structured quality and accelerated learning opportunities for students to advance and graduate with high school diplomas.

This approach has proven to be successful. In two years the Memphis City Schools Prep Academies have graduated over 700 students who would have been dropouts or possibly incarcerated.

Further analysis showed that Memphis City Schools had an extremely high student arrest and transport rate on an average of 75 students per week. These arrests and transports ranged from extremely serious incidents of weapon offenses, drug possession, and assault and sex offenses. It also includes the lesser offenses of disorderly conduct and simple battery.

This high student arrest and transport rate was addressed by analyzing what schools had high rates of arrests/ transports and developing a process to avert these students who would benefit from early intervention. We developed and implemented the School House Adjustment Program Enterprise (S.H.A.P.E.) to address this population of students and give them alternatives to arrest for the high number of minor offenses that they were being transported for. The S.H.A.P.E. Program has accounted for a reduction in transports to juvenile court for minor offenses by 40%.

Student incidents were at a high of over 140 incidents per 1000 students. The data further revealed that 14 schools out of 136 contributed to over 50% of all incidents that required transport of students for serious offenses. Moreover, these 14 schools were all impacted similarly with the internal and external factors identified earlier. The strategic approach to address these identified schools would have a drastic impact on violence and incidents in Memphis City Schools and the surrounding communities. These 14 schools were each addressed and given additional resources where needed to reduce the high incident rate. All data is looked at on a weekly basis to determine what trends are occurring or if additional resources would be required. Memphis City Schools Security developed a highly trained Special Response Unit (SRU) to provide additional assistance at these identified schools. This strategy has created a level of

safety in these schools and contributed to a steady decline in serious incidents.

Another area of concern in utilizing this comprehensive approach was the high incident of gang involved youth within Memphis City Schools. In a comprehensive gang assessment, we determined that Memphis City Schools had approximately 3,500 students who would be considered gang involved or gang affiliated. This was a problem that was not being addressed utilizing a proactive approach but instead was addressed in a reactive manner of only dealing with the students if they acted disorderly, displayed gang colors or were involved in gang related fights. At Memphis City Schools, we took the community lead to address this issue.

Memphis City Schools took the lead and established a Juvenile Justice Board which was comprised of all organizations that had any involvement with gang involved youth. This board was established and we immediately trained all members and participants on the best practices of addressing youth gang violence as established by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). This adoption and training allowed Memphis City Schools to develop a successful prevention and intervention strategy to address this issue. The Gang Reduction Assistance for Saving Society's Youth (G.R.A.S.S.Y.) model was developed and implemented, and has successfully contributed to a 49% reduction in gang-related incidents.

In Memphis City Schools, this approach has been embraced by the community and has become the foundation of the gang reduction strategy for Memphis City Schools and the community. This strategy was recently recognized by the Department of Justice as an innovative approach to address gang violence in the community and schools.

All data points that emerged during the initial analysis in 2008 showed that the lack of adequate prevention and intervention approaches aligned to strategic and balanced enforcement is critical and would be critical in addressing and implementing a sustainable effort to address school violence.

Understanding the student population and the dynamics of that population are extremely important in the development of a comprehensive strategy. Knowing this allowed Memphis City Schools to align our prevention and intervention strategies to accomplish our goal of reducing violence and creating a safe learning and working environment.

This alignment along with targeted enforcement has begun to change the culture and climate in our schools. It has also put us on the path of having one of the safest school environments in the country and contributed to continued decreases in serious targeted incidents in Memphis City Schools.

The enhanced training of over 94 Memphis City Schools' officers in addressing and recognizing the factors that contribute to student violence has been extremely valuable in our comprehensive approach. Additional training in Kingian Non-Violence, Crisis Prevention Intervention (CIP), and gang reduction has also contributed to this effort.

As stated earlier, in addressing this problem, we did not take the approach of enforcement only. By utilizing this comprehensive strategy with the use of detailed data analysis, we have been able to achieve sustainable results with Memphis City Schools as it relates to violence reduction.

- In the 2008-2009 school year, Memphis City Schools had an incident rate of 140 incidents per 1000 students. The incident rate is currently under 29 incidents per 1000 for 2010-2011.
- In the 2008-2009 school year, Memphis City Schools had an average arrest and transport rate of 75 students per week. Currently for the 2010-2011 school year, the arrest and transport rate is an average of 25 per week.
- In the 2008-2009 school year, Memphis City Schools had a gang involvement rate of 3,500 repeat gang offenders. Currently, we have reduced that rate by 49%.

	2008/2009	2010/2011	Percent Change
Incidents Per 1000 students	140	29	-79%
Average Juveniles Transported by Week	75	25	-67%
Gang Involvement Rate (repeat offenders)	3500	1785	-49%
High Incident Schools (14) Percent Compared to All Schools	51	44	-14%

***THRU 3/31/2011**

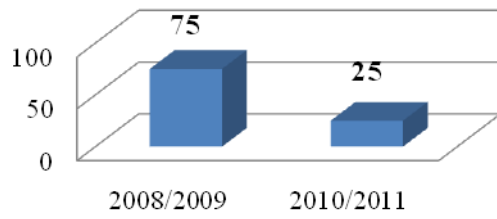
- In the 2008-2009 school year, 14 high incident schools contributed to over 51% of all incidents in Memphis City Schools.
- In the 2010-2011 school year, these 14 schools have experienced an incident reduction of 14% overall in incidents and do not contribute disproportionately to the incidents within the school district.

In utilizing this approach, Memphis City Schools is confident that these accomplishments related to a safe learning environment can be sustained.

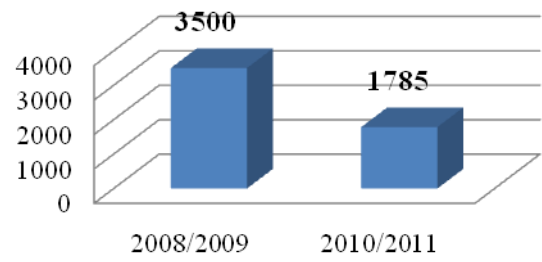
The Superintendent of schools, staff and community is committed to enhancing these efforts and making adjustments to our strategies as needed.

School safety and the protection of our students and staff are of the utmost importance and we are committed to serve the district with a detailed strategic and comprehensive effort in addressing school violence.

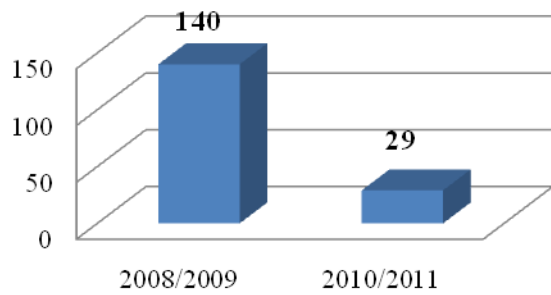
Average Juveniles Transported by Week



Gang Involvement Rate (Repeat Offenders)



Incidents Per 1000 Students



High Incident Schools- Percent compared to All Schools

