

Congressional Forum on Youth Violence

Written Testimony

Minneapolis Public Schools supports the work of the “Blueprint for Action” that is being implemented by the city of Minneapolis under the leadership of Mayor R.T. Ryback.

The school district has put a number of strategies in place to provide support for students by meaningful adults in their lives. The Middle School and High School reform efforts are focused on making schools more relevant and personalized for all students.

- 1) Schools have put in place advisory programs that provide support for students and address youth development needs.
- 2) All students are required to complete a “My Life Plan” that helps students answer the following questions
 - Who am I?
 - What is my community?
 - Where am I going?
 - How do I get there?
 - How do I function?

This plan is inclusive of both planning for high school graduation and transitioning to post-secondary education or training.

- 3) AVID/Advancement Via Individual Determination
 - This is an in-school academic support program for grades 6-12 that prepares students for college eligibility and success.
 - AVID places academically average students in advanced classes and levels the playing field for students of color, low-income and other students without a college-going tradition in their families.
- 4) The district is developing additional support programs for ELL and special needs students.
- 5) The district has implemented summer transition and jump start programs in math and science for students starting 9th grade in the fall.
- 6) The district is expanding mentoring and tutoring programs in each school.
- 7) The district has implemented a very successful check and connect program that intervenes early with 9th grade students who are having attendance problems.

Alignment with Blueprint

The district’s Emergency Management Strategies Team has aligned its’ work with the Mayor’s Blueprint to prevent youth violence. The district has formed a Youth Violence Prevention Taskforce that

specifically looks at youth development issues. The taskforce consists of representation from across disciplines and communities. Examples of representation are:

- The City of Minneapolis
- Youth Coordinating Board
- District Safety and Security
- Contract Alternative Schools
- Safe and Drug Free Schools
- Minneapolis Police Department
- Guidance and Counseling
- Indian Education
- ELL
- Emergency Management

The purpose of this taskforce is to align the district's work in youth development with the "Blueprint for Action". Some examples of that alignment and collaboration can be seen in the following initiatives:

- Safe Routes to Schools
- Speak-up Youth Violence Hotline
- Gang awareness work
- Community outreach

We believe that it is critical that the school district and city work closely together to address youth development challenges. By combining our resources and working together, we can more effectively support our youth in a positive way.

My opening statement will include demographic data about Minneapolis Public Schools that will include suspension data from the current year. I will focus on suspensions for fighting and assault in grades 6-12. This data review will prepare the audience for the rest of my testimony on Youth Violence and what the district is doing to address this issue both within the schools and the community.