APPENDIX

A

Analysis of School Gang Survey

June 24, 1998

To: Senator Royce West, Chair
       Senate Interim Committee on Gangs and Juvenile Justice

From: Catherine Clark and Kerri Briggs
       Texas Center for Educational Research

Re: Survey on School Security Issues and Policies

Information about Responding Districts

Six hundred and fourteen (614) Texas public school districts (including six charter schools) responded to the Survey on School Security Issues and Policies distributed in November 1997. The number of students enrolled in responding districts was 2,589,290, representing 68 percent of the total Texas student enrollment. (Additional information about data analysis and the sample is presented in Appendix A – Technical Issues.)

Data in Table 1 and Table 2 show that responding districts are representative of Texas school districts in terms of size and enrollment of low-income students. As shown in Table 1, more than half of the districts in each size category responded to the survey. Two-thirds of the 145 largest districts responded. As shown in Table 2, respondents represent a roughly even distribution across districts ranked by percent of low-income students.

Table 1. Responding districts by size

Size	Responding Districts	All Texas Districts	Percent of Size Category Responding
Small ISD (0-1599 students)	375	698	54%
Medium ISD (1600-4,999 students)	124	216	57%
Large ISD (5,000-49,999 students)	90	136	66%
Extra-Large ISD (50,000+ students)	6	9	67%
Unknown size*	19		

*It was not possible to categorize some districts by size category because questionnaires were returned anonymously.

Table 2. Responding districts by percentage of low-income students (students receiving free and reduced-price lunches)

Categories of Percent Low-Income	Responding Districts	All Texas Districts	Percent of Low-Income Category Responding
0-40%	224	389	58%
40-50%	138	241	57%
50-60%	97	186	52%
60%+	136	243	56%
Unknown % low-income*	19		

*It was not possible to categorize some districts by income category because questionnaires were returned anonymously.

Gangs

EXISTENCE OF GANGS

Individuals responding to the survey estimated the number of gangs in their school district and also estimated how many individuals belong to gangs. A total of 119 districts (19 percent of respondents) indicated that there were gangs on campuses. The average number of gangs per district among those reporting was seven. A total of 138 (24 percent) responded that there were gang members on campuses. The average number of gang members per district among those reporting was 126. As Table 3 below shows, the preponderance of gang members is in large and extra-large school districts. Among large districts, the average number of gang members per district was 172. Among extra-large districts, the average number of gang members reported was 2,070.

Table 3. Estimates of gang presence by size

Size	Avg. Number of Gangs	Avg. Number of Gang Members
Small ISD	2	13
Medium ISD	3	45
Large ISD	10	172
Extra-Large ISD	71	2070
Unknown size*	2.5	23

According to school officials, an estimated 17,438 students belong to gangs. This represents 0.7 percent of the sample student population and 0.45 percent of the total Texas student population.

DISTRICT PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR IDENTIFYING GANGS

Among the 614 districts in this sample, 147 (24 percent) have a person or a department within the district responsible for the identification of gangs. As indicated in Table 4a, larger districts

are more likely to have an individual or department with responsibility for this task. Only 16 percent of small districts in this sample had such an individual or department. In contrast, 55 percent of the large districts and 83 percent of the extra-large districts have an individual or department specifically responsible for identifying gangs or gang members on school campuses. In Table 4b, the same information is reported by percent of low-income students. Viewed this way, only small differences exist among districts. In other words, districts that enroll high percentages of low-income students are not necessarily more likely to have person or a department assigned to identify gangs and gang members.

Table 4a. Does your district have a department or person responsible for identifying the existence of gangs and gang members on campuses?

District Size	No	Yes	Percent Responding Yes	Not Applicable[*]
Small ISD	314	60	16%	
Medium ISD	89	31	26%	
Large ISD	40	49	55%	1
Extra-Large ISD	1	5	83%	
Unknown size	16	2	11%	
TOTAL	460	147	24%	1

*Note: Respondents had the option of indicating that the question did not apply to their district. Only one responded in this manner.

Table 4b. Does your district have a department or person responsible for identifying the existence of gangs and gang members on campuses?

Categories of Percent Low-Income	No	Yes	Percent Responding Yes	Not Applicable[*]
0-40%	172	50	23%	
40-50%	100	38	28%	
50-60%	75	21	22%	
60%+	97	36	27%	1
Unknown %	16	2	11%	
TOTAL	460	147	24%	1

*Note: Respondents had the option of indicating that the question did not apply to their district. Only one responded in this manner.

Districts were also asked to indicate who is responsible for identifying gangs and gang members. Results are displayed in Table 5. Fewer than half (65) the respondents indicating that some person or department was responsible for identifying the existence of gangs named that person or department. Among those identified, the two most frequent were the school principal (32 districts) and police officers (19).

Table 5. Who identifies the existence of gangs and gang members on campuses?

Person or department	Count[*]	Percent of Responses
Principal	32	44%
Police	19	26%
Assistant principal	7	10%
Superintendent	6	8%
Counselor	5	7%
Teachers	2	3%
District department	1	1%
Attendance officers	1	1%

*Note: Because some respondents identified more than one person who had this responsibility, there are 73 individuals identified from 65 districts.

CRITERIA FOR IDENTIFYING GANG MEMBERS

Respondents were asked to describe the criteria used when identifying students belonging to gangs. The resulting list of criteria is quite varied (see Appendix B). The information presented below summarizes general themes among criteria used by district personnel to identify gangs and gang members. As shown in Table 6, the most frequent responses were "clothing and appearance" and "student actions and behavior." On many occasions, respondents offered more than one indicator for identifying gang members. However, not every district responding to the survey answered this question. Table 6 includes answers from 262 districts (352 did not respond).

Table 6. Criteria for identifying gang members

Criteria	Count	Percent of Responses
Clothing and appearance	265	50%
Student actions and behavior	117	22%
Information from people not at school or district	50	9%
Information from self and peers	46	9%
ISD personnel observe and interact with students	23	4%
Formal criteria, not defined by district	19	4%
"2 or more students with common sign and leadership and may conspire to commit illegal acts"	4	0.7%
Miscellaneous	10	2%

Respondents were asked whether faculty, parents, or students received training on gang identification or awareness. Faculty members (68 percent) were more likely to receive training than parents and students, although a fair number of parents (41 percent) and students (42 percent) also received this training. In small districts, all three groups were less likely to receive training than the same three groups in medium, large, and extra-large districts. There was little

distinction in who did or did not receive training based on the percent of low-income students in the district. The survey did not ask respondents to specify the type of training.

SECURITY PERSONNEL AND GANGS

Among a series of questions asking how, if at all, district security personnel work with gangs, one question asked about the existence of security personnel dedicated to gang issues full-time. Ninety-eight percent (all but four districts in the sample) responded to this question. Among those responding, only 21 districts (3 percent of respondents) have security personnel working with gangs and gang members on a *full-time* basis. This does not mean that only 21 districts have security personnel who address this issue—instead, it suggests that many districts do not have a serious gang problem, or they do not have personnel who are solely devoted to this issue. The distributions based on size and percent of low-income students are displayed in Tables 7a and 7b.

Table 7a. Are any security personnel assigned full-time to work with gangs and gang members?

District Size	No	Yes	Percent Responding Yes	Not Applicable[*]
Small ISD	362	1	0.3%	10
Medium ISD	114	6	5%	3
Large ISD	79	11	12	
Extra-Large ISD	3	3	50%	
Unknown size	18	0	0%	
TOTAL	576	21	3%	13

*Note: Respondents had the option of indicating that the question did not apply to their district.

Table 7b. Are any security personnel assigned full-time to work with gangs and gang members?

Categories of Percent Low-Income	No	Yes	Percent Responding Yes	Not Applicable[*]
0-40%	209	9	4%	6
40-50%	131	3	2%	4
50-60%	92	2	2%	1
60%+	126	7	5%	2
Unknown %	18	0	0%	
TOTAL	576	21	3%	13

*Note: Respondents had the option of indicating that the question did not apply to their district.

The survey asked whether security personnel participate in regional inter-agency task forces created to address gang issues. Table 8a and 8b show the responses. A small number of districts

(59) participate in such task forces. Almost 420 districts (68 percent of respondents) reported that the question did not apply. This could indicate that regional gang task forces (1) do not exist in some areas, (2) are not easily accessible to school districts, and/or (3) districts do not know about these task forces.

Table 8a. Does your security force, if any, participate in a regional inter-agency task force?

District Size	No	Yes	Percent Responding Yes	Not Applicable
Small ISD	47	4	1%	322
Medium ISD	44	14	11%	65
Large ISD	36	37	42%	16
Extra-Large ISD	3	3	50%	
Unknown size	1	1	6%	16
TOTAL	131	59	10%	419

Table 8b. Does your security force, if any, participate in a regional inter-agency task force?

Categories of Percent Low-Income	No	Yes	Percent Responding Yes	Not Applicable
0-40%	47	26	12%	150
40-50%	24	12	9%	102
50-60%	26	7	7%	62
60%+	33	13	10%	89
Unknown %	1	1	6%	16
TOTAL	131	59	10%	419

Respondents were asked about the type of information school district security forces keep related to the existence of gangs and gang members. As displayed in Tables 9a and 9b, almost 20 percent of the security personnel for districts in this sample (120 districts) keep some information about gangs and gang members.

A second question asked if district personnel collect demographic information about gang members that indicates their gender, race, or age. Fewer districts (70) collect this type of information (See Tables 10a and 10b). One hundred and nineteen (119 districts) indicated they do not collect this information. A large portion of respondents (418 districts) indicated this question did not apply in their district.

Table 9a. Does your security force, if any, maintain information on gangs and gang members?

District Size	No	Yes	Percent Responding Yes	Not Applicable
Small ISD	37	21	6%	314
Medium ISD	31	30	24%	62
Large ISD	9	62	70%	18
Extra-Large ISD	1	5	83%	
Unknown size	1	2	11%	15
TOTAL	79	120	20%	409

Table 9b. Does your security force, if any, maintain information on gangs and gang members?

Categories of Percent Low-Income	No	Yes	Percent Responding Yes	Not Applicable
0-40%	30	45	20%	148
40-50%	15	24	17%	99
50-60%	16	19	20%	60
60%+	17	30	22%	88
Unknown %	1	2	11%	15
TOTAL	79	120	20%	410

Table 10a. Does your security force, if any, maintain files or a database that document the gender, race, and age of identified gang members?

District Size	No	Yes	Percent Responding Yes	Not Applicable
Small ISD	42	10	3%	320
Medium ISD	48	10	8%	64
Large ISD	25	46	52%	18
Extra-Large ISD	3	3	50%	
Unknown size	1	1	6%	16
TOTAL	119	70	12%	418

Table 10b. Does your security force, if any, maintain files or a database that document the gender, race, and age of identified gang members?

Categories of Percent Low-Income	No	Yes	Percent Responding Yes	Not Applicable
0-40%	47	24	11%	151
40-50%	21	14	10%	103
50-60%	26	8	9%	60
60%+	24	23	17%	88
Unknown %	1	1	6%	16
TOTAL	119	70	12%	418

SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICIES

As shown in Table 11, many districts (71 percent) reported having discipline policies for students engaging in gang activity. Similarly, many districts (71 percent) have policies prohibiting the wearing of certain clothes. Fewer districts (31 percent) have policies regarding the removal of gang graffiti from the campuses. As districts increased in size, it was more likely that the district would have a policy related to gang activity, clothing, and graffiti. There were only slight differences among districts when examining their responses by percent of low-income students in the district.

Table 11. Policies related to gangs and students

Policy	No	Yes	Percent Responding Yes	Not Applicable
Discipline policy	175	426	71%	1
Clothing policy	178	431	71%	
Graffiti policy	413	184	31%	6

Respondents were asked to provide written descriptions of these policies: 157 districts (26 percent) described a discipline policy, 160 (26 percent) described a clothing policy, and 54 (9 percent) described a policy addressing graffiti removal. The descriptions of these policies provide sketchy information about the three types of policies. Most districts (62 out of 157) rely upon the Student Code of Conduct for their discipline policy. Beyond that, the following statements were provided as a description of the source for discipline policy: school-developed policy (29 districts), Texas Association of School Board (TASB) policy (22), and an Alternative Education Program policy (16).

Most districts described their policy regarding the wearing of certain clothes as a "dress code," providing little information beyond this brief statement. Others (9) indicated that their policy

was to "prohibit certain clothes." Some indicated they relied upon the Student Code of Conduct (38) while others adopted the standard TASB policy (15).

About half of the districts (55 districts or 9 percent of respondents) described their graffiti policies. Most were related to the length of time in which the district would remove the graffiti. The time frame ranged from "immediately" (11 districts) to within two days (1 district).

Policy Considerations

We offer the following issues for your consideration. Each issue is predicated on the assumption that the Senate Interim Committee on Gangs and Juvenile Justice is seeking a more structured, pro-active response from public school districts and public charter schools in identifying gangs and gang-related activity.

1. School districts should be encouraged to adopt policies related to (1) identification of gang members, (2) assignment of responsibility for identifying and documenting gang members who are enrolled in school, and (3) documentation of gang membership and/or gang activity.

2. The Texas Education Agency or the regional education service centers should work with law enforcement agencies to develop standardized training to enable school personnel to identify and report gang membership and gang behavior.

   When a public agency such as a school district identifies and records that a student has a gang affiliation, that student's record carries that mark permanently. The serious nature of gang identification by a public agency requires specific and standardized training of personnel so that identification is as accurate as possible. Training should specify primary and secondary criteria by which to identify gang members and gang activity and appropriate documentation procedures using the criteria. Policies adopted by the district should be compatible with the identification criteria and documentation procedures.

3. The state should advise school districts of the appropriate way to document and record student gang affiliation and gang behavior. School records should be compatible with district policies for gang identification and documentation. Student records should be reviewed periodically, and the school district should record status changes.

4. The state should clarify the composition, function, and responsibility of inter-agency task forces to address gang issues. School districts should receive guidance regarding participation in such task forces.

Appendix A. Technical Issues

In November 1997, the Texas Senate sent school districts a four-page survey asking questions about school safety; drug and alcohol prevention and treatment; and gang issues. This survey was jointly sponsored by Senator Teel Bivins (Chair, Senate Interim Committee on Education) and Senator Royce West (Chair, Senate Interim Committee on Gangs and Juvenile Justice).

The Sample

More than 600 school districts (n=614) responded to the survey. This results in a response rate of 58 percent. Some districts returned the survey anonymously (n=14). These districts are included in the reporting as "unknown" districts. In other words, it was not possible to determine how large these districts were or how many students were receiving free and reduced-price lunches. Similarly, it was not possible to match five other districts (those from the districts with duplicate names) with district demographic information. These districts are also included in the analysis as "unknown."

The Analysis

Data were analyzed separately by major topic, e.g., responses to gang questions were in a separate data file from the school safety and drug treatment questions and responses. The databases were matched with school district demographic information reported through the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS). Two variables in the AEIS system were used for this analysis.

> *Percent low-income:* The percent of low-income or economically disadvantaged students is calculated as the sum of the students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch or eligible for other public assistance, divided by the total number of students. (Source: PEIMS, October 1996)

> *Total students*: This is the total number of students who were reported in membership as of October 25, 1996, at any grade, from early childhood education through grade 12 on public school campuses. (Source: PEIMS, October 1996)

Using this information, two additional variables were created for analysis purposes: SIZE and LOW_SES.

SIZE:	Small district	0 - 1,599 students
	Medium district	1,600 - 4,999 students
	Large district	5,000 - 49,999 students
	Extra-large district	50,000+ students

LOW_SES	1	0-40% SES	3	50-60% SES
	2	40-50% SES	4	60%+ SES

Appendix B. Criteria for identifying gang members

Criteria	Count	Percent of Responses
Clothing and appearance		
Clothing, dress, bandanas	116	21.4
Signs and symbols	72	13.5
Skin markings, tattoos	35	6.6
Colors	31	5.7
Hair styles	10	1.9
Paraphernalia	1	0.2
Behavior and communication patterns, actions		
Graffiti, writing, tagging	36	6.7
Association with peers	30	5.6
Criminal activity	26	4.9
Actions, behavior	15	2.8
Dialect, language, talk	7	1.3
Street names	3	0.6
Information from people outside school or ISD		
Police information	42	7.9
Word-of-mouth, community contacts	8	1.5
Information from self and peers		
Self-admission	30	5.6
Student information	16	3.0
Observation and interaction with students		
Observe, visible ID	16	3.0
Know all students	7	1.3
Formal criteria from outside district	19	3.6
"2 or more students with common sign and leadership and may conspire to commit illegal acts"	4	0.7
Miscellaneous		
Policy handbook	3	0.6
No formal criteria	3	0.6
Staff training	2	0.4
Grades	1	0.2
Residence	1	0.2

Among the sample, only 262 districts responded. More than 350 districts did not respond to this question.