

WHAT THEY SAID ABOUT THE VIOLENCE-FREE ZONE PROGRAM

EDUCATORS

Milwaukee Public Schools Superintendent William Andrekopoulos: "I'm not even going to say it's a program, it's really a cultural shift, an emphasis on bringing the community into our schools and embracing our children. We saw instant improvement in suspensions, instant improvement in class disruptions, in fact, talking with the principals, they have told me they don't know how they could be a principal without the program in the schools. So it's been a very positive experience. The data presents itself. It's actually changing lives of children."

Dr. John Deasy, (now former) Chief Executive Officer, Prince George's County, MD, Public Schools: "I have extremely positive things to say about the Violence-Free Zone program. It brings a huge chunk of support to the schools. The Youth Advisors are some of the most talented people I have ever met. We have been trained by the Youth Advisors. They made an immediate connection inside the schools. They are incredible. Their ability isn't just in the schools, they are in the homes and in the community, so they have immediate rapport with the students. Few adults fill that role."

Ron Price, District 9 School Board Member Dallas, Texas: "The VFZ program has been a tremendous success. [After two years of the VFZ] Madison High School had the highest gain of any Dallas high school in academic test scores. Madison was having serious problems, gangs were running wild, there was just general unruliness, and there was no education going on. Omar's group [CNE community partner Vision Regeneration] went in and stabilized the situation, assisted the administration of the school, and brought order. That school was one of the toughest in the city of Dallas. They addressed the behavior issues, and got the school under control. Academics could then go on."

Bay View High School Principal Robin Kitzrow, Milwaukee: "I watched something I've never seen in schools before. I watched the Violence-Free Zone Advisors become the safety nets for students that had basically given up on themselves. They took these students, they gave them hopes, they gave them dreams, and then they followed through with this. They kept up with the students, they went to their homes, they were out in the community, they communicated with all of us. I watched students that never, ever thought they would graduate, never thought they would go to college, walk across the stage in June, that really is the proof."

Darrin Slade, Principal, Ron Brown High School, former Principal, Fletcher-Johnson K-8, Washington, DC: "Before this program was put into place in Fletcher-Johnson, we had a student killed on the parking lot. We had fights. We had stolen cars on the playgrounds. We went from that to zero. We went from gang fights every week to zero. We had order, a 100% change in climate. We had never made AYP [Adequate Yearly Progress under the No Child Left Behind Act] before in any area. In 2005-2006, we made it in all areas. It is the best program I've had in any school I've been in."

Royce Sublett, Principal, Ben Carson Middle School, Atlanta: "The impact on the school has been in a lot of key areas: student discipline referral decrease; increase in mentoring and a good positive role model for our students; and also decrease in our students being in off-task behavior, such as in the hallways, our cafeteria and at bus dismissal. They [VFZ Youth Advisors] provide an extra round of support and security for our students to make them feel safe, to be able to get a good sound education each and every day."

Cecelia McDaniel, Assistant Principal, Southwestern High School, Baltimore: "New Vision [CNE community partner] has helped us move students forward who had given up on themselves. There are no words to express how important this has been. New Vision is our

eyes and ears. When the students know you care, it makes a difference. We no longer see the large traffic jams in the halls. The program has moved the kids out of the halls and given us the tools to learn academic rigor. They don't allow the kids to give up."

Robert Ward, Principal, Madison High School, Dallas: "I think this program has helped us in a number of ways to increase the overall effectiveness of this campus. Right off the top I can see there has been a reduction in the number of negative interactions between children—the number of fights has dropped off, the number of neighborhood territorial or gang related fights have dropped significantly since three years ago."

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Milwaukee District Attorney John Chisholm: "Since this program has been in place-- there clearly have been other factors as well-- but this is one of the key factors--we've seen the largest reduction in violent crime in Milwaukee's history in the last 25 years. And that's how deeply I feel that this isn't just a luxury, not just a good program, this is a necessity that we need to have in our community if we are to going to continue creating a safe environment, a place where people know that their kids are going to be able to go to school in safety..."

City of Milwaukee Municipal Court Chief Judge Derek Moseley: "Any given day I have from 100 to 300 juvenile cases on my calendar from incidents inside the schools, the parks, and the community. We realize we can't continue to prosecute our way out of some of these problems. We need to collaborate with other organizations. As a judge, I hope that you will support this program and I hope that you will expand it to other schools. It makes my job easier—believe me, it helps make my job easier..."

Lieutenant Scott C. Booth, Third Precinct Sector 312, Richmond Police Department: "I believe that the youth intervention aspects of the Violence Free Zone at George Wythe High School have impacted Motor Vehicle Theft in Sector 312. Probably our largest incident producer in 2007 in that crime was the Northrop Neighborhood, the area immediately adjacent to GWHS. With the introduction of the VFZ, kids are staying in school more and are less of a negative impact on the adjacent neighborhood."

Atlanta Police Department School Resource Officer Bennie E. Bridges: "Once the VFZ Visions program came in, it gave us another outlet to deal with whatever problems that were happening in the community because there was someone there to mentor the children. There was someone that the children could go to outside of the police because quite often, children, they don't want to talk to the police about personal problems, things going on at home. And it brought a lot of our problems down. It decreased them. It has made my job easier—a whole lot easier!"

STUDENTS AND PARENTS

Jeremie, 14, 8th Grade Student, Ben Carson Middle School, Atlanta: "They helped stop the violence. Like if a fight started, they'd break it up. They make a safer environment for students."

AnnQuisha, 8th Grade, Harper Archer Middle School, Atlanta: "This changed my life all around. When I first met Visions I realized I could change my behavior and this year I went to class, I didn't fight, I did my work, I got good grades and everything. I'm proud of myself because you all changed me all around."

Sylvester Stewart, Jr., Former Student, Custer High School, Milwaukee: "When they first came to Custer, there were a lot of fights at Custer. I was a popular person but I never had a voice to come and tell me that's not right to do, or don't get into fights and let's sit down and talk about it. They just made me want to stop my friends from fighting and stop everyone from Custer from fighting. When they first came I wasn't excited about going to college, but they got my mind set on going to college and helped me with all the forms and such."

Charity, 14, 8th Grade, Ben Carson Middle School, Atlanta: "Without them I would have given up because they always tell me don't give up. There have been some hard times when I wanted to give up."

Parent Latifa Thompson, Milwaukee: "I have a 16-year-old daughter who was getting off track in life, disrespecting her elders and disrespecting herself. They helped my daughter get on track. Some of these people are more than mentors—they are our school angels."

WHAT THE WASHINGTON POST SAID:

One year after the truce was effected in Washington, DC's Benning Terrace public housing community, the Washington Post newspaper carried as its front-page, lead article a story examining the homicide rate in the District of Columbia. As reporter Michael Powell wrote, "Despite a downturn in slayings in Washington last year--a drop that the D.C. police officials are quick to take credit for--the District remains an exceptionally violent city, posting the highest homicide rate in the nation for big cities in 1997."

The story went on to note that the number of homicides fell from 397 in 1996 to 301 in 1997. But this was not, the Washington Post reporter found, the result of police action. The following excerpts are from the Washington Post on Sunday, April 19, 1998:

"So why did the number of homicides fall last year? The most obvious answer is provided by the city's Housing Authority, which reported 48 fewer homicides in public housing last year...When a group known as the Alliance of Concerned Men brokered a cease fire between warring youths in Benning Terrace in Southeast Washington, Gilmore cemented the peace with training and jobs for the young men. Benning Terrace has not recorded a slaying since the truce...Amid the bleakness, there is reason for hope. Homicide in the first four months of 1998 is down 25 percent from last year...And Gilmore, the Alliance of Concerned Men and Robert Woodson's National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise have forged truces in other public housing complexes."