

## **Our Gang**

(Identifying precursors & predictors of gang involvement)

**Purpose:** 1. To raise student awareness of high risk factors which increase the likelihood of students saying “Yes” to gang involvement and 2. With this heightened awareness, begin to develop strategies, strengths & resources (Preventative Measures) reducing the likelihood of getting involved with gangs.

**Materials:** Grocery paper sack (or other container) & Handout (see last page of this activity.) \* The questions used on the activity sheet were formulated based on the following research and articles: Early Precursors of Gang Membership: A Study of Seattle Youth (Hill, Lui & Hawkins OJJDP 12/2001) and Why Do Youth Join Gangs? Juvenile Justice Bulletin 8/1998.

**Student Materials:** Pencil. (Paper if handout is not used. Make sure to use the classroom supply of paper to ensure everyone gets the same looking paper.)

**Time:** 30 Minutes.

**Key Words/Concepts:** High Risk Factors, Likelihood, Gangs & Prevention Measures.

**Introduce/reintroduce:** This is a good activity to do towards the end the sixth grade year. The students have had the chance to get to know and trust you by now. Boys and girls alike have experience you in and out of their classrooms. Having built a rapport with the kids will increase the likelihood of them being honest in this activity and hopefully use the information to their advantage.

### **Part 1**

**State:** This is going to be a fun activity and in order to make this activity work I’m asking each of you to be completely honest. No one else will know how completely honest you’re going to be so I’m encouraging you to be totally honest and it’s your honesty that’s going to make this activity fun & interesting!

**Inform:** Students that they will need a pencil in today’s activity. (No pens or markers are to be used for doodling, coloring or marking the paper in any unauthorized ways.)

**Distribute:** The handout (last page) to each student.

**Direct:** Students NOT TO WRITE THEIR NAMES ON THEIR PAPERS.

**Inform:** Students to use their opposite (non dominate) hand in recording their answers for today’s activity and to cover up their responses as if they were taking a test.

**Explain:** You’re directing them to take those precautions to protect their identity.

Announce: I'll be reading every question from the activity out loud. For each question I read, you are to be honest with yourself and choose one of the three answers given for that question. Be honest and select the answer that best fits your response. Circle the number of the answer you've chosen.

For Example: Question 1 asks about the safety of your neighborhood. If you think answer number 1 (Very Safe) is your honest answer, circle the number 1.

Encourage: Students to really listen and to think about their answers during this phase of the activity. Reassure them that there will be plenty of time and opportunity to talk about the questions afterwards!

Begin: Reading questions and corresponding answer choices 1 through 10.

Guide, Encourage & Patrol: As necessary to get through the questions=)

## **Part 2**

Direct: Students to make sure their names ARE NOT on the papers and that every question has a circled number answered.

Show & Tell: Students to lightly crunch their papers into a ball shape.

Walk: Throughout the room with your sack/basket/container and have students drop/toss their crunched papers into your container.

Collect: Every crunched paper.

Randomly: Redistribute (hand deliver or toss): The crunched papers as you walk through the room.

Announce: If by chance you think you've received your original paper, don't worry about it and don't announce it. No one is going to know anyway!

Tell: Students that we're going to spend the next few minutes scoring their papers two different ways. That's what the circle and square are for at the top of the page.

#1. Instruct: Students to add together all the circled numbers (answers.) There should be 10 circled numbers to be tallied. Each circled number is worth its face value. Count a 1 as 1 point, count a 2 as 2 points and count a 3 as 3 points. (This total tally number should fall between 10 and 30 points. Problem solve as needed with kids who need the extra math support;)

Direct: Students to place that number total in the circle in the upper left hand corner of the activity page.

State: Now let's get our second score.

#2. Tell: Students to count the number of circled #3 answers on their paper and put that total in the square space in the upper right hand corner of the activity page. (This number could be anywhere between 0 and 10. No one should have a number greater than 10 because there should only be one answered circle per question. Again, problem solve with students as needed.)

Announce: That does it for the paper work!

### **Part 3**

Announce: This is where the activity gets very interesting and exciting! From this point forward, you all become *representatives* of the students in this classroom. You are not representing yourself in this activity.

Clarify: As needed.

Direct: Students to look at the circled score in the upper left hand corner of their papers.

Direct: Students with a circled score of between 10-15 points to stand.

Announce: These (standing) students represent the number of people in this classroom who are considered to be a low risk for getting involved in gangs before finishing high school.

Count: The number of kids standing and have a student write that number on the board.

Sit: Down that group of students.

Direct: Students with a circled score of between 16-21 points to stand.

Announce: These (standing) students represent the number of people in this classroom who are considered to be a medium risk for getting involved in gangs before finishing high school.

Count: The number of kids standing and have a student write that number on the board.

Sit: Down that group of students.

Direct: Students with a circled score of between 22-30 points to stand.

Announce: These (standing) students represent the number of people in this classroom who are considered to be a high risk for getting involved in gangs before finishing high school.

Count: The number of kids standing and have a student write that number on the board.

Sit: Down that group of students.

Review: The group numbers of at risk students in the classroom.

Ask: Students to hold their questions until the second score is revealed.

Instruct: Students to look at the number in the square in the upper right hand corner of their paper.

Direct: Students to stand if that number is 0.

State: Standing students (represent) the number of people in this room with an average likelihood of getting involved in gangs.

Sit: Down those students before proceeding.

Direct: Students to stand if that number is 1.

State: Standing students (represent) are 1x more likely to join a gang than the average person.

Sit: Down those students before proceeding.

Direct: Students to stand if that number is 2.

State: Standing students (represent) are 2x more likely to join a gang than the average person.

Sit: Down those students before proceeding.

Direct: Students to stand if that number is 3.

State: Standing students (represent) are 3x more likely to join a gang than the average person.

Sit: Down those students before proceeding.

Direct: Students to stand if that number is 4.

State: Standing students (represent) are 4x more likely to join a gang than the average person.

Sit: Down those students before proceeding.

Direct: Students to stand if that number is 5.

State: Standing students (represent) are 5x more likely to join a gang than the average person.

Sit: Down those students before proceeding.

Direct: Students to stand if that number is 6.

State: Standing students (represent) are 6x more likely to join a gang than the average person.

Sit: Down those students before proceeding.

Direct: Students to stand if that number is 7.

State: Standing students (represent) are 7x more likely to join a gang than the average person.

Sit: Down those students before proceeding.

Direct: Students to stand if that number is 8.

State: Standing students (represent) are 8x more likely to join a gang than the average person.

Sit: Down those students before proceeding.

Direct: Students to stand if that number is 9.

State: Standing students (represent) are 9x more likely to join a gang than the average person.

Sit: Down those students before proceeding.

Direct: Students to stand if that number is 10.

State: Standing students (represent) are 10x more likely to join a gang than the average person.

Sit: Down those students before proceeding.

#### **Part 4**

Create: Discussions with the class.

Discuss & Clarify: Risk Factors. Talk about the number of representatives from the low, medium & high at risk groups. *Risk factors* are considered to be important/significant variables that when present, greatly direct/influence particular outcomes.

Discuss & Clarify: Likelihood. Provide the following as an example (if helpful)

Someone would be considered to have 4x the *likelihood* of developing breathing difficulties if the following *risk factors* are in place...

1. That person grows up in a smoking home.
2. That person hangs out in places where others smoke.
3. That person's friends smoke and
4. That person chooses to start smoking.

Ask & Discuss: Does variables 1, 2 and 3 (repeat a loud the risk factors) have anything to do with that person's likelihood of *choosing* to start smoking and thus developing breathing difficulties?

Spnd: Some time on that discussion if the kids aren't understanding things just yet.

Direct: Students to quickly scan the risk factors/questions on the activity sheet.

Ask: Students to share their "top three" risk factors they feel are the most important in influencing a person to *choose* to get involved in gangs.

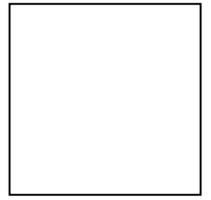
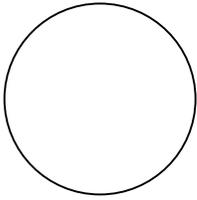
Discuss: That Gang Prevention Programs at school and in our communities often include:

### **S.W.A.T.**

1. Strengthening family systems.
2. **W**orking at keeping kids connected to their schools & communities.
3. **A**ttacking the risk factors that influence student choice.
4. **T**eaching kids to manage their anger in productive ways.

Share: With students that there are many counselors, psychologists and other mental health people who work with students to help them recognize not only the road signs (red flags) of the path there on but also how to create alternative choices (detours) to get off that path.

Challenge: Students to take their papers (the ones they scored) home and with an adult, come up with a prevention/intervention that reduces the likelihood (lowers the number) for each of the 10 risk factors. This then becomes their individual and family **S.W.A.T.** plan!

**S.W.A.T. PLAN**

1. How crime safe do you think your neighborhood is:
  1. Very safe.
  2. Pretty safe.
  3. Could be a lot safer.
  
2. Would you say that you're raised most by:
  1. Two adults in one home.
  2. A male figure (dad, step dad, uncle, grandpa, etc.) in one home.
  3. A female figure (mom, step mom, auntie, grandma, etc.) in one home.
  
3. Based on your recent grades, what are the chances of you graduating from High School:
  1. Excellent.
  2. Good.
  3. 50/50.
  
4. What's the likelihood of you getting a tattoo on your head, face, neck or knuckles?
  1. Not likely.
  2. Maybe.
  3. Likely.
  
5. Would you describe the amount of time you put into (organized/volunteer/sports/church) activities in school and or in the community as being:
  1. Lots.
  2. Some.
  3. Little.
  
6. What are the chances of you getting involved in smoking cigarettes, marijuana, and or drinking alcohol before you finish High School?
  1. Very Small chance.
  2. Maybe.
  3. Fair to Good chance.
  
7. Ten years from now do you think you'll give credit to a past teacher or coach for having been a positive influence in your life?
  1. Of course.
  2. Depends.
  3. I doubt it.
  
8. Do you think you'll have (or already have had) a close friend or family member become incarcerated (juvenile hall, jail or prison) before you turn 18 years old?
  1. No.
  2. Maybe.
  3. Yes (quite possibly.)
  
9. What are the chances of you getting caught up in a situation in the next 6-7 years by being in the wrong place at the wrong time with the wrong people when a crime is being committed?
  1. 10% or less.
  2. 50/50.
  3. 60% or greater.
  
10. Which word listed below best describes your learning ability in school:
  1. Fantastic (more or less.)
  2. Good.
  3. Fair (more or less.)