

REPORT ON

AN EVALUATION OF A

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP GRANT

TO THE PUBLIC SAFETY DEPARTMENT

SPARTANBURG, SOUTH CAROLINA

October 16, 2001

Prepared by Social Work Solutions, Inc., Columbia, SC

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The School Partnership Project has been highly successful in utilizing the SARA process to develop a program that is reducing the rate and degree of conflict in Carver Junior High School. The methods being used to do so are also providing the opportunity for the students identified for the program to become responsible adults.

The number of in-school suspensions at Carver dropped by 25% during the period covered by this evaluation. By comparison, the number of in-school suspensions at Whitlock Junior High School dropped by 3%. The results of interviews and focus groups with Carver teachers and staff, students, and parents reveal strong support for the project and a belief that the project activities have reduced conflict at the school. There is also a belief that the project has helped create a better atmosphere for learning and personal growth at Carver.

The project has been interpreted by Spartanburg Public Safety Department and Spartanburg School District 7 personnel as a conflict and violence reduction project. The grant covered parts of the program, but was generally used as a catalyst to integrate existing activities and “fill-in” where necessary. The primary intervention points have been the School Resource Officer (SRO), the in-school suspension program and special, additional activities.

The in-school suspension program uses:

- ◆ elements of conflict resolution training (anger management and empathy training).
- ◆ behavior lecture on school rules and regulations.
- ◆ a video and discussion program (Get Real About Violence).
- ◆ in-class presentations by officers and others on subjects such as violence, gangs, decision-making, staying in school, domestic violence, and so on that would be helpful to reducing conflicts and improving behavior.
- ◆ a peer counseling program.
- ◆ after school programs for designated students.

The SRO program is conducted by:

- ◆ bringing in an SRO from the SPSD (previously this was a function of the Sheriff’s office) who was specifically trained to work in school setting.
- ◆ preparing the SRO to operate in a preventive manner as well as intervening in situations that might or might not result in arrest.
- ◆ making the SRO part of the project decision making team.
- ◆ having the SRO and other officers work with in-school groups, such as sports teams.
- ◆ giving the SRO responsibility for making arrests when appropriate to deal with violent acts, rather than placing these violators in in-school suspension. The violators were thus given the opportunity to receive more appropriate services, such as alternative school.

The additional programming is:

- ◆ A Program Improvement Plan. Under this plan, chosen students earn points for several different activities or accomplishing certain goals. For example, five points are earned for improving the grade level in a subject by one letter. When the student accumulates a total of 50 points, he or she receives an incentive.
- ◆ Back In Control training/education groups for identified parents.
- ◆ Transferring of 15 to 20 students who were serial grade repeaters to other, specialized services outside of the school.
- ◆ More group and individual counseling to reinforce good goal setting and self esteem among identified students.
- ◆ Making referrals to summer programs.

It is recommended that the program be continued at Carver and be expanded to other schools. Before that can happen, the project needs to be described in writing, with the goals clearly explicated. It is also recommended that the program be publicized internally to teachers and parents and publicly to the community at large.

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INTRODUCTION

School Partnership Grant Project

The City of Spartanburg, South Carolina Public Safety Department, in partnership with Spartanburg County School District 7, began a project in September of 2000 to address disputes between students, and between students and teachers at Carver Junior High School. This work is supported in part by a U.S. Department of Justice School Partnerships Grant. The project has been interpreted by Department and District personnel as a conflict and violence reduction project. The grant covered parts of the program, but was generally used as a catalyst to integrate existing activities and “fill-in” where necessary.

The plan for the project called for use of the scanning, analyzing, response, and assessment (SARA) method to develop the project activities. Specifically, the plan called for:

- ◆ scanning the dispute situation in the school and the reactions to that situation;
- ◆ analyzing the dispute situation and the results of the reactions;
- ◆ responding with modifications of existing activities and entirely new activities that may make positive changes in the dispute situation;
- ◆ assessing the outcomes of the activities;
- ◆ beginning the process again.

The SARA method assures that there is continuous improvement in the activities that are put in place to deal with a particular issue or problem. It also assures that the people who must carry out the activities are part of the program design.

The goals of the grant are:

- ◆ Reduce the problem behaviors that result in disputes between students, and students and teachers in the junior high school;
- ◆ Reduce the number of in-school and out-of-school suspensions at the junior high school; and
- ◆ Reduce the number of in-school and out-of-school suspensions with improved skills in conflict resolution.

The Department and the School District went beyond the grant requirements in establishing a formal agreement between the two organizations. This agreement includes the following goals and objectives:

- ◆ Reduce the problem behaviors that result in disputes between students, and students and teachers at Carver Junior High School;
- ◆ Reduce the number of in-school and out-of-school suspensions at Carver Junior High School;
- ◆ Provide all students referred to in-school and out-of-school suspension with improved skills in conflict resolution; and

- ◆ Provide decision-making and conflict resolution training to parents of youth referred two times or more to in-school suspension.

To carry out the goals and objectives, the Department agreed to provide the administrative support for the grant and to:

- ◆ Supply an officer for three to four hours per day to work with youth in in-school and out-of-school suspension;
- ◆ Hire a crime analyst/project coordinator;
- ◆ Work with District 7 and a Student Advisory Group to establish a problem task force/problem advisory board to help analyze the reasons for the disputes in the schools, help understand the underlying causes of the problem, and help choose measures of success; and
- ◆ Work with District 7 contacts regarding decision-making and dispute resolution.

Spartanburg School District 7 agreed to:

- ◆ Be responsible for assisting in the development of any surveys;
- ◆ Be responsible for the collection of data on the surveys through the students;
- ◆ Be responsible for providing the Student Coordinator, Students, and Social Worker to implement the project;
- ◆ Work with the SPSD and the Student Advisory Group to establish a problem task force/problem advisory board to help analyze the reasons for the disputes in the schools, help understand the underlying causes of the problem, and help choose measures of success; and
- ◆ Work with SPSD contacts regarding decision making and dispute resolution.

The Evaluation Process and Methodology

The responsibility for the evaluation of this project is shared between Social Work Solutions of Columbia, South Carolina and 21st Century Solutions of Silver Spring, Maryland. 21st Century Solutions is conducting intensive case studies in five jurisdictions that have received School-Based Partnership Program grants. These case studies are being conducted under a COPS Office grant and Spartanburg is one of the five sites chosen as a case study area.

21st Century Solutions, Social Work Solutions and the Spartanburg, SC Department of Public Safety have entered into a Memorandum of Agreement to carry out this case study and evaluation of the project. The evaluation will include Carver Junior High School as the test school and Whitlock Junior High School as a baseline. The schools are roughly comparable demographically, and have the same programs that are required or provided by the district. Differences between the two schools in the areas being examined can, to a great degree, be attributed to the special program provided for in the grant or growing out of the programming engendered by the grant.

The role of Social Work Solutions is to conduct the qualitative portions of the evaluation. 21st Century Solutions is conducting the quantitative portion of the evaluation. However, Social

Work Solutions is including certain quantitative measures in order to give added depth to this report. The findings of this qualitative report are based on:

- ◆ Interviews and/or focus groups with the principals, in-school suspension teacher, school resource officers, representative teachers and others as identified in the two schools.
- ◆ Interviews with appropriate personnel in the school district office.
- ◆ Interviews with selected personnel from the Department of Public Safety.
- ◆ Group interviews with Carver students in special after-school programs and in a peer counseling program.
- ◆ Focus groups with selected students who have taken part in the program at Carver and students who have not taken part.
- ◆ A focus group with students who have received in-school and out-of-school suspension at Whitlock, as well as a focus group with students who have not received suspension.
- ◆ Focus groups with parents from both Carver and Whitlock.
- ◆ A survey conducted in Carver and Whitlock by 21st Century Solutions with the assistance of Social Work Solutions.
- ◆ Suspension and demographic data provided by Spartanburg School District 7.

Among the issues examined in interviews and focus groups were:

- ◆ Perceptions of the incidence of the targeted crime problem in the schools.
- ◆ Perceptions of changes in the targeted crime problem during the previous school year.
- ◆ Perceptions of the in-school suspension program.
- ◆ Perceptions of the school resource officer program.
- ◆ Perceptions of the methods and success of implementation.
- ◆ Perceptions of the changes in victimization, fear and associated behaviors.
- ◆ Changes in behavior on the part of students, faculty and administration.

The information gathered in interviews and focus groups was analyzed using a text analysis process. This method has been widely used in social work practice since the 1940's and has recently been adopted by researchers. Text analysis simply means that the listener or reader takes into account the viewpoint, value screens, biases and other background elements that influence what and how the speaker or writer communicates. The background elements include who or what organization the speaker or writer is representing. This places the communication in a context. That context creates the frame in which communication occurs.

SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS

Spartanburg School District 7 has a total of 13 schools and about 9,000 students. The district has been working with criminal justice in a variety of projects since 1985. The district has actively attempted to make the schools as safe as possible. This has included special services, but has also included a new code of conduct and statistical analysis to identify problems and potential problems. The district takes a very pro-active stance towards making the schools places where learning can occur.

The district sees the placing of SRO's in the schools as a means for providing someone who knows how to do physical intervention with students as necessary. The district would like to see the SRO's integrated into other activities of the schools.

Carver Junior High School is located in downtown Spartanburg. The school building was old and in need of upgrading during most of the project. However, a new building adjacent to the old one was completed during the summer of 2001, and classes began there for the 2001-2002 school year. Carver has approximately 580 students who are in the seventh, eighth and ninth grades. The population surrounding Carver is largely made up of the working poor. Much of the neighborhood near the school is rental or subsidized public housing. The subsidized housing is often new or refurbished and well maintained. About 56% of the students at Carver qualify for free or reduced lunch. There is strong loyalty to the school in the neighborhood. During the 1999-2000 school year, there were 187 out-of-school suspensions at Carver. Of the students suspended, 109 were black males, 62 black females, nine white males, two white females and five others. Academically, Carver is in the lower half of schools in South Carolina.

Whitlock Junior High School is located outside of the center of the city. The school was refurbished about five years ago. The school was expanded in size at that time. Additional physical upgrades were made during the last summer break. There are about 575 students at Whitlock in the seventh, eighth and ninth grades. The neighborhood around Whitlock includes four public housing projects and middle class neighborhoods. About 80% of the children at Whitlock receive free or reduced lunches. During the 1999-2000 school year, there were 325 out-of-school suspensions at Whitlock. The proportions of race and sex among the students suspended was similar to Carver. Academically, Whitlock is among the lowest rated schools in South Carolina and began receiving special help to improve at the beginning of the 2001-2002 academic year.

FINDINGS

SARA Process

Initial Scanning

The initial scanning part of the SARA process indicated that during the period September 1998-March 1999, a mean of 141.86 students were referred to in-school suspension at Carver each month. A total of 993 in-school suspensions occurred during the 1998-99 school year. A mean of 59.33 students were referred twice during each month and a mean of 23.83 were referred three times during each month. In-school suspension was usually the result of conflict with other students, with teachers or with school rules. The reaction of the school when in-school suspension did not change student's behavior was to use out-of-school suspension. During the 1997-98 school year, there were 761 out of school suspensions involving 246 students.

The scanning also identified conflicts, sometimes serious, that required intervention that teachers and administrators were unable to carry out for physical or legal reasons. There was a School Resource Officer present. The officer was operating independently of a coordinated effort to reduce problem behaviors.

Initial Analysis

The analysis of this information indicated that the in-schools suspension program appeared to be a good point to intervene with students who find themselves in conflictual situations. The analysis also indicated that the School Resource Officer (SRO) needed to be integrated into an overall problem behavior reduction program.

Initial Reaction

The in-school suspension program was modified by adding:

- ◆ elements of conflict resolution training (anger management and empathy training);
- ◆ behavior lecture on school rules and regulations;
- ◆ a video and discussion program (Get Real About Violence);
- ◆ in-class presentations by officers and others on subjects such as violence, gangs, decision-making, staying in school, domestic violence, and so on that would be helpful to reducing conflicts and improving behavior;
- ◆ creating a peer counseling program; and
- ◆ providing after school programs for designated students.

The SRO program was modified by:

- ◆ bringing in an SRO from the SPSD (previously this was a function of the Sheriff's office) who was specifically trained to work in a school setting;
- ◆ preparing the SRO to operate in a preventive manner as well as intervening in situations that might or might not result in arrest;
- ◆ making the SRO part of the project decision making team;
- ◆ having the SRO and other officers work with in-school groups, such as sports teams;
- ◆ giving the SRO responsibility for making arrests when appropriate to deal with violent acts, rather than placing these violators in in-school suspension. The violators were thus given the opportunity to receive more appropriate services, such as alternative school.

Assessment

The impact of the program was closely watched, including information on arrests (which initially went up and then declined), suspensions and reported incidents of conflict. Students and staff were asked for input informally. A more formal group of Joyce Lipscomb (Grants Coordinator), Arthur Brewton (District 7 Director of Alternative Programs), Dr. Robin Johnson (Carver Principa) and Anthony Brothers (Carver Guidance Counselor) made decisions based on the assessment information.

Modification of Responses

In response to the assessment, the program was modified by adding three new activities. They are:

- ◆ A Program Improvement Plan. Under this plan, chosen students earn points for several different activities or accomplishing certain goals. For example, five points are earned for improving the grade level in a subject by one letter. When the student accumulates a total of 50 points, he or she receives an incentive.
- ◆ Back In Control training/education groups for identified parents.
- ◆ Transferring of 15 to 20 students who were serial grade repeaters to other, specialized services outside of the school.
- ◆ More group and individual counseling to reinforce good goal setting and self esteem among identified students.
- ◆ Making referrals to summer programs.

Interviews

A total of 17 individual interviews were held. These were conducted during March, May and September 2001 with persons who were most closely related to the project. Several of the individuals were interviewed multiple times. The individuals interviewed and their positions are:

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|------------------------|---|
| Tony Fisher | Director, Spartanburg Department of Public Safety |
| Sgt. James Sutton | City of Spartanburg Public Safety and Supervisor of SROs |
| Officer Vinnie Johnson | Spartanburg Public Safety Officer and SRO at Carver Junior High |

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|---------------------|--|
| Officer J.L. Hall | Spartanburg Public Safety Officer and presenter for ISS groups at Carver |
| Joyce Lipscomb | Grants Coordinator, City of Spartanburg |
| Robin Johnson, PhD | Principal at Carver Junior High |
| James Morris | Assistant Principal at Carver Junior High |
| Anthony Brothers | Guidance Counselor at Carver Junior High |
| James Chambers | In-School Suspension Supervisor at Carver Junior High |
| Arthur Brewton, PhD | Director Alternative Programs, School District 7 |
| Audrey Grant, PhD | Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, School District 7 |
| Brenda Story | Student Services Coordinator, School District 7 |
| Rusty Wright | Principal at Whitlock Junior High through May 2001 |
| Anthony Goodjoin | Guidance Counselor at Whitlock Junior High through May 2001 |
| Carolyn Ragin | Guidance Counselor at Whitlock Junior High |

Many of the individuals from the school district and the SDPS reinforced the view that Carver had a high rate of disciplinary problems prior to the inception of this project and that the school was located in a higher risk neighborhood, in the center of several subsidized housing projects. Many people reported that Carver had a "bad reputation" as a rough school, though most said that they felt this reputation was undeserved. Although there had been some overtly violent incidents at Carver in the past, most of the student-student conflicts in more recent times were reported to be verbal. Expulsion rates for the District have decreased over the past few years (88 expulsions in 1995 and 2 in 2001). According to key informants, this is due partly to District 7 policy changes and to having more alternatives available. The project at Carver fits into this movement toward providing more alternatives to expulsion.

There was nearly universal agreement among those interviewed that this project had shown beneficial effects at Carver Junior High in several ways.

Benefits

- ◆ That Officer Johnson had helped to establish a presence of "friendly authority" at the school.
- ◆ That Officer Johnson has become a sought-after resource to students and to teachers for conflict resolution and early intervention.
- ◆ That the specialized after-school groups have been helpful to the students who participated in them.
- ◆ That referrals into ISS decreased over the school year 2000-2001.
- ◆ That the ISS conflict resolution classes have shown some positive effects.
- ◆ That there is now less student-student conflict at Carver.
- ◆ That some students who do receive ISS referrals are now more likely to take responsibility for their actions and less likely to make excuses.
- ◆ That the number of reported school incidents may have increased but that the severity of the incidents has declined.

Both Officer Johnson and others agreed that he (Officer Johnson) showed concern for the students and worked to establish relationships. Officer Johnson believes that a big part of his

job is to intervene in ways that reinforce responsible behavior. He follows a SARA methodology in his in-school work - scanning, assessing and responding.

The guidance department and ISS teacher also follow a similar model of reinforcing responsible behavior as well as giving the students information that will help them make responsible decisions.

Individuals who had been involved in the project suggested several ideas about what would have made the program even more effective at Carver.

Suggestions

- ◆ Involve the broader community beyond the school in a collaborative effort for violence prevention.
- ◆ Inform and involve Carver staff and faculty earlier in the project to enlist their support.
- ◆ Inform the student body and parents earlier in the year about the ground rules.
- ◆ Have more programs for students after school to keep them focused on the positive.
- ◆ Integrate life skills, like conflict management, into the curriculum for all students.
- ◆ Get more frequent progress reports on the project at the district level.
- ◆ Educate the community about the successes at this school and within the District.

Group Interviews

Two group interviews were held with students at Carver.

1. A group interview was conducted with students from one of the project-sponsored after-school groups, the Points for Partners group. All students could be considered somewhat higher risk because they had been recommended for participation after they had been in ISS. Students participated in the discussion with only the evaluators present.

All students indicated that they had benefited from participating in the after-school group. They mentioned several specific ways in which the group had been helpful to them personally. Their comments are quoted below.

- ◆ It showed us how to be leaders, not followers.
- ◆ We learned how to pull up our grades.
- ◆ Officer Johnson gave us written assignments.
- ◆ We learned how to listen.
- ◆ We learned by writing in our journals.
- ◆ It gave us time and opportunity to think about things.
- ◆ We had time to think about what's happening.
- ◆ We took a field trip to the museum. We saw trains and animals; that helps with school, too.
- ◆ We played games to learn things.

2. A group interview was conducted with a group of students who administered a survey to student peers who were referred to ISS. These students were selected for this assignment because they demonstrated good school citizenship. The students said they had learned some things through interviewing the students in ISS.
 - ◆ They had found out about how other students had gotten into trouble. They had mostly learned that they did not want to go to ISS themselves.
 - ◆ They also learned that they had more in common with the ISS students than they had expected.
 - ◆ These students were also providing tutoring for other students who needed it.
 - ◆ These students felt that they were helping the school and their fellow students by carrying out this work.
 - ◆ They believed the students going into ISS would tell them things that they would not tell adults.
 - ◆ These students believed that the biggest problems were fighting, verbal for the most part; an attitude of students being cliquish; and general verbal abuse among students.

Focus Groups

In addition to the series of individual and group interviews described above, a total of 13 focus groups were conducted with teachers, parents and students at Carver Junior High and at Whitlock Junior High.

At Carver Junior High, three focus groups for teachers were held with a total of nine teachers and staff. Two student groups were conducted, one with nine students who had been referred to In-School Suspension (ISS) and one group of ten students who had not been referred to ISS, for a total of nineteen students. Four Carver parents participated in an evening focus group.

At Whitlock Junior High, four focus groups for teachers were held with a total of eighteen teachers. Two student focus groups were conducted, one for students who had been referred into ISS and one group who had not been in ISS. A total of twelve students participated with six in each group. Four parents were present for an evening focus group that was also attended by four school staff.

Input was obtained from a total of 63 individuals through the series of focus group discussions.

1. Teacher Focus Groups

Carver Teachers

The school had moved into a new campus at the beginning of the fall term. Carver teachers were universally positive about being in a new school building because monitoring the hallways was easier. They indicated that this contributed to general safety in the school. They reported

having a school "Pow-Wow" at the beginning of the year where they introduced all the staff to the student body, explained the rules, and encouraged students to talk to a teacher or guidance staff if they became worried about potential conflicts. They also said that teachers post their own rules in the classroom.

All teachers at Carver who spoke were pleased about having an SRO at their school and supportive in particular about Officer Vinnie Johnson. In past years, the SROs had been deputies from the Sheriffs' Department. Teachers who had been working at Carver for several years observed that the current SRO, Officer Johnson, was much more active and directly involved with students. Many Carver teachers cited Officer Johnson's positive personal interactions with students and his skills in helping students to avert conflict. These teachers thought that it was Officer Johnson's personal qualities, as well as his communication skills that made him effective in this role. All teachers spoke about Officer Johnson as friendly, accessible and pro-active. A few teachers thought that bullying had decreased since the current SRO has been there. Teachers said that they invited Officer Johnson into their classroom to give talks or to explain the law to students.

One teacher said that Officer Johnson often went beyond the traditional SRO safety role. In at least one instance, he assumed an arbitration role when he took home a student who had been disciplined and talked with the parents about how to work with their child. Many teachers said they had seen him as an integral part of the school program and described him as a liaison between the school and home. Most of the comments about Officer Johnson centered on his effectiveness in talking on a personal level with students, knowing students' names and circumstances, and providing an example of friendly authority.

Carver teachers were only moderately familiar with other, non-SRO aspects of the violence prevention project at Carver, although most knew that there were special presentations within ISS and that there were special after-school groups. Some of the teachers were surprised to learn that the ISS conflict resolution programs and the specialized after-school groups were part of the violence prevention effort funded in part by this project. Some teachers said that they had noticed a positive difference in the attitudes of students after they had gone to ISS. One said, "After they go to ISS, it's a new day."

Many Carver teachers mentioned general after-school activities as a deterrence to conflict. Some of the groups and clubs they were aware of are the School Improvement Council, PALS Club, Boys and Girls' Club, Gents Club and Points for Partners.

Carver staff and teachers said they felt personally safe at school and thought that most other teachers felt safe, although they acknowledged that a few teachers might fear students bringing a weapon to school. They thought that students mostly felt safe at school. For the most part, these teachers viewed the student conflicts they see as "normal adolescent issues," although some teachers mentioned that students bring to school the problems and faulty conflict styles from their own parents and families of origin. Carver teachers attributed the causes of some conflicts as students "doing what they see their parents do at home."

A few Carver teachers thought that "removing the disruptive students" was the best approach to decreasing future violence and conflict in the school. These same teachers also supported more hard-line discipline, monitoring and oversight of students. Among the teachers who participated in the focus groups, this viewpoint was in the minority. Other Carver teachers who stressed the importance of teaching students more skills in alternatives to conflict voiced a different perspective. These were the ones who suggested more classes on anger management and conflict resolution to impart life skills to all students, not just those who violate the school rules. A specific suggestion was teaching students how to accept responsibility when disciplined during class without further escalating the student-teacher conflict (and consequences) by talking back aggressively, such as saying, "I have a right to say what I think."

Whitlock Teachers

All teachers from Whitlock were very forthcoming in their remarks. They supplied information about the school and new programs, often without being asked.

The predominant viewpoint voiced by Whitlock teachers was that increased structure and close monitoring of students at all times was the most effective deterrent to student conflict. Whitlock had a change in administration with the beginning of the 2001-2001 school year, and all teachers voiced strong support for the increase in structure imposed by the incoming principal. Teachers reported that at the beginning of the school term, they showed a video to all students about the discipline code and rules. (This video was mentioned later by several Whitlock students.) All teachers who participated in the focus groups said that the increased structure at Whitlock and tighter student discipline was a positive step. Many of them also said that having separate hallways for each grade level within the school had cut down on opportunities for conflict between older and younger students. They also mentioned having phones and panic buttons in each classroom as giving an extra measure of security because they knew they could summon backup quickly in an emergency. Most of the beneficial strategies they mentioned that had been put into place for decreasing conflict were about structure, monitoring of students and physical separation of students.

The teachers mentioned positive recognition for students as another conflict prevention strategy employed by the school. For example, one student was recognized and rewarded for turning in a sum of money he found. Several teachers also mentioned that the new administration had "moved out several student troublemakers" to the alternative school. Everyone who mentioned the alternative school thought there should be more slots available for students who cannot function in regular settings. Some teachers recommended that there should be more on-going efforts with conflict resolution and assertiveness training for students. A few teachers acknowledge that Whitlock is in a "rough neighborhood," but that students tend to keep their neighborhood conflicts outside the school setting.

Whitlock has had an on-site SRO for several years, a Sheriff's Deputy. Teachers praised the performance of a previous SRO who had gone beyond the call of duty in protecting students from harm during a fight. They made positive remarks about all the previous SROs who had been at Whitlock. The current officer is new at the school this year. Whitlock teachers said that they perceived Officer Camp as a "safety person" and as an ally for the teachers and staff.

They saw his presence in uniform as a deterrent to violence on school grounds. They also said that Officer Camp helps the students deal with conflict and learn alternatives. Some teachers saw Officer Camp as a friend and confidante to students, particularly in his role as advisor to the Crime Stoppers Club; students in that club can report other students anonymously.

All the Whitlock teachers said that they felt personally safe at school with one exception, a teacher who had been followed home last year by a student. This was reported to be a single incident. Teachers at Whitlock thought that students mostly felt safe at school; some thought that school was, for some students, seen as a safer place than their homes and neighborhoods. They uniformly thought that Whitlock's negative reputation in the community was undeserved.

2. Student Focus Groups

Carver Students

When asked what school activities they were aware of to reduce conflict, students who had been in ISS mentioned participating in sports, the PALS Club and Officer Johnson ("He has helped with fights"). Students who had not been to ISS mentioned clubs (Pals, Beta, Culture Club), teachers monitoring the hallways, cameras, and Officer Johnson ("He interacts with students"), so there were similar responses. Some non-ISS students said that Officer Johnson "tries to keep things from happening." Most students on both groups indicated that they participated in school activities to some degree, although the non-ISS students appeared to be more involved in clubs.

Carver students were asked what effect, if any, the activities or interventions they mentioned had on them personally. Students who had been in ISS reported that during their ISS experience they had seen a movie about (preventing) violence and that "an officer talks to you." They mentioned that "going to ISS can hurt your grades" and that "It makes you not want to go there again." Students who had never been in ISS said they didn't want to get into trouble, because they know it would hurt their grades and their image. They mentioned the responsibility as upperclassman of setting a good example for younger students. When asked what effect ISS and other interventions had on other students they knew, the ISS students mentioned consequences as a deterrent: "When kids fight on campus they get arrested and taken into the city." The non-ISS students mentioned that they thought the experience of being in ISS is a deterrent for some students they know, while others "would rather be in ISS than in their regular classes."

None of the students reported feeling unsafe at school, although non-ISS students reported that they believe a few teachers are afraid of students and therefore do not write them up for infractions.

Students who had been in ISS said more about feeling comfortable talking to Officer Johnson than the students who did not go to ISS. All Carver students indicated that they knew Officer Johnson and that they saw him around the school frequently talking to students.

Both ISS and non-ISS students had suggestions for further reducing conflict. ISS students talked about the need to change attitudes of both students and teachers, to promote more mutual

respect. They expressed the opinion that some of the same kids keep getting into trouble. They said that one problem is some female students who do not observe the dress code. The non-ISS students advocated having anger management classes for the ISS students, teaching kids to respect each other, talking to a teacher or counselor, and working directly with student's families ("How parents raise you - that's how you act at school"). None of the student suggestions focused primarily on enforcement, but more on emphasizing respect and communication or conflict skill development.

Whitlock Students

Students who had been in ISS mentioned several activities to reduce conflict at their school: video cameras, Teen Supreme, Crime Stopper Club, the SRO and "the rules." This group also mentioned explicitly the Code of Conduct as a deterrent, that they had to read it and sign it. Although they were aware of several school activities, most did not participate in afternoon school-related activities. One student participated in soccer and another had a part-time job. Students who had not been in ISS mentioned a similar list of clubs and activities, but indicated that they were more involved in after-school activities than did the ISS group.

Although the ISS students said that some other students had talked to the new SRO, none of these students reported having a personal relationship with him. The non-ISS students said they had not yet had an opportunity to interact with the new SRO, but said they had contact with the SRO last year.

Student who attended ISS said that "it is boring in ISS" and that was the main reason to avoid having to go back there again. When asked about the effect that ISS and similar interventions have on other students, they said that some kids seem to do better and there is no effect for some kids. They also said that talking to an adult sometimes is helpful. Students who had never been in ISS seemed fairly unaware of what goes on in ISS and did not express strong opinions about how this experience affects other students. They said more general things about trying to be helpful to other students and to set a good example through their own behavior. The non-ISS students mentioned watching the video about school rules at the beginning of the term. They thought, "this makes you think about it."

Whitlock student who had attended ISS reported feeling safe at school and thought that other students felt safe also. Whitlock students who had not been referred to ISS had a slightly different perspective about their own safety. These students said they fear gang violence that happens outside of school at events such as the fair and community festivals. They said that gang members usually let it be known that something is going to happen during these events. These students reported that other Whitlock students go on purpose to watch fights, but that they had not done so. They reported that it is not considered all right to talk to the authorities about this. One non-ISS student felt afraid when first entering Whitlock, but this was more about fears of fitting in than about personal safety.

The ISS students suggested several things to further reduce conflict at school:

- ◆ Have an additional SRO on duty.

- ◆ Deal with issues that students bring into the school from the community, both gang-related and non-gang related.
- ◆ The school ought to talk to people involved in problems and try to stop it (violence).
- ◆ The school ought to talk to parents, tell them what is going on.

Whitlock students who had not attended ISS had a different list of suggestion to reduce conflict.

- ◆ Metal detectors for weapons (some students objected to this suggestion).
- ◆ We already have more activities, things to do.
- ◆ Don't put kids into a big huddle, like at lunch; it creates opportunity for problems.
- ◆ Teachers should be more willing to help us during class with our work.
- ◆ They expressed general frustration and loss about the increased structure of the school day, especially before class hours. They did not like the before-school intramural program. Some said, "They (school authorities) are too strict." As ninth graders, they felt they had lost the expected privileges of upperclassman.

Parent Focus Groups

Carver Parents

Four parents attended the focus group. All of their children were in the ninth grade and none of them had been in ISS. None of the Carver parents were aware of any special programs to prevent violence or conflict at the school, although all of them knew that the school had a SRO and knew Officer Johnson by name. All parents said that their child "talks about Officer Johnson all the time," quoting him or relating how he had dealt with a situation at the school. They regarded him as very approachable by students. One parent mentioned that she knew about Officer Johnson because of a community mentoring program in which he is involved.

When asked about what effect school activities had on their own child, parents were again positive about Officer Johnson, indicating that children respect him. They also said that the Guidance staff is excellent, citing guidance counselors Ms. Gillespie and Mr. Brothers. They mentioned that Ms. Gillespie had intervened with a group of girls last year and headed off problems early.

Parents thought that Carver was a safe place for their child, although the school had a bad reputation in the community. They said, "it is worse in other places." They thought that their child felt safe at school. One parent had her child transferred to Carver when she could have attended another school. She said her child thought "it was nicer here." Another parent had a child who had been threatened by a fellow student. Officer Johnson had intervened and resolved the problem.

The Carver parents did not know much about what happens in ISS, but asked several questions to get more information. They also did not know about the conflict resolution presentations given by officers in ISS. In addition, the parents did not know about many programs and activities of the school, other than those in which their own child directly participated. They had several suggestions about what might be helpful to further reduce conflict at school:

- ◆ Build more capacity for anger management and similar classes for ISS students, perhaps through use of qualified community volunteers.
- ◆ Include anger management training for all students, perhaps as part of the health curriculum.
- ◆ Reach out to students who are "lost" within the system, who have failed academically or who are so angry at everyone and everything. A parent gave two personal examples: a young man she knows who had lost eligibility to play ball and that was the only activity keeping him involved at the school; another young man she knows had good behavior but had failed twice. This parent was concerned that both will be lost and never complete school.
- ◆ Parents in general don't know what is happening at school and what services are available to them and their families (free eyeglasses, the ScIP program, other services); could some classes or information meetings be held for parents?
- ◆ One parent said, "Most angry kids come from angry homes. Those parents need to get service, too."

Whitlock Parents

Four parents attended the focus group. Their children were in seventh, eighth and ninth grades. None of their children had been in ISS. Four school staff also sat in on the group: the principal, the SRO, the guidance counselor, and a district office representative.

The evaluators asked Whitlock parents to respond to the same list of questions that had been asked of the Carver parents. However, whenever parents began to speak or to ask questions about a specific school matter, the school staff would respond. This shifted the focus of the discussion from an information-seeking evaluation process into an information-giving process. The data obtained from Whitlock parents is therefore not useful for the current evaluation project.

PARENT CONFLICT RESOLUTION CLASSES

As part of the project, classes were held for parents of Carver students who had been referred to ISS or who had experienced other discipline problems. The parenting workshops were held at the Temporary Intervention Program (TIPS) or in parent homes. As part of this initiative, the District staff conducted 31 home visits and provided parenting tips and other information. The home visits were for parents living in the Southside neighborhood. Parenting workshops and home visits were conducted once a month, beginning in March 2001. Thirty-eight parents or significant others participated in this initiative.

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Precursors to Program Success

Three precursors were important to the success of the program. These were:

- ◆ use of the SARA process;
- ◆ coordination among the district, school and Spartanburg Public Safety;
- ◆ movement of students unlikely to respond to the program into more appropriate placements outside of the school.

Process of the Project

The project at Carver was much broader and more intensive than the grant funding would indicate. The funding was used to provide services that would not otherwise have been provided. But more importantly, the grant was used as an opportunity to:

- ◆ utilize a systematic approach (SARA) to the problem of conflict in Carver;
- ◆ develop services needed but not paid for by the grant;
- ◆ identify old services that were already addressing the problem;
- ◆ integrate the old and new services; and
- ◆ modify the activities to better achieve the goal.

Social Development

School Partnership Grant Project resulted in a program that provides for students the opportunity to develop in a positive direction the four components of personality that the literature indicates are important to determining what kind of adult the young person will become and how they will act as they go through adolescence. (*Appenzeller, G. W., NASW Chapter Update, July, 1995*) The junior high school years are the most crucial in this development. The four personality components are:

- ◆ a concept of authority and leadership;
- ◆ a concept of responsibility;
- ◆ a concept of accomplishment; and
- ◆ a concept of belonging.

Authority and Responsibility

The program at Carver integrates the SRO into the life of the school. In the interviews and focus groups at Carver, law enforcement was viewed by the participants more from a protective than an authoritarian point of view. The respondents viewed the authority of law enforcement, at least the SRO and other officers who came to the school to carry out programs, as part of the

social life of the school. The officers were viewed as a friendly authority, part of the group of caring adults in the school who are there to protect and teach the students.

Part of the School Partnership Grant Project, as identified by the respondents, is to change the value system of identified students to one that is more pro-social than the value system the students have exhibited in the past. The SRO and other officers are an important part of that change. The SRO is a living example to the students that authority is there to help and protect them.

The in-school suspension program also moved students towards acceptance of legitimate authority through the behavior lecture on rules and regulations and the presentations by officers and others. In addition, the Back In Control training for parents gives the parents the tools to continue the work at home that begins in the school.

The responses at Whitlock were quite different. Here, the SRO, while respected and well thought of, did not appear to be perceived by staff, faculty and students as being as integrated into the social life of the school. The predominant belief of the faculty and staff was that the SRO was there to do the things they could not do to control and protect students. The predominant belief among the students was that he was there to enforce the rules.

Also important to preparing young people to exercise authority is teaching them about leadership, both how to lead and how to follow. This is done by example of the SRO, teachers and staff. But it is also done by giving the students the opportunity to practice leadership and followership. This is done through the after-school activities sponsored by the school counselors office and the SRO, as well as with the peer counseling program.

Responsibility

Responsibility is about making good decisions. The SRO activities and the other programs in Carver that are part of the project empower the students to do this. Students are taught and given the opportunity to practice responsibility for their own behavior. Specific decision-making classes are provided at in school suspension. But the confidence shown in the student's ability to make their own decisions, and intervening early if the wrong decision is being made is equally important. The respondents in the interviews and focus groups, especially with the students, indicate that this idea of giving the student the responsibility for their decisions has been successful. Those students identified as needing help in this area are helped with carrying out the necessary developmental tasks.

Whitlock is more likely to follow the more traditional approach of controlling students through observation and intervention (including surveillance cameras), suspension as punishment and the Code of Conduct as a deterrent.

Given the differences in the approach of the schools to teaching responsibility to identified students, the differences in statements by respondents between the two schools is likely to be attributable to the School Partnership Grant Project.

Accomplishment

Feeling that he or she can accomplish things is an important part of a young person's movement towards adulthood. Part of the School Partnership Grant Project is giving identified students, and peer counselors, an opportunity to achieve. This is done through supporting academic accomplishment. But it is also done through after-school programs. The Program Improvement Plan is specifically designed to reward accomplishment.

Belonging

The final component important to social development is a sense of belonging. Believing that one is part of the society usually means that someone is more likely to act in ways that will be acceptable to others. The School Partnership Project develops this sense through providing special, positive activities for the identified students. The SRO, school counselors and others spend time making sure that identified students feel that they are part of the school. This was clearly believed to be the case in the group interviews and student focus groups.

Quantitative Data

During the 1999-2000 academic year, there were 3,167 individual in-school suspensions at Carver. A total of 369 students were involved in these suspensions. During the 2000-2001 academic year, the period of the project, there were 2,374 in-school suspension involving 354 students. The number of suspensions per identified student therefore dropped from 8.58 incidents per student to 6.7 incidents per student. This was a 22% drop in incidents per identified student and an overall drop in in-school suspensions of 25%. There was a similar, but less dramatic, drop in out-of-school suspensions. The suspensions dropped by 7% overall, and incidents per student dropped from 2.51 to 2.15, a reduction of 14%.

The rates of suspensions remained static at Whitlock. The rate per identified student of in-school suspensions was 3.92 in academic year 1999-2000 and 3.89 in academic year 2000-2001. The rate per identified student of out-of-school suspensions was 2.83 in academic year 1999-2000 and 2.72 in academic year 2000-2001. The overall number of suspensions in academic year 1999-2000 was 1,421, compared to 1,374 in academic year 2000-2001, a change of about 3%. However, the number of out-of-school suspensions changed from 922 to 786, a reduction of 15%.

Conclusion

The School Partnership Project has been highly successful in utilizing the SARA process to develop a program that is reducing the rate and degree of conflict in Carver Junior High School. The methods being used to do so are also providing the opportunity for the students identified for the program to become responsible adults.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Major Recommendations

1. The program should be continued in Carver and expanded to other schools.
2. The program should be fully documented and the goals fully explicated to make transition to other schools more efficient.
3. The program should be explained more fully to teachers and to parents.

Additional Recommendations

1. Involve the broader community beyond the school in a collaborative effort for violence prevention.
2. Inform and involve Carver staff and faculty earlier in the project to enlist their support.
3. Inform the student body and parents earlier in the year about the ground rules.
4. Have more programs for students after school to keep them focused on the positive.
5. Integrate life skills like conflict management into the curriculum for all students.
6. Get more frequent progress reports on the project at the district level.
7. Educate the community about the successes at this school and within the District.

**INTERVIEWS AND
FOCUS GROUPS**

**Spartanburg Department of Public Safety
School Violence Prevention at Carver School
Key Informant Interview**

Name ___Officer J. L. Hall_____ Title/Position Public Safety Officer (8 yrs)
Date ___3/20/01_____ Interviewer ___S Meadows_____

1. What is your role/responsibility related to this project?

He conducts classes at Carver during ISS re: violence, gangs, decision making, staying in school, domestic violence – “These are issues kids can relate to.” He has done the classes during last two years.

Says “I challenge them to use their brain.”

His other duties are in community policing – he used to patrol housing area near Carver.

2. Describe the violence situation at Carver before the inception of this project (data or examples)

Kids used to be more likely to say “It’s not my fault that I got in that fight” or “that I got to school late” (He used to hear more excuses)

Kids not taking any initiative regarding school work.

3. What changes, if any, have you observed since the project began?

The last time (he) went to do a class in ISS, most of the kids were there for tardies (rather than for a more serious offense). He sees Carver as doing earlier interventions, “cracking down on troublemakers” and sending them to the TIPS alternative program. This makes them outcasts and labels them as troublemakers. Only works if parents are helpful and supportive.

He has two opinions about this (early intervention approach) - sees both sides

Troublemaker students “are exiled to alternative school”

“TIPS is cheating students out of an academic experience”

4. What project initiatives have worked well? (How do you know that?)

No answer – see above

5. What has not worked as well? (How do you know that?)

“Exile and labeling”

6. Lessons learned: If you could start over, what would you do differently?

Need to give some kids a break – the opportunity to succeed; don’t just label them

Take more time to build relationships, trust w/ kids

Continue /expand after school programs

**Spartanburg Department of Public Safety
School Violence Prevention at Carver School
Key Informant Interview**

Name _____Anthony Brothers_____ Title/Position ___School Counselor ___
Date _____3/20/01_____ Interviewer _____S Meadows_____

1. What is your role/responsibility related to this project?

Was involved in some planning for project –went to last meeting for grant
Now has a dual role: (1) Coordinator for peer counseling program – designated students ask survey questions of ISS students; also Mr Brothers ask them questions
(2) Coordinator for after school program for referred students

2. Describe the violence situation at Carver before the inception of this project
High number of ISS referrals

Tardies, behavior, not going to detention hall as ordered, discipline code
High number of verbal conflicts – not much violence; He/said/she said
Have not much fighting per se at school. “If you fight, you go home”

3. What changes, if any, have you observed since the project began?

#’s in ISS have decreased by 10%.
Mr. James Chambers is the ISS teacher/coordinator

4. What project initiatives have worked well? (How do you know that?)

Talking to kids in after-school groups
Having kids (in after school groups) write in their planners, having to write their feelings and reactions
Individual conferences with teachers about a particular child

Can tell what works from personal observation

5. What has not worked as well? (How do you know that?)

Hard to say – not a long track record yet for after school program
Re: having kids take their planners to their teachers, kids don’t’ bring it back (to him)
The planner may not have worked as well as the point incentive

6. Lessons learned: If you could start over, what would you do differently?

Carver had a meetings w/ parent and also w/ grades, but very late in school year. Better to have a grade level meeting early in the year, also parent conference (to explain program and approach)
Main cause of ISS referrals is tardies - need to explain to parents and kids
Would like to have more money to expand after school program with more kids, have more people
Would like to have tutoring program after school
More capacity for field trips (increase student confidence, freedom, self-esteem)

**Spartanburg Department of Public Safety
School Violence Prevention at Carver School
Key Informant Interview**

Name Arthur Brewton Title/Position: Dist. Dir. Alternative Programs
Date 3/20/01 Interviewer S Meadows

1. What is your role/responsibility related to this project?

Is Director for Alternative Programs for District 7, including TIPS

Has collaborated a lot in the past with Public Safety and their programs.

2. Describe the violence situation at Carver before the inception of this project

High rate of ISS at Carver

More minority students on in school and out of school suspensions

Carver is surrounded by 3 public housing projects

60/40 racial mix

Black students not taking advantage of academic programs

3. What changes, if any, have you observed since the project began?

Some decrease in # of ISS referrals

(Dr. Brewton) is “advisor “ to Mr. Brothers

Are setting up parent training (for ISS parents) using “Back in Control” DJJ curriculum – students “will be present to hear” what is being presented

Jerome Rice (attendance office) will do home visits

7. What project initiatives have worked well? (How do you know that?)

1. Workshops that are part of ISS (officers presentations on consequences, etc)

Knows this from high rating by ISS supervisor

2. Student involvement (peer counselor) getting student input, prevent potential discipline issues

Mr. Brothers has reported improved trust and communication

8. What has not worked as well? (How do you know that?)

Dr. Brewton is concerned that the targeted parents (ISS parents) will be willing to participate

Would want more buy-in from faculty

Desires more frequent “briefings” about results of this project, also for school and community- let them know that problems still persist.

9. Lessons learned: If you could start over, what would you do differently?

Have the “move” complete - In a new building, will be easier to monitor students

Would have liked to start (project) at the beginning of the school year

Would like to see collaboration with the surrounding communities, which have many problems – low achievement, aggression, truancy

Coordinate w/ community policing and Community Watch

**Spartanburg Department of Public Safety
School Violence Prevention at Carver School
Key Informant Interview**

Name Officer Vinnie Johnson Title/Position Carver School Resource Officer
Date 3/20/01 Interviewer S Meadows

1. What is your role/responsibility related to this project?

Has been SRO since beginning of 2000-01 school year. Is at the school from 7:15 AM-4:00PM.
Part-time coach 7-8PM
Gets to know kids at Carver 1-1, teachers, administrators
Talks to kids in ISS, works w/ Mr. Chambers

2. Describe the violence situation at Carver before the inception of this project.

There were many kids from the projects – troublemakers
Lots of name-calling in the hallways - “she said X”
Gang fights amongst girls – 2 or 3 ringleaders
Conflicts became physical
“Moved out the troublemakers”

3. What changes, if any, have you observed since the project began?

Kids and parents initiate contact (with SRO)
Less acting out in hallways

4. What project initiatives have worked well? (How do you know that?)

Had mid-fall assemblies with each grade level regarding conflict resolution: Officer Johnson
“got to say where I stand”
Sexual harassment, touching, name calling
Code of conduct
Law enforcement policy
Community meeting with parents

Some parents “protest” interventions with their kid

“DJJ reports fewer cases this year from Family Court” (no figures)

5. What has not worked as well? (How do you know that?)

Some individual interventions have not worked out, kids have not responded – he was disappointed.
Parents from the projects who believe that the officer had it in for their kid

6. Lessons learned: If you could start over, what would you do differently?

Would have assemblies early in the year before problems get bigger. (When he just started, he did not know how the administration would act).

Next year, he will do an orientation in first week with rising 7th graders, also meeting with parents of new students

7. Additional thoughts of Officer Johnson:

Own background – Brooklyn, NY high school

Key element is being real re: self, own history and life experience

Gets support from Dr. Audrey Grant at district level. She meets with all SROs each month. Also from social worker Jerome Rice at district office.

Gets support at Pub Safety from Mr. Fisher and Sgt. James Sutton.

Thinks they “need more programs in the schools to keep kids focused on the positive”

Clubs, band, etc.

Things “to give purpose and hope”

He tells kids “Education opens doors for you”

Self-esteem = armor

Goal = diploma

Need to have an educational curriculum

Deal with conflict

Teams

Peer pressure

Use peer mentors

Teach life skills

**Spartanburg Department of Public Safety
School Violence Prevention at Carver School
Key Informant Interview**

Name Dr. Robin Johnson Title/Position Principal at Carver
Date 5/14/01 Interviewer S Meadows

1. What is your role/responsibility related to this project?

Minor role – is providing support and allowing program to go on.

Program has evolved. Mr. Brothers is the primary project person on-site. He informed me and then went away and did it.

2. Describe the violence situation at Carver before the inception of this project.

She was assistant principal and dealt with discipline. (During project planning 3 years ago) she got in at the tail end.

3. What changes, if any, have you observed since the project began?

Not as much violence now, but still have “horsey kids” fooling around. We make a big deal about it to show kids it is wrong.

Now they rarely have fights with 9th graders.

They (school) file more incident reports w/ SRO now; more reports, but incidents are less severe - perhaps (because of) the presence of the SRO.

No weapons (in school) in years – did have 7-8 years ago. Did have one kid with a box cutter, but no threat.

Had one major incident in November (2000) – ganging. They “put out several children.”

4. What project initiatives have worked well? (How do you know that?)

ISS numbers are down

Working intensively w/kids in ISS on conflict management

Afternoon groups w/ Mr. Brothers – they want kids to be able to focus on learning, be in class, have higher test scores

Community Forum

5. What has not worked as well? (How do you know that?)

No response

6. Lessons learned: If you could start over, what would you do differently?

Wish I had been better informed and there was more school-wide awareness with faculty – what program was doing, be more supportive

One incident – complaint letter from faculty member that Mr. Brothers was getting more \$ for “a job he already is getting paid for”. Had to document Mr. Brothers after-school time spent (above regular job time).

Re: Expulsions, “We try to have a 0% expulsion rate” – go for alternative placement or send to DJJ via court recommendation. Only recommend expulsion for weapons charge or serious assault.

**Spartanburg Department of Public Safety
School Violence Prevention at Carver School
Key Informant Interview**

Name ___Brenda Story___ Title Coord for Student Services (nursing, counselors)
Date _____5/4/01_____ Interviewer ___S Meadows_____

1. What is your role/responsibility related to this project?
Planning with Pub Safety, negotiating with principals, superintendent, writing support letters.
Joyce has been main contact in setting up partnerships

2. Describe the violence situation at Carver before the inception of this project
Demographics of neighborhood (projects, low-income); long history of neighborhood violence. Generational problems:
low expectations of families
lack of commitment to education
vulnerability of younger girls with older men – unwanted pregnancy – need positive activities

3. What changes, if any, have you observed since the project began?
Among students, increased respect for officers that are there
Students are willing to confide in officers
Officers know things that students tell them – can be proactive re: fights, etc.

4. What project initiatives have worked well? (How do you know that?)
Positive use of ISS – used to be wasted time; now is a learning opportunity
Contact with a good human being (officers)
Learn respect for authority
After-school programs – give attention to kids = “you are important,” especially for girls
Dr. Brewton’s mentoring program
“Respect for authority has come a long way”

5. What has not worked as well? (How do you know that?)
Students still have a casual attitude about going to DJJ, R& E Center – she doesn’t understand why
Students entering Junior high have difficulties because of lack of standardization about class changing – how to walk in the halls, etc. – leads to problems
Some parents not mature, not self-confident, not successful in dealing with authority

6. Lessons learned: If you could start over, what would you do differently?
Take more time (up front) to orient whole faculty, groundwork, w/ janitors and teachers, involve them
“Toot our own horn” more often than we are “trying to do something”

**Spartanburg Department of Public Safety
School Violence Prevention at Whitlock School
Key Informant Interview**

Name Rusty Wright _____ Title: Principal at Whitlock, retired May 2001
Date 5/15/01 _____ Interviewer S Meadows _____

1. What is your role/responsibility related to this project?

Now is principal at Whitlock. In past, was an administrator @ Carver. He was opposed at first to having SROs on campus. Now has changed his impression. Officers Fry and Young are Sheriffs deputies - are at school all day - do after-school programs (Crime Stoppers Club). SROs are people-oriented.

2. Describe the violence situation at Carver before the inception of this project.

Whitlock has a reputation as a tough school, bad image, Many incidents, fights. Before, if there was a fight, there were injuries or a major fight

3. What changes, if any, have you observed since the project began?

- SRO fits in well, have calming influence on kids overall and provide rougher kids a reason to keep out of trouble - there will be consequences.
- # of severe incidents is reduced but # of kids "written up" is increased.
- Definition of what constitutes and "incident" has changed - have criminalized more behaviors in last 5 years - affects long-term statistics - 97-98 (?) "Crimes in Schools in SC " report showed discrepancy between police data on school crime (12,000) vs school reports that showed 3,000. SDOE was "accused of hiding or covering up." Reporting was changed (97-98). Resulting stats look like a big increase. Now police ask that school NOT report every trivial fight.
- School feels safer now. Staff feel more secure.

4. What project initiatives have worked well? (How do you know that?)

- SRO takes pressure off principal
- SRO can intervene physically if necessary
- SRO provides assistance and back up to staff and faculty

5. What has not worked as well? (How do you know that?)

- No negative effects observed.
- Still have kids suspended or expelled for minor offenses

6. Lessons learned: If you could start over, what would you do differently?

N/A

**Spartanburg Department of Public Safety
School Violence Prevention at Carver School
Key Informant Interview**

Name Audrey Grant_____ Title: Asst Supt, District 7
Date ___6/12/01_____ Interviewer ___ S Meadows _____

1. What is your role/responsibility related to this project?

I oversee the District level process for expulsion. The School recommends student for expulsion. There is a hearing before a hearing officer with parents and the child's attorney. The hearing officer decides to expel or to recommend an alternative placement (more often): alternative high school, TIPS program (grades 7-8), Adult Education, homebound instruction. Students can appeal to the Board of Trustees.

I have monthly meetings with all the SROs in the District, including the one at Carver. We discuss what occurrences in the community may spill over into the school. The SROs sometimes present information to the Board of Trustees.

The philosophy of the District has changed. We try to minimize expulsions, to keep students in school. There were 88 expulsion in 1995 and only 2 in 2001. We have more alternatives now. For the alternative high school (University School) the district pools funds from all districts. The per-student funding follows the student. The TIPS program is funded from the District, using innovative program funds. Jerome Rice is the attendance worker who works with parents and students.

If a student is arrested and sent to DJJ, they may be re-admitted on their return to their original school or sent to the alternative school, with appropriate counseling referral, such as alcohol and drug counseling.

With the state level report cards for school, there is more pressure on schools to perform. Whitlock will have an unsatisfactory grade. They need to improve the school climate, increase respect for staff and improve staff morale.

**Spartanburg Department of Public Safety
School Violence Prevention at Carver School
Key Informant Interview**

Name James Chambers Title/Position ISS Supervisor at Carver
Date 9/18/01 Interviewer SM and GA

1. What is your role/responsibility related to this project?

He is the ISS Supervisor. In ISS he does several things related to this project: (1) He oversees the Second Step program - anger management, empathy training; (2) Each day in 7th period, he does a lecture on behavior, school rules, has Q& A about the rules. He sometimes uses the *Check It Out* video.

2. Describe the violence situation at Carver before the inception of this project.

At one time, it was really bad. It was out of hand in fighting.

3. What changes, if any, have you observed since the project began?

I have seen student back off from the opportunity to fight, because of Officer Johnson. (Students know) that misbehavior is not tolerated. But some students revolve in and out of ISS.

4. What project initiatives have worked well? (How do you know that?)

The Get Real About Violence program has been effective. I have not done it yet this year (beginning of school year). There is a lot of respect (for officers). "This school could not survive without Officer Johnson."

There was a decline in ISS referrals at the end of last school year. (2000-2001)

Last school year in ISS we had Get Real about Violence; PS officers came in to IIS and talked to kids. We had other speakers about safety, such as from the Fire Department. We also had motivational speakers, such as Mr. Ben Wright. It was effective.

5. What has not worked as well? (How do you know that?)

We need more parent involvement. We have not had that. Often parents don't show up (at school) when the child gets into trouble.

6. Lessons learned: If you could start over, what would you do differently?

It would be better to send a letter to parents about the (violence/conflict prevention) program. I would be better to send formal letter to parents when a child goes to ISS.

**Spartanburg Department of Public Safety
School Violence Prevention at Carver School
Key Informant Interview**

Name James Morris Title/Position Asst' Pricipal at Carver
Date 9/18/01 Interviewer SM and GA

1. What is your role/responsibility related to this project?
I am assistant principal at Carver and deal with discipline issues. No direct role in this project.

2. Describe the violence situation at Carver before the inception of this project
There have been problems with some kids. Some kids re already in DJJ in the 7th grade - a sad situation.

3. What changes, if any, have you observed since the project began?
N/A - no response

4. What project initiatives have worked well? (How do you know that?)
It's OK having the SRO at school. We need more community involvement and parent involvement with the school.

5. What has not worked as well? (How do you know that?)
No response

6. Lessons learned: If you could start over, what would you do differently?
I would like to have a boot camp here (in Spartanburg). They have one as an early intervention program in the schools in Greer where I used to work.

Focus group w/ Carver after-school group 3/19/01

Interviewer : George Appenzeller and Sarah Meadows

The after-school group named Points for Partners consisted of three girls and three boys, three of whom are 8th graders and three of whom are 9th graders. The group meets on Monday and Thursday afternoons from 3:30 PM-5:00 PM with their advisor, Mr. Anthony Brothers, who is also the Guidance Counselor at Carver. According to the Carver principal, Robin Johnson, Mr. Brothers is paid from this grant for these extra duties. Students participated in a focus group with the evaluators. The advisor, Mr. Brothers, was nearby, but was not present during the discussion.

Question 1: What have you learned from being in this group?

It showed us how to be leaders, not followers.
We learned how to pull up our grades.
Officer Johnson gave us written assignments.
We learned how to listen.
We learned by writing in our journals.
It gave us time and opportunity to think about things.
We had time to think about what's happening.

We took a field trip to the museum. We saw trains and animals - that helps with school, too.

We play games to learn things:

Quiz games
"Rumours"

I learned to be a leader, not a follower, not to do fighting. We learned to take responsibility - we learned this from Officer Johnson.

We wrote a paper "What would you do if----"

Question 2: How is it different for you now after being in the group?

I feel more responsibility for myself.
We were encouraged to be responsible in the classroom too.
Now friends ask to be in the group.

Question 3: What if this program had not been available?

I would have gotten into more trouble.

Question 4: What advice do you have for others in setting up a similar groups?

Choose students (for the group) wisely - not all members should be kids in trouble - a mixture is best.

You need some students (in the group) to serve as a good example to others.

Get some students with good grades.

Invite students who are willing to take on a challenge.

You need to have a couple of bad kids - to reform them - turn them around.

Have a school advisor available every day.

Make sure the school advisor isn't too strict.

Make sure the school advisor is on time.

CARVER STUDENTS Group #2 - 10 students

Date: 9/18/01

Interviewers: G Appenzeller and S Meadows

10 - have NOT been in ISS 4 M 6 F 1-8th 9-9th

1. What activities do you know about to reduce violence and conflict (arguments) among students and among students and teachers here at Carver?
PALS Club. Beta Club
Teachers monitor the hallways.
Officer Johnson interacts with students
Cameras in the hallways and lunchroom
The Culture Club – you learn about different cultures.
2. Have you participated directly in any of these activities?
I have been in PALS Club, Beta Club
Student Council
Culture Club
Fellowship of Christian Athletes
3. What contact have you had with the SRO at your school?
We see him all the time. He is always in the hall talking to students.
He intervenes in fights.
He tries to keep things from happening.
4. What effect, if any, have these activities you just named had on you?
If you want to be in a club, you have to keep up your grades.
I don't want to get into ISS.
We want to keep up our status/image. People look up to you if you are a 9th grader as a role model.
5. What effect, if any, have these activities you just named had on other students you know or have observed?
ISS is a loss of freedom.
For some kids, ISS has made them think twice afterwards.
But some kids would rather be in ISS than in their regular classes.
For one girl who was sent to DJJ, she told me it was horrible. For some kids who go to DJJ, there is no effect.
6. Were you ever afraid at school?
Not really. Some kids are scared at first, but they get over it.
Some teachers are afraid of students. One teacher (name?) left. She said she couldn't handle it.
"You can get along with anybody"
A few students try to intimidate others – not many do this.
7. Are you afraid now?
No.

8. Suggestions to further reduce violence and conflict at school?
In ISS, make students go through anger management classes.
Teach kids to respect each other.
I know kids who wanted to bring weapons to school but they didn't.
Talk to a teacher or guidance counselor. (Most students indicated that they had someone at school they felt comfortable taking to)
(Do something) at kids' home. How parents raise you, that's how you act at school.

CARVER TEACHERS Group #1

Date: 9/18/01

Time: 8:40AM

Interviewers: G Appenzeller and S

Meadows

Total number of teachers in focus group: 2

1M, 1F

Grades they teach: 7,8,9

Experience at this school: 11-23 years

1. Think back before the last school year began. What are your impressions of the violence/conflict situation at the school prior to when the project officially began? (with hiring of Officer Johnson)
 - a. Re: violence at school?
 - b. Re: interpersonal conflict between students?
 - c. Re: interpersonal conflict between students and teachers?

There have been fewer incidents over the years. Over the last two years, kids are settling in better. (7th graders).

There are always a few fights at the beginning of each year, then they (fights) go down.

Kids here are not mean. It is typical teen age stuff.

There is some bullying, less so since the (current) SRO has been here. He mingles with the kids, is not overly authoritarian.

We know kids with problems are different; with Special Ed students, the law will only allow you to do so much.

2. Over the past school year, what activities did you observe being put into place to reduce crime, violence and interpersonal conflict? (were you involved in any way?)

PALS club for girls – past 2-3 years

ISS – (one teacher) writes up 20 students a year for not coming to lunch detention

Mr. Chambers is in charge of ISS

Officer Johnson takes part in discussions in (regular) classes

New school building makes security better – old building had too many nooks and crannies, made it hard to supervise students in hallways.

3. Which of these do you believe were successful?
4. Describe the situation at the end of the school year regarding violence and interpersonal conflict.
 - a. Re general violence
 - b. Re: interpersonal conflict student/student?
 - c. Re: Interpersonal conflict student/teacher?
5. What are your perceptions of the ISS program?
6. Of the SRO program?
7. What are your perceptions about student fear of crime and victimization?

Don't feel afraid.

8. What suggestions do you have to further reduce crime, violence and conflict at school?

EH kids get too much (leeway?) They have a lack of accountability.

9. How safe do you feel at this school? Has this changed in any way during the past year? If
so,
how?

CARVER TEACHERS Group #2

Date: 9/18/01

Time: 9:30AM

Interviewers: G Appenzeller and S

Meadows

Total number in focus group: 2 (1 teacher, 1 staff)

2F

Grades they teach: 7,8,9

Experience at this school: 6 weeks

1. Think back before the last school year began. What are your impressions of the violence/conflict situation at the school prior to when the project officially began? (with hiring of Officer Johnson)

a. Re: violence at school?

b. Re: interpersonal conflict between students?

c. Re: interpersonal conflict between students and teachers?

N/A Both have just started working at Carver this year. So far, they perceive students as “normal” re: conflict and fighting.

2. Over the past school year, what activities did you observe being put into place to reduce crime, violence and interpersonal conflict? (were you involved in any way?)

PALS club – (new teacher) is co-advisor for club; it teaches personal and leadership skills; girls want to be in it. It is a mixture of kinds of girls.

School Improvement Council- students have to write an essay that is screened by Principal Robin Johnson.

Guidance Counselors

Officer Johnson talks to students, is friendly with students. He is an authority but also a pal.

3. Which of these do you believe were successful?
4. Describe the situation at the end of the school year regarding violence and interpersonal conflict.
 - a. Re general violence
 - b. Re: interpersonal conflict student/student?
 - c. Re: Interpersonal conflict student/teacher?

(Staff) sees students who have been sent to the office for discipline – she has no idea how they came to be there, what led up to it.

These seem to be normal student conflicts. Some students like to pick on others, some hitting, he said-she said.

Student-teacher conflict is mostly “talking back, ”nothing terrible.

5. What are your perceptions of the ISS program?

(teacher) I don't know the details of what happens there, but when students return after going to ISS, “It's a new day.” It has been appositve experience for students.

6. Of the SRO program?

Officer Johnson earns his salary. It has been positive.

7. What are your perceptions about student fear of crime and victimization?

I don't see any evidence of fear on the part of students.
I don't hear any student conversation about fear.

8. What suggestions do you have to further reduce crime, violence and conflict at school?

Don't know what else could be done.

Steps have been (already) taken. The SRO can intervene and take participants outside. (staff) I suggest we need a better way to communicate within the school building and grounds. Our walkie-talkies don't transmit well in this new building – too much steel. It would help if we could use them. We have phones in classrooms, but radios are needed for hallway and outside monitoring by teachers and staff.

The school had a bomb threat last week. We had been trained, but were not sure of the proper procedure.

9. How safe do you feel at this school? Has this changed in any way during the past year? If so, how?

I feel safe here.
I can talk to the students in my classroom.
Some conflicts will always occur.

CARVER TEACHERS Group #3

Date: 9/18/01 Time: 10:30AM Interviewers: G Appenzeller and S Meadows

Total number in focus group: 4 (2 staff, 2 tchr) 1M 3 F

Grades they teach: 7,8,9 Experience at this school: 3-7 years

1. Think back before the last school year began. What are your impressions of the violence/conflict situation at the school prior to when the project officially began? (with hiring of Officer Johnson)
 - a. Re violence at school?
 - b. Re: interpersonal conflict between students?
Students need to know how to handle themselves (better) in the hallways. This is prevention of potential problems. Some times things start out as playing, then it gets into shoving. This (fights) gets us a reputation in the community.
No serious incident, but it escalates into shouting matches.
 - c. Re: interpersonal conflict between students and teachers?
I (staff) see this as area of greatest need – for kids to know how to respond (when they are being disciplined by teachers or with peers), to know how to handle themselves. Often they tell me “ I have a right to say ----.”
2. Over the past school year, what activities did you observe being put into place to reduce crime, violence and interpersonal conflict? (were you involved in any way?)
(Guidance) has conducted a group of 8-9 students on conflict resolution. It was not as successful as I would like. I plan to do groups this year, but with smaller number per group. The school had a “Pow Wow” meeting at the beginning of the year. We encouraged students to talk to a teacher or guidance counselor if they are worried about a potential conflict. Then teachers can listen and warn administrators to intervene. We made announcements about rules, detention, time out, etc.
Teachers post their class rules in the classroom.
3. Which of these do you believe were successful?
There were services for a small group of kids referred to guidance. We are always looking for programs that will work. There is a great need for a large number of students for conflict resolution.
4. Describe the situation at the end of the school year regarding violence and interpersonal conflict.
 - a. Re general violence
 - b. Re: interpersonal conflict student/student?
 - c. Re: Interpersonal conflict student/teacher?
5. What are your perceptions of the ISS program?
I know that there are special programs by officer Johnson and some other officers.

6. Of the SRO program?

Many teachers have Officer Johnson come into class to explain the law (about disrupting school). Students talk to him in the hallways. Students go to him. He is a good liaison between the school and parents.

7. What are your perceptions about student fear of crime and victimization?

Most kids feel safe at school.

8. What suggestions do you have to further reduce crime, violence and conflict at school?
A program on Peer Mediation would be good, helpful. We are always looking for something on their level on conflict resolution.

We have diverted kids to the alternative school. This has been the most effective thing to reduce conflicts, to remove the most disruptive students.

Special Ed kids can be suspended and sent to the alternative school. The TIPS program and the University School. They get some special services there. They have a mental health counselor 2 days per week.

ASP – Alternative Service Program

9. How safe do you feel at this school? Has this changed in any way during the past year? If so, how?

(I/we) feel safe here. Most teachers feel safe. A small percentage do not feel safe. They fear that a student may have a knife or other weapon. Some kids make teachers feel threatened.

CARVER TEACHERS

Date: 9/18/01 Time: AM Interviewers: G Appenzeller and S Meadows
Total number of teachers in focus group
Grades they teach Experience at this school:

1. Think back before the last school year began. What are your impressions of the violence/conflict situation at the school prior to when the project officially began? (with hiring of Officer Johnson)
 - a. Re: violence at school?
 - b. Re: interpersonal conflict between students?
 - c. Re: interpersonal conflict between students and teachers?
2. Over the past school year, what activities did you observe being put into place to reduce crime, violence and interpersonal conflict? (were you involved in any way?)
3. Which of these do you believe were successful?
4. Describe the situation at the end of the school year regarding violence and interpersonal conflict.
 - a. Re general violence
 - b. Re: interpersonal conflict student/student?
 - c. Re: Interpersonal conflict student/teacher?
5. What are your perceptions of the ISS program?
6. Of the SRO program?
7. What are your per captions about student fear of crime and victimization?
8. What suggestions do you have to further reduce crime, violence and conflict at school?
9. How safe do you feel at this school? Has this changed in any way during the past year? If so, how?

CARVER PARENTS – 4 parents

Date: 9/18/01 Interviewers: G Appenzeller and S Meadows
4 - F 4 - Their student has NOT been in ISS 4 - 9th grade

1. What activities do you know about to reduce crime, violence and conflict among students and among students and teachers here at Carver?

Parents were unaware of any special programs at Carver to reduce conflict.

“I thought every school had an Officer Johnson.”

I noted how well he (Officer Johnson) related to all the kids.

2. What effect, if any, have these activities had on your child?

I have felt good about them (activities my child is involved in).

My child talks about Officer Johnson all the time at home. It is always very positive. He is very approachable.

Officer Johnson volunteers in an outside school mentoring program that my daughter is in.

3. What effect if any, have these programs had on other students you know or have observed?

I volunteer at the school discipline office. I see children sent there. They respect Officer Johnson.

The counseling staff have been excellent. Ms. Gillespie intervened with a group of kids.

Ms. Gillespie worked with my child as a transfer student.

4. Have you participated in any conflict resolution classes for parents?

No

5. If yes, what effect did the classes have? N/A

6. What is your perception of how safe your child feels at this school?

My son had one person on the football team threaten him. Officer Johnson came to intervene and I feel better now.

My daughter transferred her from McCracken. She feels it is nicer here.

People have different perceptions of Carver. It's not that bad. It's worse in other places.

7. What suggestions do you have for further reducing violence and conflict at school?

They need more supervision outside before school begins. I have observed a lot of pushing and shoving.

I'm interested in the ISS program, what goes on there. The kids need to have anger management skills. Could some (qualified) community volunteers help with speakers? How could this be set up?

For “regular students”, is anger management part of the health curriculum? All kids need help with this and stress management.

My concern is that we are losing a lot of young guys. One young man I know seems so angry. I don't know what he is so angry about. He lost his eligibility to play football and now what will he be able to do?

Another young man I know has good behavior but has failed two times. He is lost academically.

Parents in general don't know what is happening at school; they are not aware of programs.

Could some parents be invited to a class to tell them about services? Most angry kids come from angry homes. Parents may need services, too.

What is another way to let them know what services are available through the school? This is hard because some parents are intimidated by schools.

WHITLOCK STUDENTS Group #1- 6 students

Date: 9/18/01 Interviewers: G Appenzeller and S Meadows
6- have not been in ISS 3 M 3 F 1 -8th grade, 5 -9th

1. What activities do you know about to reduce violence and conflict (arguments) among students and among students and teachers here at Whitlock?
Video cameras at school
Crime Stoppers Club
Involve kids in activities to keep them out of trouble.
Summer jobs and activities too keep kids out of trouble.
Teen Supreme and Boys and Girls Club
Sports and cheerleading
Being on a team is important – also having a back up plan (when conflict arises).
(after prompting) The SRO stops fights at school. He talks to kids.
Most students are afraid to talk to teachers.
2. Have you participated directly in any of these activities?
I'm in Crime Stoppers Club.
3. What contact have you had with the SRO at your school?
Not much with the new officer.
I had more with the one last year.
4. What effect, if any, have these activities you just named had on you?
I try to help other students (about their assignments)
I/we are more mature now, we have more responsibility (as a good example)
5. What effect, if any, have these activities you just named had on other students you know or have observed?
The video we saw at the beginning of school about the rules, consequences makes you think about it. We need to set an example (as older students).
6. Were you ever afraid at school?
Yes, my first year here. I was afraid I would not fit in. I was shy.
I have been afraid about gang activities that happen outside of school (such as football games or the fair) but some kids want to go (to activities) to see the fights.
Some (gang) kids do give warnings at school sometimes that something (fight) is going to happen. Gang kids don't fight during school. An issue now is talking to authority.
7. Are you afraid now?
Not really
8. Suggestions to further reduce violence and conflict at school?
Metal detectors for weapons (some students disagreed with this suggestion)
We now have more activities – many things to do.
They are too strict.

Don't put kids into a big huddle, like at lunch. They need for us to spread out.
A high number of 9th graders did not pass; they were kept back. This is a problem.
Teachers should be more willing to help us (during class) not just before we have to go to another class, when there is not time left.
We want more time to go to lockers, more frequent times.
We don't like the intramurals before school. It is too strict, too structured. It was more fun before. We feel as 9th graders that we have lost some privileges.

WHITLOCK STUDENTS Group #2- 6 students

Date: 9/18/01

Interviewers: G Appenzeller and S Meadows

6 have been in ISS

5M 1F

1 -8th grade, 5- 9th grade

1. What activities do you know about to reduce violence and conflict (arguments) among students and among students and teachers here at Carver?
Security cameras
Teen Supreme
Crime Stoppers Club
We have the SRO here.
“The rules”
The Code of Conduct – we had to sign that we had read it, that we knew the consequences.
2. Have you participated directly in any of these activities?
Teen Supreme (2 students)
In ISS, I do my work. You are isolated from other students. The ISS supervisor leads a discussion about violence.
3. What contact have you had with the SRO at your school?
Several students have talked to the SRO.
4. What effect, if any, have these activities you just named had on you?
I do better so it won't happen again (many indicated they did not want to go back to ISS.)
It is boring in ISS.
5. What effect, if any, have these activities you just named had on other students you know or have observed?
Some seem to do better, some it has no effect.
Talking to adults (at school) helps.
6. Were you ever afraid at school?
No
7. Are you afraid now?
No
8. Suggestions to further reduce violence and conflict at school?
Another (additional) SRO at our school.
Some students bring issues from the outside to school. Some of this is from gangs but some issues are not from gangs. (The students referenced problems that happened after a shooting in the community several years ago.)
They think the school ought to talk to people involved in problems and try to stop it.
The school ought to talk to parents. Tell them what is going on.
(When questioned, these students participated in few after-school activities. Most said they did homework or “slept” after school. One lifted weights and one played soccer.)

WHITLOCK TEACHERS Group #1

Date: 9/19/01 Time: 8:40AM Interviewers: G Appenzeller and S Meadows

Total number of teachers in focus group: 5 3M, 2F

Grades they teach: 7,8,9 Experience at this school: 3-16 years

1. What activities are you aware of at the school to reduce crime, violence and interpersonal conflicts among students and among students and teachers?

The (structured) intramural program before school has cut down on the amount of fighting. This is the first year that has been in place (with advent of new principal and new class schedule.) In addition to the gym, students can go to the computer lab, library and a game room before class begins.

There is more supervision of student at all times.

We have separate hallways for each grade level, which cuts down on opportunities for conflict.

There is a separate lunch period for each grade level

There are cameras in hallways

The Boys and Girls Club has activities after school

Resource Officer (Officer Camp – he is new this year. The former SRO transferred to the high school). He walks around.

The SRO is the enforcer. He deals with the physical issues.

Officer Camp has good rapport with students.

Crime Stoppers Club – it is safe (in the club) to inform on other students. There is also a hotline.

2. What changes, if any, did you notice during the last school year in the amount or degree of crime, violence and interpersonal conflicts at school?

Since the beginning of this year, we have seen a drop in fighting.

(note: Most respondents attributed the drop in fighting to the new structure and schedule.)

3. What suggestions do you have to further reduce crime, violence and conflict at school?

We need more teachers and staff (for monitoring and oversight).

Clear book bags would be helpful; we could see what is inside.

Or kids could go to lockers more often so that they only have to carry a few books at a time.

Now students are allowed to visit lockers three times per day.

4. How safe do you feel at this school? Has this changed in any way during the past year? If so, how?

I feel safe here, even more so this year. There has been an extreme change (note: The change teachers mentioned was attributed to the change in the administration of the school).

This is the first year there has been good administration here.

The administration has recognized “repeaters” and moved them out to the alternative school, TIPS program, DISC or other placement. For Special Ed students (ones with an IEP) their needs are met there, but they do return to Whitlock after a semester.

We need more slots at the alternative school. Whitlock has only seven slots.

We still have incidents; one student brought bullets to school. The student was suspended for five days. This was a Special Ed student.
I have no indication that the kids feel unsafe.

WHITLOCK TEACHERS Group #2

Date: 9/19/01

Time: 9:30AM

Interviewers: G Appenzeller and S
Meadows

Total number of teachers in focus group: 5 2M, 3F

Grades they teach: 9th Experience at this school: 4-21 years (avg – 12)

1. What activities are you aware of at the school to reduce crime, violence and interpersonal conflicts among students and among students and teachers?

We have more surveillance.

The organized activities in the morning before school are helpful.

The Crime Stoppers Club

Kids feel OK about reporting early conflict to the school administration for resolution. The administration has squelched issues brought in from the community, such as gangs.

The school gave public recognition of responsible behavior and good citizenship. Two students were rewarded for good citizenship, such as returning money lost by a teacher.

At the beginning of the year, we showed a video on district and school rules, including the dress code.

The SRO is popular with students. He is a father figure and confidante. He is active in after-school activities. He gives (students) a feeling of protection. A few students think he is out to get them.

Officer Camp participates in after school activities, and goes to the prom.

He can tell the kids what they need to do. They know he can take them off to jail.

All of the SROs we have had have been good.

2. What changes, if any, did you notice during the last school year in the amount or degree of crime, violence and interpersonal conflicts at school?

The administration is open to proactive intervention. The principal and officer seek information in the community about potential problems.

Discipline is better this year. I felt unsafe before.

We have a new communications system with phones and panic buttons in the classrooms.

3. What suggestions do you have to further reduce crime, violence and conflict at school?

There should be an ongoing effort with conflict resolution and assertiveness training classes for students in order to counter the home learning and socialization of so many of our students. They don't get a good example of this (conflict resolution) at home. They are used to loud conflicts.

Students seem to want to keep their conflicts on the outside of school, "leave it at home". It is different this year.

We need more spaces for alternative school placements. The school administration doesn't want to put these kids on the streets. We need intensive help for this group.

There are not enough slots at the alternative school. The alternative school need to have more focus on vocational skills for some students, more structure.

4. How safe do you feel at this school? Has this changed in any way during the past year? If so, how?

I do (feel safe).

I have felt unsafe at times. (last year) A student followed me home.

The improved internal communication system has helped: phones in classrooms, panic buttons. I know Officer Camp and others will respond.

Students mostly feel safe, but some resent the safety mechanisms.

Some little kids feel afraid of bullies.

School is probably the safest place they have. Some kids see school as an oasis. They don't want to mess up and know that (at school) there will be consequences.

We hear of incidents that happen in student neighborhoods; one girl reported seeing a man shot in front of her house.

It is different now. Five or so students were sent out of here. These were the major culprits.

WHITLOCK TEACHERS Group #3

Date: 9/19/01 Time: 10:45AM Interviewers: G Appenzeller and S Meadows

Total number of teachers in focus group: 4 2M, 2F

Grades they teach: 8th Experience at this school: 4-27 years

1. What activities are you aware of at the school to reduce crime, violence and interpersonal conflicts among students and among students and teachers?
The emergency response system is good. Problems are dealt with quickly.
The SRO talks to kids; he encourages them to report wrongdoing.
Having an authority figure in school is very helpful.
Kids bring neighborhood problems in to school and he (SRO) can follow up in the neighborhoods. This also gives kids a chance to learn to trust authority. This is positive. It is also good for the police officer to get positive feedback.
Last year, I invited the previous SRO to my class to speak. He showed a video about violence and students wrote an essay about what they learned.
There is a club for kids: Students Against Crime (sic). Troubled students have been turned around.
There is a Boys and Girls Club.
The school tries to catch and do things early. We tell students “come talk to me.” We urge them to talk to a teacher.
All teachers and staff were trained in Crisis Intervention two years ago. We get refresher training.
2. What changes, if any, did you notice during the last school year in the amount or degree of crime, violence and interpersonal conflicts at school?
Past SROs have fit into the school really well. All have checked on the kids and done follow up.
Students can report rumors (of impending conflicts) to the SRO and “it never happens.” He defuses it.
This year there has been a general tightening of discipline. There is less rowdy behavior.
This year there are specific duties for teachers and better control. We are headed in the right directions.
The building is secure.
We have a group of kids here from a crime-infested neighborhood. Five years ago two kids were killed in the community and occasionally there are rumors about revenge. These kids have no stable parents at home and little supervision.
3. What suggestions do you have to further reduce crime, violence and conflict at school?
There should be parenting classes and other assistance for parents.
Some kids are taking care of siblings with no parental supervision. They need help.
It would be good to involve these kids in activities. Their parents are just struggling to provide the basics. They don’t have time to interact with the kids.
4. How safe do you feel at this school? Has this changed in any way during the past year? If so, how?
There are always “possible dangers” but it feels like home to me.

I feel pretty safe here. Our building is secure.

Some students may feel afraid of another student.

There is a perception of Whitlock. Whitlock has a negative reputation. (most teachers said this reputation was not deserved)

Perceptions of Whitlock in the community have been negative, but are changing.

There was a recent bomb threat at school. There may be some general fears.

Kids do bring neighborhood problems to school.

The SRO builds respect for authority. This is a good influence, a good role. It has benefits for the SRO also to get positive feedback from kids.

The SRO cares for the students and often goes beyond the call: A teacher told about a previous SRO kept two (fighting) students from being cut by holding a plate glass window with his bare hands.

WHITLOCK TEACHERS Group #4

Date: 9/19/01 Time: 11:00AM Interviewers: G Appenzeller and S Meadows

Total number of teachers in focus group: 4 1M, 3F

Grades they teach: 7th Experience at this school: 2-8 years

1. What activities are you aware of at the school to reduce crime, violence and interpersonal conflicts among students and among students and teachers?
Teachers submit names of students to the guidance program.
The Crime Stoppers Club
The Boys and Girls Club
There is an after-school study group.
The SRO shows that men in uniform aren't bad, that an officer is a friend, not an enemy.
Last year, the SRO gave out awards for citizens to kids who spoke out. An example was a student who spoke out against sexual harassment (at home?). The school gave an award this year for honesty, a student who found and returned some money to a teacher.
(if a student is unruly) Students are removed from the building for the safety of others.
2. What changes, if any, did you notice during the last school year in the amount or degree of crime, violence and interpersonal conflicts at school?
The number of fights has been reduced because of consequences (of fighting).
The SRO has been an important presence. He provides an interventions; this helps kids cool off.
The SRO explains the law (about disrupting school). The kids sign to say they have read it.
Some students have asked to talk to the officer.
We have had two bomb threats so far this past week.
We now have more locked doors; we restrict access. Visitors to campus have to sign in.
We have emergency phones and panic buttons in our classrooms.
3. What suggestions do you have to further reduce crime, violence and conflict at school?
Students need to be taught conflict resolution skills. Students see what their parents do. This is their example. Students need re-socialization.
We need to offer parent education and involvement, but it is hard.
"If you meet the parent, you meet the problem." They raise their children as they were raised. They care about their children but don't know how else to act.
We really need the SRO. He shows that authority can be good, a lesson for kids. The SRO is involved in the community; he talks to parents and children at home.
4. How safe do you feel at this school? Has this changed in any way during the past year? If so, how?
I don't feel threatened by my students.
The building has security.
These kids don't have parent involvement. They have impaired life experience.
In general, 7th graders are more easily intimidated by older students. I have observed no major picking on this year. I have gotten few complaints about bullying.
If a student is afraid, they have places they can go (talk to a teacher or staff).
The SRO has skills to help if a situation develops.

Whitlock has a bad image in the community. Some parents are concerned, but this is “old stuff.” This is our burden from the reputation of the past. Some parents have fears, but kids quickly adapt here.

WHITLOCK PARENTS – 4 parents

Date: 9/18/01 Interviewers: G Appenzeller and S Meadows

2 –M 2-F 4 - Their student has NOT been in ISS 7,8,9 grades represented

In addition to parents, the following school personnel were present: SRO Officer Camp,

Guidance Counselor: Carolyn Ragin, Principal: Kenny Blackwood

District 7 School Service Coord: Brenda Story (part of time)

1. What activities do you know about to reduce crime, violence and conflict among students and among students and teachers here at Whitlock?

Friends of my children have been suspended and arrested for fighting.

Whitlock is described as “the worst school in the district.”

Students sent to the alternative school bear the stigma.

Guidance staff and teachers at Whitlock are friendly. They have a good relationship.

The SRO is positive. He is visible and intervenes early.

I have heard less talk lately.

Other administrators and teachers have a role to play.

Do you have in-school suspension at Whitlock?

There are after-school activities: the Boys and Girls Club (an extension of the Whitlock faculty along with other staff. It is an extended day program.), Teen Supreme. Principal Blackwood supplied this information.

The cooking club

Band

Outside programs like Gear Up held at USC Spartanburg.

There is a journalism group. My son’s class got to go to TEC to observe.

5. What effect, if any, have these activities had on your child?

None of these parents had children who had been in ISS, but they wanted to know what happens during ISS.

In ISS students have to concentrate on their lessons, and also get tutoring on the PACT test.

They get individualized interventions about what got them into ISS. There are fewer ISS referral this school year. Principal Blackwood supplied this information.

I like getting direct e-mail reports from my daughter’s teachers.

6. What effect if any, have these programs had on other students you know or have observed?

There is a lot of peer pressure among our children to get good grades.

I encourage my child to get involved with only positive people.

7. Have you participated in any conflict resolution classes for parents? No

8. If yes, what effect did the classes have? N/A

9. What is your perception of how safe your child feels at this school?

My daughter feels comfortable here.

10. What suggestions do you have for further reducing violence and conflict at school?

Talk to kids (who get into trouble) instead of punishing them.

What role does the SRO play in prevention? His uniform makes him visible, a symbol of authority. Teachers don't have the uniform.

Could there be classes for kids about anger?

During orientation could they introduce the SRO? – *Response from Ms. Ragin – this already happens at the beginning of the year. All staff are introduced to students.*

Could school volunteers be helpful as mentors?

Get more parents involved in the PTO.

Note: Much of the discussion throughout the one hour group time focused on the new class schedule, the before-school programs and the academic program of the school, as explained by Principal Blackwood. The researchers stopped process of asking questions when the school officials began responding to the parents. This changed the intent of the focus group.