

SCHOOL CLIMATE TASK FORCE



FEBRUARY 22, 2008

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S C H O O L C L I M A T E T A S K F O R C E



We could learn a lot from crayons: some are sharp, some are pretty, some are dull, some have weird names, and they are all different colors....but they co-exist very nicely in one box.

The School Climate Task Force, made up of parents, teachers, principals, law enforcement, school officials, students, and community leaders, began its research in July of 2007. The Guilford County Board of Education charged the task force to:

- 1) review the district's handling of student misbehavior;
- 2) review the Guilford County Disproportionate Minority Contact Report;
- 3) meet with teachers, parents, students and community stakeholders and
- 4) make a report by consensus back to the Board of Education.

The consensus report should include concrete steps that the Board of Education may adapt to:

- 1) reduce the number of suspensions and expulsions of Guilford County school students;
- 2) improve the relationship between law enforcement utilized in our schools and minority communities disproportionately represented in arrest records;
- 3) facilitate greater communication and understanding between the community, schools, parents, SRO officers and students;
- 4) improve the classroom education component of the SRO program and increase the safety of our campuses with an emphasis on the growing gang concern.

The task force went to the community and interviewed teachers, principals, parents, students, counselors, bus drivers and other stakeholders. We reviewed data included in the Student Safety Survey taken in May 2006¹, the Disproportionate Minority Contact Report, the latest Teacher Working Conditions survey in 2006², data on suspensions and arrests of minors, and performed our own survey of teachers.

There are some positive efforts already underway in Guilford County Schools. The task force found that Positive Behavioral Support (PBS) has been implemented at various schools, and representatives from those schools report significant positive results. However, PBS is not fully functional where it is currently being implemented because it lacks funding and personnel. The majority of our schools do not have a PBS program at this time. Middle colleges are also demonstrating positive results with students, such as preventing drop out, development of personal instruction with small class sizes, and relevant curriculum. Lastly, support of educational programs such as New Light At Risk Intergenerational Outreach Program where alternative academic recovery is available for students in out of school suspension (OSS) and

¹ Student Safety Survey, May 2006 based on a statistically representative sample of 2572 students in Guilford County

² Teacher Working Conditions Survey, Fall 2006, based on a statistically representative sample of 4236 teachers (70% of GCS educators)

long term suspension (LTS) receives community support and is serving as an important safety net.

The recommendations in this report will address these findings and others that contribute to poor school climate, including a lack of personnel, and facilities; inconsistencies within schools in relation to discipline; and a SRO program that encompasses three separate law enforcement agencies.

Although task force members understand the limitations and challenges of school funding, and though we are not equipped to determine what the adequate level of funding is for Guilford County Schools, we can report that in the Teachers' School Climate Survey (2008)³, lack of funding for personnel and facilities was referenced 124 times, second only to comments regarding discipline.

Therefore, it was agreed that the top concern for Guilford County Schools was the lack of adequate facilities and personnel for the population of students it serves, all the same:

- 1) High Schools should have no more than 800 students
- 2) Middle Schools should have no more than 600 students
- 3) Elementary Schools should have no more than 400 students

Of particular interest was when task force members met with high school principals and asked what their top three priorities are for improving school climate. By unanimous agreement the principals stated that the system needs local quality educational alternatives for students in OSS and long term suspensions; they need security personnel in order to free principals to provide leadership and support to individual staff members, especially those experiencing difficulty with classroom management; and a quality reading program for incoming freshmen because of their continued experience with 9th graders who are reading two or more grades behind.

Task force members strongly recommend that Guilford County Schools implement a plan to identify students with limited reading ability no later than the third grade and implement immediate interventions addressing the students' needs.

Task force members found inconsistencies with the application of rules and repercussions from teacher to teacher and from student to student within a school when rules were broken. Nevertheless, there was a desire to adjust rules and consequences based on a particular school's culture. Some believe that when students are disruptive or misbehave they should be suspended and others believe that students who misbehave need additional support and education, needing more school not less school. Those who believe that students who misbehave need more education did not include students who are a direct threat to safety, such as weapons, drugs or who commit serious bodily harm to others.

Teachers, SROs and the members of the task force highly recommend a district wide standard mode of dress (SMOD). Teachers reported that SMOD eased some of the obvious indicators of socioeconomic differences, decreased distractions within the classroom and permitted a greater concentration on the student's educational needs versus their manner of dress. SROs reported

³ Teacher School Climate Survey, January 2008, based on 771 responses from GCS teachers

that SMOD would tremendously enhance school campus safety. With SMOD, SROs could better identify visitors and/or intruders.

Two subcommittees were formed to research and develop recommendations that were brought to the entire task force for discussion and consensus. The two subcommittees examined these and other findings and the reports provide recommendations on how we can start to bring together a divided community of parents, students, teachers, administrators, law enforcement and other stakeholders in hopes of improving the school climate of Guilford County. The reports are attached hereto.

Respectfully submitted by:

Uma Avva	Community Member
Rev. Cardes Brown	Clergy
Donald Cooley	Student
Martin Green	Community Member
Mark Jewell	Guilford County Association of Educators
Julie Kimsey	Teacher
Sharon McCants	Principal
Leslie Mise	Teacher
Linda Mozell	Community Member
Yamile Nazar Walker	Latina Parent
Kimberly Oakley	Teacher
Alan Parker	Principal
Joe Pass	SRO, Guilford County Sheriff
Terrina Picarello	President, Council of PTAs
Clarence Roulhac	SRO, Greensboro Police
Victor Vigoya	Student
Monica Walker	Diversity Officer, GCS
Shawn Watlington	Teacher
Rodney Wilds	Principal
Al Williams	SRO, High Point Police

From task force members, many thanks to our school staff support

Dr. Eric Becoats	Chief of Staff, GCS
Dr. John Morris	Chief Student Services Officer, GCS

And to our board of education members as our conveners

Alan Duncan	School Board member
Amos Quick	School Board member

S C H O O L C L I M A T E T A S K F O R C E



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Members of Subcommittee 1:
Uma Avva, *Community Representative*
Sharon McCants, *GCS Principal*
Linda Mozell, *Community Representative*
Monica F. Walker, *GCS Diversity Officer*
Shawn Watlington, *GCS High School Teacher*

School discipline is as controversial, complex, and political in Guilford County as it is in other parts of the country. In our time spent in dialoguing, querying and surveying the GCS community of personnel, parents, students and community, we can attest to a significantly divided community on the subject of suspensions as well as various other aspects of classroom and school discipline. Yet, in spite of these starkly divided ideas, the one thing most agreed upon by all is that our current system is in need of tremendous overhaul. What we share in this report are our findings and conclusions as best we can offer as potential solutions and recommendations, many of these inspired by other systems and programs tried and tested in other systems around the country.

How do we reduce the number of suspensions and expulsions of Guilford County school students?

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Assign one social worker per school

In much of our dialogue with school personnel, it is clear that those inside the schools see social workers as critical to the overall effectiveness of our educational program. We therefore recommend that these services be reprioritized in next year's budgetary plans.

Based on community feedback schools should not be forced to have to choose between math teachers and social workers.

Restructure/Structure ISS or Alternative Programs to include proactive support for students (social workers, counselors, technology, curriculum-based, etc.)

The program outlined below was previously used by GCS high schools as an alternative to ISS. The result was a reduction in the number of suspensions. This program emphasizes a partnership between adult stakeholders and the effective and increase use of school counselors and social workers.

“Educational and Counseling Options” (ECO)

Component 1: Immediate removal of disruptive students from classroom so learning may continue.

Component 2: Teachers will refer students using a referral form within 24 hours of the incident and must include a specific description of the incident. On the form, teachers are to indicate the reason for referral, previous strategies used to change behavior, previous parent contact, and student academic/social issues observed.

Component 3: Counselors and social workers evaluate a disruptive student’s needs/talents in order to address his/her issue before returning to class. Counselor and Social Worker should follow up with classroom teacher and administrator to report progress made.

Component 4: Academic monitoring by an ISS licensed teacher whose sole responsibility is ISS; to include the requirement that teachers provide daily assignments to students to be prioritized as curricular work while in ISS. ISS teachers should ensure that work is completed and returned to the teacher.

Component 5: Parent involvement via conferencing for mutual goal setting.

Component 6: With regard to students who remain noncompliant, referrals should be made to the Student Services Team for additional referrals as needed.

Encourage increased use of Teen Court (i.e. simplify application process and increase use)

Guilford County Teen Court provides trials for first-time offenders ages 9 to 15, pleading guilty to misdemeanors, who are referred by the criminal justice system, law enforcement, School Resource Officers (SRO's); and ages 16 and 17 referred by SRO for offenses committed at schools. Evening court sessions are conducted at the Guilford County Courthouses located in Greensboro and High Point. Adult and youth volunteers are essential to the successful administration of Teen Court. Regular training sessions are conducted for persons interested in volunteering for services. While this service is already available to our schools, it has not been widely used. It might be advantageous at this point to find out why; to conduct an evaluation of the services in an effort to find out how it can best assist in servicing school needs.

Establish a Centralized Mediation Center exclusive to GCS with both a teacher/student training component.

Mediation provides an efficient alternative for conflict resolution. Thus, in an attempt to reduce conflict and intervene in volatile situations prior to their being an affect on the educational environment, it is favorable to provide parents, students, teachers, school administrators, and other staff access to mediation services.

Mediation is an informal process in which a neutral third person(s) called a mediator facilitates the resolution of a dispute between two or more parties. The process is designed to help disputing parties reach an agreement on all or part of the issues in dispute. Decision-making authority remains with the parties, not the mediator. The mediator assists the parties in identifying issues, fostering joint problem-solving and exploring settlement alternatives.

- a. Students may refer any situation to the Student Hearing Office so long as that student lists all involved parties and their contact information. Furthermore, any situation referred by the student must pertain, in some significant manner, to the educational environment.
- b. Parents may refer a situation regarding their child and another child, their child and another parent, their child and a teacher, school administrator, or other school staff, or themselves and any of the above directly through the Student Hearing Office.
- c. A teacher or school administrator may refer any situation within their school for mediation at any time through the Student Hearing Office. However, if such mediation involves a student, the parent must be notified in writing prior to the referral of the student.

Increase accountability of principals to collect, review and address trends to include demographics in suspensions for the purpose of assessing policies and practices that result in suspensions. Principals are also expected to provide leadership and support to individual staff members who are experiencing difficulty with classroom management.

Establish discretionary funding to individual schools allowing principals to purchase security equipment and to employ additional personnel as needed to meet specific safety concerns.

Fund two security (non-law enforcement) personnel for the high schools to increase campus safety and allow principals to provide leadership and support to individual staff members. During the principal forum held on January 10, 2008, principals unanimously agreed that this addition was necessary.

Reduce Class Size to 17 or Below in Traditional Schools

Reducing class size will increase teacher contact with individual students creating a more orderly learning environment and more individualized instruction. Studies have shown that smaller classes improve achievement for all students. In a North Carolina study (Burke County) teachers with smaller classes had fewer discipline problems and in California and Wisconsin, studies revealed that students who were enrolled in smaller classes performed better.

Provide Direct District-Level On-Site Support and Opportunities for Teachers Regarding Best Practices and Reading

This support could include but is not limited to; objective peer observations and feedback, modeling of lessons, small group training in best practices and reading instruction, preparing curriculum resources specific to the school or classroom teacher, and facilitating collaborative discussions with groups of teachers about their instructional practices. During the teacher forums held by task force members, teachers indicated that there was a lack of attention to the implementation of said training(s).

Professional Development for Principals- Instructional Leadership and Teacher Empowerment

Beyond creating core beliefs and communicating a clear vision, we recommend that principals should receive explicit training on how to encourage teacher growth, empowerment and leadership. The most successful schools have leaders who are able to create a collaborative environment and also apply the creative energy of teachers toward constant improvement. Teachers should be given time to collaborate and share their expertise. Principals should foster teachers' sharing and learning from each other. Professional growth and development should be encouraged and accommodated by school leaders. Encourage teacher growth also means teachers should receive honest feedback from school leadership regarding their strengths and weaknesses in classroom instruction. Principals should develop a clear evaluation process for identifying the effectiveness of staff development school-wide.

Increase Number of After-School/Extra-Curricular Activities available for students

Open school buildings to community non-profit initiatives, programs and student led clubs that are consistent with school policy to include but not limited to:

- Academic offerings—homework assistance, tutoring, hands-on learning, reading and writing enrichment;
- Enrichment and accelerated learning—exposure to visual and performing arts, field trips, character education, critical thinking skills, foreign languages, and technology;
- Supervised recreation—organized sports and sports education; and
- Community service—connects students to the community.

Implement District-Level Multicultural Curriculum and Practices

We believe that the curriculum and practices of all of our schools should reflect the diversity of the students we serve. Therefore, we recommend that a multicultural curriculum and practices be implemented district-wide. The key elements of a multicultural curriculum and practices are:

- a. Instructional delivery that reflects a variety of learning styles
- b. Classroom practices and procedures that ensure equity among all students

- c. Teacher becomes a facilitator of learning
- d. Ensure that curriculum is complete and accurate
- e. Teachers use a variety of instructional materials and ensure that all materials used are free of bias
- f. Course content is presented from a variety of perspectives
- g. Recognize students as the most important resource on multiculturalism and find ways to connect to their everyday lives
- h. Educate all children in social justice and model a sense of civic responsibility within the curriculum
- i. Ensure that commonly used assessments are free of bias
- j. Board direct schools to affirm the district's Discrimination Free Environment policy⁴, establish a procedure (for students, teachers, other school staff to include bus drivers) to report allegations of discrimination and develop a means of investigating such allegations and develop and implement a plan to address the offense (NOTE: the task force received information regarding student to student harassment based on race).

Provide Rigor, Relevance, Relationships (3 R's) Training for All Teachers and Principals

Rigor, Relevance and Relationships are the new 3 R's in education. In order to reduce suspensions, decrease the drop-out rate, increase the graduation rate, and prepare students for the 21st Century world of work, we believe that instruction in our schools must provide students with the following:

- Rigor: Challenging learning for ALL students where they learn to think critically and access new knowledge and information.
- Relevance: Make sure students have courses and subjects that relate to their life and goals. This could include the increased use of technology.
- Relationships: Schools must have more personalized instruction where teachers know their students and build relationships with them. Teachers serve as teacher-counselors. Smaller class sizes will help facilitate this practice.

Provide Professional Development for Teachers/Principals in the Area of Classroom Discipline in Diverse Classrooms

We believe that the number of teacher referrals and suspensions due to non-compliance will be reduced significantly with this type teacher training. We recommend that classroom management training include the following elements:

- a. **Teacher Awareness of Individual v. Collective Points of View**
 - i. Individualism (western culture 30% of world population): independence, self-reliance, individual achievement, self-expression, task orientation, cognitive intelligence
 - ii. Collectivism (non-western cultures- 70% of world population): well being of group, interdependence, family/groups success, modesty, respect, social orientation, social intelligence

⁴ Discrimination Free Environment policy attached

- b. **Reaching Out to Families: Cross-Cultural Understanding between Schools and Families:** Developing positive relationships with parents through home phone calls, successful parent conferencing, equal access to open houses, homework assignments, etc.
- c. **Developing a Culturally Responsive Classroom:** Teachers' use of five classroom management strategies (1) redirection (2) transition activities-switching type of instruction often, (3) non-response - ignoring some student behavior, (4) discipline - reprimanding with respect (5) reward for positive behavior⁵
- d. **Fund and implement PBS district wide**
- e. **Evaluation** district wide suspension referral trends amongst Visiting International Faculty, lateral entry teachers and substitute teachers, for the purposes of addressing cultural awareness training, leadership development training, and other training as deemed appropriate

Increase School-Community Collaboration

Schools do not exist in isolation and they cannot go at it alone. To keep students in school their social, economic, and family needs, as well as their academic needs must be met. They need the support and help of the whole community. The often heard statement, "It takes a village to raise a child," is very true. Volunteers and funding are two major ways that communities support their schools. Some of the initiatives that involve partnering with the community are School-to-Work Programs, drug abuse prevention programs, after-school centers, and parental involvement programs. Coordinating community collaborations to avoid duplication and keeping them focused on a common goal is a challenge. Research on the impact of community collaboration is ongoing. Two major programs that have been studied are full-service community-schools and the Annie E. Casey Foundation New Futures initiative. Some of the positive results found at full-service community-schools are improved reading and math performance, better attendance rates, a decrease in suspension rates and a decrease in the dropout rate⁶.

⁵ **Source:** Carrie Rothstein-Fisch and Elise Trumbull, Managing Diverse Classrooms: How to Build on Students Cultural Strengths, 2008.

⁶ Schargel & Smink, 2001, p. 201

Attachments for additional information:

“School Discipline Tougher on African-Americans”, Sept. 25, 2007, ChicagoTribune.com

Teen Court <http://www.onestepfurther.com/>

Additional details on Mediation Center may be obtained via requests to Chesseley Robinson, GCS Hearing Officer

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SUBCOMMITTEE 2 was charged with identifying recommendations for the following 4 areas:

- a) How do we improve the relationships between law enforcement utilized in our schools & minority communities?
- b) How do we improve the classroom education component of the SRO program?
- c) How do we increase the safety of our campuses?
- d) How do we address the growing gang concern?

Sub2 Members

Leslie Mise, Teacher
Joe Pass, SRO
Terrina Picarello, PTA
Monica Walker, GCS
Yamile Nazar Walker, Latina
Rodney Wilds, Principal

a) How do we improve the relationships between law enforcement utilized in our schools & minority communities?

In partnership with school personnel:

- 1) SROs should host meetings every 6 - 8 weeks at community centers or other appropriate locations (i.e. public housing community centers, City Parks & Rec. centers, places of worship) with parents and students community wide
- 2) Organize opportunities for open dialogue on what's happening in the schools and in the community; include school staff, parents and students
- 3) Distribute the SROs roles and responsibilities, and periodically review them

Defining Specific SRO Roles and Responsibilities⁷

Successful programs have generally followed several steps in developing a list of SRO roles and responsibilities, including:

- Identify roles and responsibilities *in writing*
- **Avoid relying on a personal relationship, easy access, and a handshake** between police and school administrators for establishing SRO roles
- **Involve the schools** in developing the SRO roles and responsibilities
- **Distribute** the roles and responsibilities, and **periodically review them**; and
- Provide **a mechanism for resolving disagreements** between school administrators and SROs about the officers' responsibilities

Note: Unique to Guilford County School system is that the SRO program is a product of three separate law enforcement agencies; therefore all bullets above must correspond with all three agencies.

⁷ A complete copy of the Comparison of Program Activities and Lessons Learned among 19 School Resource Officer Program report of February 28, 2005 is included herein.

In developing the written description of the SRO roles and responsibilities:

- Narrow the considerable leeway of ***what it means for SROs to engage in “law enforcement”***, as an example, maintain a high level
 - Make clear school wide that SROs are not responsible for ***enforcing discipline*** (*In the matter of Christopher Brown...This Court does not doubt that when students act as respondents in this case, they are troublesome and a burden in the classroom. These are the [***10] trials faced by teachers in today’s schools. But if we were to hold that the present actions are of such gravity that they warrant a conviction of disorderly conduct, every child that is sent to the office for momentary lapses in behavior could be convicted under such precedent.*)⁸; and
 - Be specific about the SROs’ ***teaching, and mentoring/counseling, responsibilities***
- 4) Recommend that “Guilford County Teen Court” or an equivalent be used district wide. We recommend that the school system request that “Teen Court” be expanded to give students more than one opportunity for its use at the discretion of the SRO for minor offenses.

b) How do we improve the classroom education component of the SRO program?

Please note that these recommendations are contingent on the system’s ability to place an additional staff person in each middle and high school to address behavioral concerns with students.

SRO programs need to consider, although by no means always accede to, the wishes of the school administration in establishing the ratio of time the SROs spend on law enforcement, teaching, and mentoring. The relative emphasis the SROs place on the three basic SRO program components is affected by whether and how soon they develop teaching and mentoring skills. Training SROs in how to perform them can expedite by months the teaching and mentoring aspects of the program. After attending a *COPS in Schools* conference, which has a 90-minute segment on “classroom strategies,” the SROs dramatically increased their teaching and counseling. Even though the SROs’ specific responsibilities may change over time and may vary from school to school, it is essential to define roles and responsibilities. Additionally, a particularly effective approach to involving schools is through joint training attended by both the SROs and the local school administrators.

Develop a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or contract in order to minimize conflict.

- Develop a partnership between the SRO and school administration
- Identify the three components (law enforcement, teaching and mentoring/counseling) of the SRO program and for each school culture identify the percentage of time the SRO should spend on each
- Policies and procedures for the SRO program *must* be developed in partnership with school administrators and all 3 law enforcement agencies and *must* be consistent for the entire school system

⁸ *In the Matter of : Christopher Brown*, Court of Appeals of NC, May 7, 2002 filed: In addition, see *In the Matter of KF Juvenile Respondent*, Court of Appeals of NC, 2005 NC app. Lexis 40, January 4, 2005, filed

- The roles and responsibilities of the SRO must be created and agreed upon by all 3 law enforcement agencies and school administrators for the entire school system
- SROs should be evaluated by their law enforcement supervisor and school administrator
- Identify how conflicts will be resolved
- Identify how incidents that violate school policy will be handled

To Enforce or Not to Enforce

School discipline involves dealing with students who break school rules as opposed to handling students who violate state statutes and local ordinances. Examples of misconduct that are not illegal but may violate school rules include tardiness, inappropriate dress, going to the parking lot without a pass, swearing, verbal bullying, and defiance. The Task Force members understand that there are numerous gray areas such as, is shoving to be treated by the SRO as a criminal matter (battery) or by the assistant principal as a violation of the school discipline code? A MOU would iron out these areas before incidents occur. Additionally, an advisory committee should be established consisting of a school board member, teacher, SRO, parent, and community member; host monthly meetings to share information and develop new ideas and strategies.

c) How do we increase the safety of our campuses?

- 1) During the principal forum held on January 10, 2008, principals unanimously requested two security (non-law enforcement) personnel for the high schools to increase campus safety and allow principals to provide leadership and support to individual staff members
- 2) Fund and implement **PBS** district wide. Include a specialist assigned to each middle and high school with two responsibilities: i) The implementation of PBS, and ii) addressing students with discipline and other behavioral concerns with access to resources available in and outside the system to address students' needs⁹
- 3) Enhance awareness of community dynamics and its impact on district schools accordingly; take socio-economics into account when re-districting (studies show positive results when economic diversity exists; i.e. Wake County School District)
- 4) TRAINING: On-going for all school staff (Custodians, Cafeteria personnel, Bus Drivers, Teachers, Teachers' Assistants, Administrative Assistants, Assistant Principals and Principals) on diffusing hostile situations, mediation, conflict resolution, awareness of culture (Race, Ethnicity, Economics)
- 5) Enhance staff awareness of today's youth (It's no longer 1985: youth today are many times dealing with adult issues); make online resources, curriculum and other training available to teachers, administrators and other school staff personnel
- 6) Use suspensions to rectify unacceptable behavior: Re-implement "Educational and Counseling Options" where goals included counselors and social workers to evaluate a disruptive student's needs/talents in order to address it; to include an ISS licensed teacher whose sole responsibility is ISS; academic monitoring during ISS; and include parents for mutual goal setting. Enhance alternative programs for students in OSS and long term suspension, such as, New Light Baptist Church enrichment program
- 7) Take advantage of the time a student is suspended by offering alternatives to maintain academic enrichment
- 8) SROs should host weekly meetings with student representatives: Breakfast meetings on site. Breakfast provided free to student representatives for their volunteerism

⁹ An overview of Positive Behavioral Support is attached hereto for your convenience

9) See attached *Student Human Relations Commission* initiative outline

d) How do we address the growing gang concern?

- 1) Partner with local businesses and institute a fair and equitable "Co-op Employment" program for high school teens. The Triad has a need for nonprofessional labor (i.e. airplane mechanics, nurses, physician assistants, physical therapist, diesel mechanics, electricians, plumbers, etc); the school system should fund and establish a career and technical education component for students including those who do not wish to attend institutions of higher learning (It is the task force members' belief that the partnership of schools and employment opportunities will reduce the attractiveness of gang activities for monetary gain, will reduce drop out rates and reduce behavioral concerns)
 - a. In partnership with local businesses, corporations and medical health institutes establish a paid apprentice program for students receiving vocational education
 - b. Enhance upon and aggressively market to both students and parents vocational studies already offered by Guilford County Schools
 - c. Establish an oversight cabinet position who reviews the demographics of students referred to career and technical educational studies to prevent racial, ethnic and/or economic discrimination
- 2) Open school buildings to community non-profit initiatives that are consistent with school policy, programs and student led clubs

In partnership with the Greensboro Human Relations Commission establish Student Human Relations Commissions (SHRC) in each high school, with duties that include but are not limited to, serving as a student advisory council to administrators, to study and make recommendations concerning problems in the field of human relationships, to encourage fair treatment and mutual respect and understanding, to anticipate and discover those practices and customs most likely to create animosity and unrest among the student body, to make recommendations to administrators, school board and other stakeholders that promote good will and harmony, to enlist the cooperation of the various racial, religious, ethnic groups, community organizations and other groups with programs and campaigns devoted to eliminating bigotry, prejudice and discrimination, and to cooperate with other students, teachers, parents, school administration, Human Relations Commissions, Board of Education and others in developing presentations on techniques for achieving harmonious inter-group relations. (Complete draft proposal enclosed)

- 3) Provide transportation for students participating in after school programs and clubs
- 4) Enhance upon SCALES program to include intervention measures that will address students' needs
 - a. Establish a more comprehensive transition for students returning to home school
 - b. Assign a school employee to the student to assist and monitor student with his/her educational progress
 - c. Expand SCALES time for student, when appropriate (At various forums stakeholders indicated that SCALES provides students with behavioral concerns an environment with positive results; small classroom setting, increase contact and attention from teachers, administrators, etc)
- 5) Educate students on the consequences of gang membership and gang related activities (make it relevant to their futures)
- 6) Establish a concise and all encompassing gang prevention and intervention policy (Proposed policy following Miscellaneous items)

- 7) Educate all school staff personnel on the history of gangs and why children are attracted to gang membership

MISCELLANEOUS

The following are results from the members' heightened awareness of matters of concern with school climate:

- 1) "Mission Possible" initiative needs revamping: Either recruit *teacher teams* in order to create a support system resulting in less "burn out" within target school or create "Mission Possible" *schools* where all teachers within the physical school are recipients of the incentives (reduction in decreased morale amongst teachers)
- 2) Create a partnership with local colleges and universities who offer curriculum for teachers and create methods of making school curriculum relevant to students' real life and to include topics such as, diffusing hostile situations, mediation, conflict resolution, awareness of culture (Race, Ethnicity, Economics), and instructions on teaching students how to read
- 3) Create district wide policies, procedures and practices in order to maintain consistency, such as, SRO program, maintain programs implemented by principals when there is a change in leadership
- 4) Research strategies to retain principals and teachers in current positions for as long as possible
- 5) Encourage more programs such as New Light Baptist Church as an alternative for academic recovery for students in out of school suspension as a result, maintains their academics and prevents possible contact with law enforcement
- 6) Establish an on-going task force to review, research and implement best practices for matters brought to light in the School Climate Task Force effort
 - a. Task force should be made up of school personnel, community members and students
 - b. Review, research and implement best practices of recommendations herein
 - c. Develop a district wide strategic plan and manage the implementation
 - d. Implement
- 7) A concern voiced by all levels of school personnel included the belief that there was a lack of trust between school site and central office staff.

Proposed Gang Prevention and Student Intervention policy follows on next page.

TITLE:

GUILFORD COUNTY SCHOOLS POLICY ON GANG PREVENTION AND STUDENT INTERVENTION

PURPOSE:

This policy shall be directed towards promoting a safe environment conducive to a productive educational experience and **shall not be interpreted as a means for suspending or otherwise excluding students**. The purpose of this policy is to (1) evaluate and prevent the disparate impact of related suspensions on protected classes¹⁰ of students, and to (2) disrupt illegal activity related to gangs in the Guilford County Schools and to intervene with individual students in need of alternatives.

GATHERING ACTIONABLE GANG RELATED INTELLIGENCE

A. STANDING COMMITTEE ON SAFETY INTELLIGENCE

A standing committee containing the School Safety Program Administrator, Student Hearing Officer, a designee from the office of the Superintendent, 5 knowledgeable members from the Guilford County community, and 3 School Resource Officers (representing all 3 law enforcement agencies) shall, August 2008, meet on a quarterly basis to review shared data and information regarding gangs and student based criminal activities. The data shall be reduced to a brief summary report identifying the following:

- 1) Communities containing the highest concentration of gang related activity,
- 2) Most affected schools in Guilford County,
- 3) The most commonly identified gangs, and
- 4) Suggested course of action for each identified or otherwise significantly affected school.

The committee shall share this report with the Principal of each identified or otherwise significantly affected school and the School Resource Officer for such school. Within 60 calendar days, the Principal or Principal's designee shall respond to the committee in a brief written summary what actions were taken, what results were either realized or are forecasted, and what suggestions the Principal has for the Guilford County Schools System to address the issue.

Additionally, the committee shall, on every second report, (1) Identify any trends that present the possibility of disparate impact regarding any class of individuals in relation to gangs (2) Identify potential causes for each trend and (3) Develop a list of solutions for each trend and its impact. In the event that, after four quarterly reports, it is determined that any suspect class is significantly more likely to be identified as being associated with gangs or gang related activities in any particular school, such school must provide a summary of its reports to the committee and the Board for review and an accounting of what interventions have been enacted at the school level coupled with a *legitimate non-discriminatory* hypothesis for the disparate impact related with the suspect class and gang activities and suggestions for addressing such impact.

B. RESPONSIBILITY BASED WITHIN EACH INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL

¹⁰ Protected classes of students as defined in the Discrimination Free Environment school policy

In the event that, after four quarterly reports, it is determined that any suspect class is significantly more likely to be identified as being associated with gangs or gang related activities in any particular school, such school must provide a summary of its reports to the committee and the Board for review and an accounting of what interventions have been enacted at the school level coupled with a hypothesis for the disparate impact related with the suspect class and gang activities and suggestions for addressing such impact.

Each school must provide a written response to the immediately aforementioned report within 60 calendar days describing, among other things previously listed, how they intend to comply with the provided list of solutions in brief summary format.

Any school found to have identified more than 1% of its population as suspected gang members or affiliates within a 3-month period shall file a report with the committee every 30-calendar days to inform the committee of how they are addressing the issue of gang related activity on their campus and what results they are achieving. This report may be brief and in summary form.

In the event that any school identified as described above either fails to show a reduction of their gang population over 6 -30 day reporting periods or such school displays a disparate number of any class of students within its reported gang population, The Board of Education shall appoint a Special Diversity Officer to develop and implement a plan to make the appropriate levels of improvement. The appointment shall be reviewed on a quarterly basis and shall only be continued where the school remains identified as stated above.

DEFINITIONS:

Gang: Any ongoing organization, association, or group of three or more persons, whether formal or informal, having as one of its primary activities the commission of felonies or violent misdemeanor offenses, or delinquent acts that would be felonies or violent misdemeanors if committed by an adult, and reasonably appears to have or has a common identity or theme.

Gang Related Activity: Committing or attempting to commit, solicit, intimidate or otherwise coerce another or other persons to commit criminal acts where a reasonably prudent person of the offenders' age, intelligence, and experience would understand that such acts are probably illegal for the purpose of achieving an objective or goal of a gang as defined above.

Criminal Acts: Criminal Acts under this policy are limited to the following acts:

- 1) Any offense under NCGS § 90-86-113.8;
- 2) Any violation of the Guilford County Schools Code of Conduct Rules # 15, 17, 19, 20(b), 21(a), 22, 23, 24, and 26 that could also result in the charge and/or conviction of a felony, and
- 3) Any offense resulting in the charge and/or conviction of a felony under Chapter 14 of the North Carolina General Statutes except Articles 9, 22A, 38, 40, 43, 46, 47, 59 and also

excluding NCGS § 14-78.1, 14-82 14-86, 14-145, 14-179, 14-183, 14-186, 14-190.9, 14-195, 14-197, 14-247, 14-248, and 14-313.

PREVENTION OF GANG RELATED ACTIVITY

No student shall commit any act that furthers gangs or gang related activities. Where a preponderance of the evidence suggests that a gang under the aforementioned definition exists, operates on or around the school campus, and convincing evidence **exists** (meaning that the evidence *clearly* establishes that it is *significantly* more likely than not) that a student is a member of a gang or is a regular participant in gang-related activity,

- 1) School Resource Officers shall share with the Principal or Principal's designee any student found to have committed two or more criminal acts as defined in this policy within 5 school days of discovery of such facts,
- 2) The school must inform the parent that such child is suspected of either being a member of a gang or participating in gang related activity and present a summary of that evidence within a reasonable period of time but no later than 5 school days after the discovery,
- 3) A student who has committed two or more acts that are found to relate to gangs and gang related activity as defined under this policy shall be considered a student at risk for either joining a gang or participating in gang related activity,
- 4) Members of the school administration shall be presumed to have the reasonable suspicion necessary to conduct cursory random searches of the person, personal belongings, and surroundings of each child suspected of either being a member of a gang or participating in gang related activities **after informing the parent of such suspicions and presenting the evidence in written form to the standing committee members and receiving validation of such a suspicion** from at least 6 committee members including at least one community member until the weight of evidence indicates that the child is either no longer a member of a gang or engaged in gang related activities or that that the child was never involved in gang related activity,
- 5) Where a student has violated the Guilford County Schools Code of Conduct and the student is suspected of being either a member of a gang or engaged in gang related activities, the school may obligate the child, at the discretion of the Principal and after consulting with the parent, to abide by any reasonable conditions which include but are not limited to:
 - a. Athletics where the student is eligible,
 - b. After school tutorials where transportation is provided after school for the child,
 - c. Behavioral contracts that include grade requirements and attendance and tardiness requirements,
 - d. Campus based community service; or
 - e. Any other officially sanctioned extracurricular school related activities

Additionally, the school may obligate the child to participate in one of the related alternatives listed in this policy for the purpose of addressing issues regarding gang membership and activities,

- 6) Where a student violates any reasonable condition based upon paragraph five on more than two occasions, the student may be found in violation of The Guilford County Schools Code of Conduct Rule # 6 and subject to a suspension in excess of 10 days, community service, or reassignment to an alternative educational program. However, such an action may only occur where the student would have been subject to a long-term suspension recommendation prior to being identified as a student suspected of being either in a gang or engaged in gang related activities and the violation of the condition is clearly volitional and persistent.
- 7) Any property that is erected, established, maintained, owned, leased, or used by a gang or gang member for the logistical support or promotion of, or engagement in, criminal activities on or around a school campus or school sponsored activities shall be subject to confiscation for the remainder of the school year, and
- 8) Upon specific showing of a clear and credible undue influence upon a student having been suspended for Code of Conduct violations reasonably related to gangs or gang related activities, the Office of Student Assignment may reassign a student subsequent to the recommendations of both the Student Hearing Officer and, where applicable, an Administrator from the Schools and Communities Alternative Learning Environment ("SCALE"). Clear and credible evidence of an undue influence related to gangs or gang related activities must identify specific students, person, and risks currently present in or around the school and such information must be reported to the School Resource Officer and the Principal of the school in question so that appropriate actions shall be taken including those actions within paragraphs 1-7 of this section. *A student transfer and reassignment under this section may or may not include transportation services to the new school assignment.*

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

The committee, during its first report, shall draft a memorandum of understanding for the Board's approval. This memorandum shall address the manner in which the local law enforcement agencies will share information with the School Resource Officers so that they may effectively share information with Administrators for the Guilford County Schools. The Memorandum shall be reviewed, and, if necessary, revised, in every 8th report thereafter.¹¹

¹¹ Authored by: Chessey Robinson, GCS Hearing Officer and modified by Subcommittee 3 members in conjunction with Mr. Robinson

STUDENT HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION 2008

Definitions

HRC and *HRCers* is the abbreviation of Human Relations Commission and Human Relations Commissioners respectfully.

HRD is the abbreviation of Human Relations Department.

SHRC is the abbreviation of Student Human Relations Commission.

Delegate is a representative from school who will serve on the SHRC who will meet with HRCers and HRD staff on a periodic basis throughout the calendar year.

School name here *SHRC* is the individual school commissions developed by the Delegates in partnership with school administrators or their designee.

School Liaison is either a school administrator or their designee who is willing and able to serve as a partner to the SHRC to assist with logistical needs, such as but not limited to, meeting space within the school, meeting notices, supplies (Limited supplies will also be available through the HRD), transportation, and maintaining Commissioners' focus by serving as a impartial facilitator without including personal opinions, viewpoints, and/or perspectives. The school liaison should be willing and able to attend meetings with SHRCers whenever feasible and available to attend an initial training session on human relations.

Overview:

Each Guilford County HS will host a Student Human Relations Commission composed of no less than fifteen members who shall be recruited by the Greensboro Delegates and selected in partnership with the school administration or their designee, HRD staff and HRC Commissioners. All members of the individual school commissions shall be bona fide students maintaining attendance and behavioral requirements within their school. *This proposal does not include schools that currently have a SHRC in place (Andrews, Southwest and Central).*

SHRC Delegates shall be recruited by school administrators or their designee and selected in partnership with the school administration, HRD staff and HRC Commissioners to represent their individual schools and be apart of the Greensboro SHRC.

Delegates will represent two persons from grades 9, 10 and 11th. It is recommended that at least two representatives from each school be "Anytown" program graduates; however, the entire commission should be a diverse representation of the school body.

Delegates will meet periodically as an entire body to discuss and report on activities, plans, matters of concern and other issues from their individual commissions to the Greensboro SHRC.

The HRD staff will speak with GPD Chief and SRO supervisor(s) for this school year and enhance those partnerships with County Sheriff's Department during the '08 summer in preparation of '08-'09 school year in order to develop a role and relationship with the SROs and SHRCers.

Expected changes as a result of the Delegates' and Commissioners' work in the schools: Greater awareness and sensitivity to differences; better relationships amongst students, teachers, administrators, SROs, maintenance and other school staff; reduction in violence because of greater relationships and trust; greater pride in school; greater appreciation of education; greater understanding of the relevance of human relations in their daily lives.

Mission: To promote and secure mutual understanding and respect amongst the student body, school staff, parents and community.

Objectives:

- (1) To receive complaints of discrimination, review and attempt, by voluntary mediation an amicable resolution¹²
 - (2) To submit periodic reports at regular intervals to school administrators, HRD staff and HRC Commissioners setting forth the activities of the SHRC, the results of any studies and any recommendations which will result in the improvement of human relations
 - (3) To conduct research projects, make studies and reports on the status human relations and related social concerns in the school
 - (4) To endeavor to enlist the support of educational and civil leaders for the improvement of inter-group and interracial relations in the school
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Duties: The duties of the Student Human Relations Commission shall be as follows:

- (1) To study and make recommendations concerning problems in any or all fields of human relationship and encourage fair treatment and mutual understanding among the student body.
- (2) To anticipate and discover those practices and customs most likely to create animosity and unrest among the student body and by consultation seek a solution as these problems arise or are anticipated.
- (3) To make recommendations to the school administration and other community stakeholders designed to promote good will and harmony among the student body.
- (4) To recruit, select and develop individual school commissions of no less than 15 diverse members; to include but not limited to, grade, age, gender, orientation, ability, race and ethnicity.

¹² A Complaint Resolution Committee made up of students to hear complaints of unfair treatment and act as a quasi-judicial hearing body may be convened as deemed appropriate.

- (5) To appoint, at its discretion, subcommittees to concern themselves with specific human relations problems in the school. These subcommittees shall be composed of students and a school staff member of the school but need not be members of the commission; except that the chairperson of each subcommittee must be a member of the Greensboro student human relations commission.
- (6) To serve as a student's advisory committee for the purpose of coordinating, studying, and making reports and recommendations concerning student involvement in various projects.
- (7) To seek and enlist the cooperation of various groups in the school in order to fulfill the purposes of this article.
- (8) To receive general statistical reports and studies from the human relations delegates concerning complaints involving discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, national origin, sexual orientation, socio-economics, bullying, and lookism/sizism and to appoint members to the complaint resolution committee to assist the human relations delegates in complaint review process.
- (9) To cooperate with other students, teachers, parents, school administration, Human Relations Commission, Board of Education, City Council, County Commissioners and other agencies in developing presentations on techniques for achieving harmonious inter-group relations within the school.
- (10) To enlist the cooperation of the various racial, religious, and ethnic groups, community organizations and other groups with programs and campaigns devoted to eliminating bigotry, prejudice and discrimination.
- (11) To hold such meetings as the commission may deem necessary or proper to assist in carrying out its functions.
- (12) To perform such other duties as may be assigned it from time to time by the City of Greensboro Human Relations Commission and/or HRD staff.

Next steps 2008-2009 school year

Request City Council to consider expanding SHRC to middle schools.