



Center for Neighborhood Enterprise

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New University Study Indicates \$ Savings for Community Due to MPS Schools Violence-Reduction Program

Motor vehicle thefts around Milwaukee public high schools with the Center for Neighborhood Enterprise's Violence-Free Zone program dropped 25%, researchers from Baylor University said, pointing to a possible side benefit of the VFZ youth violence reduction program operating in eight MPS schools.

The Baylor report, an updated edition of the Milwaukee Case Study published in January, 2009, was released today by Baylor Fellow William Wubbenhorst in a report to Milwaukee funders of the program. He presented new data showing overall significantly reduced violent and nonviolent incidents, suspension rates, and total suspensions in the schools during the 2008/2009 school year compared with pre-VFZ totals.

"One of the most important findings on the impact of the VFZ program, and one to which a dollar value can be attached, is not based on data and outcomes from the schools, but instead concerns data on auto thefts provided by the Milwaukee Police Department for the communities immediately surrounding the schools with a VFZ program," the Baylor report said. The research team, headed by Dr. Byron Johnson, looked at the number of auto thefts within 1,000 feet of schools that launched VFZ programs on or before November 2007, and compared them with the overall citywide numbers.

"Auto thefts decreased by 25% between academic years 2006-07 (i.e., pre-VFZ) and 2007-08 (i.e., post-VFZ), the most recent data provided by the Milwaukee Police Department. In comparison, the citywide reduction in auto thefts during this same time period decreased by only 6%. Given the fact that the Milwaukee Police Department did not indicate that any special efforts were in place in these specific areas to reduce auto thefts, it is a reasonable assumption that the work of the Youth Advisors with students within the school also influenced their behavior and decision-making outside of the school," Wubbenhorst said.

In addition to the cost/benefit study of auto thefts near the school, these findings regarding the schools with the VFZ were reported in the new case study:

Violent incidents were down 11%

Nonviolent incidents were down 21%

Suspension rates were down 7%

Total suspensions were down 29.6%

“Interviews with Milwaukee school officials, teachers, and other relevant stakeholders indicate widespread agreement regarding the linkages between the implementation of the VFZ initiative and improvements in a host of areas,” the researchers said. “Student climate surveys generally confirm that perceived improvements concerning the overall learning atmosphere/environment, safety, and general orderliness within the VFZ schools exceeded those of Milwaukee’s other high schools. In-depth interviews with teachers and administrators support these findings.”

“We are pleased that the independent case study shows that the Violence-Free Zone is continuing to produce reductions in violent and non-violent incidents and suspensions, in a time when youth violence and disruptions are increasing not only in Milwaukee schools but around the country,” CNE President Bob Woodson said.

The Violence-Free Zone program was created by the Center for Neighborhood Enterprise and implemented in Milwaukee schools by CNE’s community partners, the Latino Community Center and Running Rebels Community Organization. The VFZ Youth Advisors – young adults from the same communities as the students--work full time in the schools as hall and cafeteria monitors, conflict mediators, and mentors to high-need students. They work closely with MPS School Safety Officers, teachers, and counselors to provide a complete support system for students. The VFZ also works closely with the Milwaukee Police Department.

The Violence-Free Zone program is funded by MPS and has had additional support from 10 Milwaukee foundations. The program has been implemented in Bay View, Bradley Tech, Custer, Madison, North Division, South Division, Washington, and Vincent High Schools.

Table 1: Yearly Comparisons – 2008/2009 to Previous Years 2006/2007

Measures	Pre-VFZ	2008/2009	Change
VFZ High Schools			
Violent Incidents	2330	2,065	Down 11%
Non-Violent Incidents	34,223	26,870	Down 21%
Suspension rates	41%	38%	Down 7%
Total Suspensions	23,666	16,662	Down 29.6%

MPS data from South Division, Bay View, Custer, WHS of Law, Education and Public Services, WHS of Expeditionary Learning, Madison, and Bradley Tech, compiled in the Baylor University Case Study.

Table 2: Climate Survey Comparisons – 2005-08

Question	VFZ Schools Change
School and grounds as safe	Up 31%
Orderliness/adherence to rules	Up 26%
School welcoming/learning environment	Up 20%