



Center for Neighborhood Enterprise



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Violence-Free Zone Initiative FACT SHEET – 2010

THE VFZ PROGRAM:

Robert L. Woodson, Sr. and the Center for Neighborhood Enterprise (CNE) created the Violence-Free Zone initiative to address youth violence in schools and communities. The VFZ is directed by CNE, and is implemented by community-based organizations at each location. Violence-Free Zones are successfully reducing youth violence in a total of 36 public middle and high schools across the country, including Atlanta (5), Baltimore (5), Dallas (17), Milwaukee (8), and Richmond, VA (1).

RESULTS:

Three Baylor University studies¹ based on data reported by the Milwaukee Public Schools and Richmond Public Schools concluded that there have been significant impacts on the schools with the VFZ in improved safety in the schools (reductions in violent and nonviolent incidents); and increased presence of students in school (decreases in unexcused absences, suspensions, and trancies).

Violence-Free Zone Results Reported by Baylor University
<p>Milwaukee—Eight high schools with VFZ, 2008/2009 compared to pre-VFZ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violent incidents down 11% compared to increases of 15% for non-VFZ schools • Nonviolent incidents down 21% compared to increases of 19% for non-VFZ schools; • Suspensions down 29.6% compared with only a 9% decrease for non-VFZ schools • Increases in student GPAs of 4% compared to no increase in all MPS schools • Auto thefts around VFZ schools decreased by 25% compared to only 9% around non-VFZ schools
<p>Richmond, VA—George Wythe High School, VFZ 2008/2009 compared to pre-VFZ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16% reduction in incidents • 41% decrease in truancy rates • 18% reduction in police service calls to school • 61% reduction in motor vehicle thefts within 725 feet of school
<p>Baltimore, MD—Forest Park High School, VFZ introduced in September, 2009, 6 month results²</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total incidents and fighting down 55% • Attacks down 55% • Suspensions down 54% and expulsions down 70%

¹ Byron Johnson and William Wubbenhorst, *The Milwaukee Violence-Free Zone, Tracking the Milwaukee Violence-Free Zone, and The Richmond Violence-Free Zone*, Program on Prosocial Behavior, Baylor University, 2009 and 2010.

² Baltimore City Schools data

VFZ RESULTS, CONTINUED...

Baltimore schools reported similar results. In Milwaukee, VFZ schools also reported an increase in overall GPAs compared with non-VFZ schools. In Richmond, police attributed substantial decreases in motor vehicle thefts around the school to the presence of the Violence-Free Zone program.

WHY IT IS UNIQUE:

The Violence-Free Zone approach is unique in that it utilizes young adults from the same neighborhoods and backgrounds as students in the schools. Called Youth Advisors, they are able to prevent violence, resolve conflicts, and motivate students to responsible behavior and academic achievement. Because they have faced and overcome the same challenges, they receive the students' trust and confidences. They serve as role models that individuals can overcome their environments, and confiding in them is not regarded as snitching.

HOW IT WORKS:

The Center for Neighborhood Enterprise provides overall direction and management of the VFZ initiative. The community-based organizations hire, screen, train, and supervise the Youth Advisors at each school. The Youth Advisors act as hall and cafeteria monitors, mentors, counselors, and role models, and establish trust relationships with the students. In addition, teachers assign groups of high risk students to the Youth Advisors, who meet with them at lunch or other times to discuss and work out the issues that trouble them. They provide safe passage to students before and after school. The Youth Advisors report to and work closely with the school administration, teachers, counselors and safety staff. The community-based organizations also offer after-school, weekend, and summer programs, creating 24-7 relationships with young people.

THE YOUTH ADVISORS:

There generally are up to seven (7) Youth Advisors assigned to each school, including a Supervisor. Each Youth Advisor has a caseload of from 10 to 15 or more high-need students. The VFZ caseload targets the 10% of students that tend to lead disruptions in the schools and whose leadership affects the other 90% of the student body.

THE PROCESS:

- CNE selects established youth-serving organization in each locale
- CNE provides management, administrative, and financial oversight, technical assistance, and linkages to sources of support
- Local organization screens, hires, trains, and manages Youth Advisors
- Youth Advisors act as hall and cafeteria monitors and mediators and mentors to high risk students, provide safe passage before and after school, and work in the community to provide 24/7 availability to the young people.
- Results are measured and best practices are shared with other VFZ sites across the country.