



Youth At-Risk Research Committee

(March 18, 2010)

Youth crime, violence and gangs are on the rise in Columbus.

- There has been at least one shooting in Columbus every day in 2010. In 2008, police received 12,530 reports of shots fired in the city, an average of 34 a day. This total represented a 9 percent increase from 2007 (Columbus Dispatch website);
- In 2009, out of the 83 killings in Columbus, about a quarter of the victims were under the age of 25, and 8 of the victims were under 15. Almost half of those suspected or arrested in connection with the 83 killings were under 25. (Columbus Police Department Interview);
- Columbus Police Department officials report that 25% of the killings in Columbus in 2009 were gang-related.

Truant students and school drop-outs are prime targets for recruitment into gangs

- Chronically truant students are 16 times more likely to use illicit drugs than non-truants; 21 times more likely to commit a serious property crime; 12 times more likely to commit a felony, and about 7 times more likely to be arrested (Henry & Huizinga, 2005).
- Median Annual Income for High school graduates in Columbus is \$25,420 (2007 dollars). Median annual income for high school drop-outs is \$10,981. Median annual income for college graduates is \$21,556 higher than those of high school drop-outs (Cities in Crisis, 2009; Education Research Center);

Too many kids are falling through the cracks at school;

- Columbus has **the ninth worst graduation rate** (44.7%) among the 50 largest school systems in the country (Cities in Crisis, 2009; Education Research Center):
- Columbus City Schools issued **4,262 out-of-school suspensions for truancy** in the 2008-9 school year (EMIS report, Ohio Department of Education)—despite the fact that this practice is against the written policy of the School district (Guide to Positive Student Behavior, p. 24);
- Reynoldsburg City Schools had 111 out-of-school suspensions for truancy and South-Western City Schools actually **expelled** 31 students for truancy (EMIS reports).
- Columbus City Schools issued more than 15,000 out-of school suspensions for "disruptive behavior" (EMIS report)—despite the fact that the District's official discipline policy strongly discourages out of school suspension for disruptive behavior.

There are effective ways to improve student behavior

The BREAD Organization got the Franklin County Prosecutor to spearhead the development of a model truancy reduction program at our 2006 Nehemiah Action. The Prosecutor along with BREAD and other stakeholders developed Project KEY which is in six schools. The results:

- Reduced chronic truancy by 55% in those six schools;
- Improved student attendance for more than 200 students;

Philadelphia, which has a higher poverty rate than Columbus, improved graduation rates by 23% over a ten-year period (1995-2005) to 62% (Cities in Crisis, 2009)

What We Want:

- Enforce Current Policies;
- Expand Programs that Work; and
- Identify other "evidence-based practices" that would help Columbus to address its problems.