



Gang Awareness and Recognition Training

by Steve Greiner

On February 4, 2009, I attended a gang awareness and recognition training in Niles, Illinois. Sgt. Robert Tornabene of the Niles Police Department put on the program. Sgt. Tornabene is a national level presenter. The training was designed for police as well as school personnel, and as a school person, I was definitely in the minority. The program was put on through GATE America, inc. (Gang Awareness Training Education). The website for the organization is www.openthegate.org. I originally wanted to gain some information for myself on gangs in my school and gangs operating in my area. What I got was not only excessive amounts of information, but also access to additional resources through web sites and listservs.

The days programming began with general information about street gangs. Their history, what they are, what they do, recruiting, membership, levels of gang membership, migrations, and recent trends both regionally and nationwide. Information was presented on the major divisions of gangs, as well as current gang identifiers (symbols, hand signs, insignias). Most of us have been made aware of this information previously.

The information presented that I had not been exposed to related to topics like national, regional and local structure of the various street gangs. I was not aware that the Latin Kings have one leader on the national level that controls activities in prison and one that controls activities in the street. Each of these leaders has finance committees, advisors, and treasurers. Under these leaders are the council of princes,

another council beneath them and the various chapters on the local level. Even the local chapters are well organized into leaders with advisors, counselors, enforcers, investigators, and finally soldiers and warriors. Numerous other gangs have this sort of organization, for example the Gangster Disciples and the Black Gangsters. Not surprisingly these various gangs also have colorful ingenious names for the various ranking positions. Other various sub-set or off shoot gangs, like the Sureno's and Norteno's as well as the Mara Salvatrucia were discussed.

Another topic of interest for me was the clothing, and how gang members use it to represent, or disrespect other gangs. It was amazing how the athletic clothing industry is playing a big part in this sort of representation. For example New York Yankees, this organization typically uses black and white colors to represent themselves, however, the clothing industry is now making Yankee hats that are black with gold crowns for the Latin Kings, as well as making the hats in red for the Bloods, and blue for the Crips. This is but one example of many; some street gangs actually have their own clothing lines.

There was also a portion of the training on how and where the gang members hide illegal items, both on their person and in vehicles. As training for both police and school personnel, I was exposed to more information than school trainings normally provide. The actual pictures shared by Sgt. Tornabene were enlightening and gave new meaning to the statement 'searching a vehicle.'

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President's Corner

by Jim Kelly, President, ISDA

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In the past week, I received a long email from a parent of a regular client. During the last four years, I have had many disagreements with this mother. She had excuses for her daughter, blamed others for her problems and never wanted our student to take responsibility for her actions. Does this sound familiar? For the most part, the message was complimentary and fortunately my frequent customer has turned her life around. The email reminded me that I had a part to play in the daughter's turn around. As Deans and Vice Principals, we guide unmotivated students everyday. Listening, setting parameters, following through on what we say, showing that we care and being good role models helps us motivate students. In the next several years, our continuing challenge will be reaching these troubled, frustrated and misguided students. Thanks to all of you who do whatever it takes to make changes in the lives of young people everyday.

We will be accepting applications for the ISDA Improved Student Scholarship until April 2nd. I encourage you to take the time to recommend students who you have worked with and have had made significant improvements in their lives. Applications were included in packets at our fall convention. Award amounts vary between \$500 and \$1,000 per student. The applications can be e-mailed or mailed to my attention.

The ISDA leadership group is working hard to plan our fall conference. I would like to thank all of the members who are collaborating to develop and plan the fall conference. We are looking for new ideas and new people to help the organization grow. If you are interested in attending a planning meeting, please contact me at 847-639-3825 or Jkelly@d155.org.

Thanks for all that you do. Have a great Spring Break!



Mark Your Calendar!

The 2009 ISDA Fall Conference
will be held
November 11, 12 & 13, at the
Hotel Pere Marquette, in
Peoria, Illinois.



News You Can Use

In Case of Emergency

by Greg Stilling and Sara Rogers

Classrooms are traditionally equipped with an emergency button. The button is intended to assist teachers in case of an emergency. Sometimes, the emergency is obvious and warrants the attention that the button will bring. However, there are some tenuous situations that need attention, but may not be an emergency.

The ICE email system was initiated to help fill the gap between emergencies that require immediate attention and situations that need support. Immediate attention emergencies, such as personal injury, violent situations or health related matters should still utilize the emergency call button. However, there are some situations that arise in class that a teacher may not want to draw attention to. For example, if a teacher suspects that a student might be under the influence and doesn't want to draw the attention of the emergency button (which sends the nurse and school resource officer running) then the ICE email system is perfect.

ICE email is a group email set up in the school's email system. A teacher simply needs to open a new message and type I and ICE pops up as an option. The teacher can write a brief message that is sent to the entire group. The team leaders/deans, school resource officer, key administrators and the secretarial staff in the dean's office receive the message. All of these people have radio access. The assumption is that at least one of these people will be sitting at the computer and notify the others via radio.

This system has proved to be a valuable asset. Teachers appreciate being able to draw attention to situations anonymously and swiftly. Additionally, the wayward missed email telling the dean that "Suzy just wasn't herself this morning," is a thing of the past. Additional positive aspects of this system include: increased confidentiality, timely and immediate attention, appropriate use of services and more frequent and consistent interventions.

However, there are some pitfalls. Implementation requires some explanation for teachers. ICE is not appropriate if a teacher is dealing with an immediate health concern or violent situation. ICE is additionally not appropriate for attendance situations. Another shortcoming arises if no one selects to "reply to all" to the initial email. A brief message to the ICE list lets everyone know when a situation is being addressed.

The benefits of the ICE email system far outweigh these negatives. Appropriate implementation and use can eliminate many frustrations and help teachers and deans to help students. If you would like to initiate this type of system in your building, contact Greg Stilling (Vernon Hills High School) or Sara Rogers (Libertyville High School) with any questions.

**"People who enjoy
what they do, invariably
do it well."**

~ Joe Gibbs,

Former NFL Coach

**"It often requires more
courage to dare to
do right than to fear
to do wrong."**

~ Abraham Lincoln

We Want To Hear From You!

*Do you have exciting
news to share?*

Don't forget ISDA when sending news releases about your school! We want to share success stories from the field with ISDA members.

If you have an article or any ideas for the ISDA Newsletter, please contact **Sara Rogers** at sara.rogers@d128.org.

New Address? Retiring? Job Change?

New Position Next Year?

Help us keep our membership information updated. Please contact Steve Greiner at sgreiner@d155.org with membership changes, or complete the membership application form on the back page to mail the updated information to: Dave Shuttters, Crystal Lake Central High School, 45 W. Franklin, Crystal Lake, IL 60014.

A portion of the training was dedicated to gangs and technology as some street gang members are quite techno savvy. The use of computers, cell phones and cameras by gang members is quite prolific. Members use websites and social networking sites for networking as well as recruiting. Texting is utilized for organizing illegal activities. Cameras are used to take pictures of themselves in full gang colors throwing signs or drugs they may be in possession of, or tagging/vandalism they have done. The focus here was to be aware of the use of technology by them and use it to our advantage in documenting, charging them with crimes, or having their probation/parole revoked.

The training concluded with Do's and Don't's of interacting with street gang members. For example: when, where and how to interview street gang members, dealing with confrontations, cautions like not underestimating females, and other bits of valuable information.

This entire presentation was delivered in PowerPoint format, with all participants receiving a hard copy, as well as an additional 121-page gang awareness handbook. Further, there were numerous short videos and actual interviews and photos interspersed throughout the day making the program quite interesting and useful. Finally, there were Internet resources provided for police and school personnel to help in tracking gang migration, deciphering street gang graffiti and hand signs as well as further trainings. (Ex: chicagohoodz.com)

Overall the training was outstanding, with valuable information and resources that a Dean or SRO could use on a daily basis, delivered by a well-versed instructor (police officer) with 20 years of experience. The cost of the day's program and all materials was only \$100. If you are interested in attending one of these trainings, log on to www.openthegate.org.

2009 Assistant Principals Conference and Deans Day Review

by Steve Greiner, Secretary, ISDA

On February 2, 2009, President Jim Kelly, Vice President Megan Murray, and I attended the IPA's annual Assistant Principals Conference and Deans Day in Lisle, Illinois. Jim Kelly and I arrived early in the day and were able to hear from a variety of presenters on topics from RTI (response to intervention), PBIS (positive behavior intervention systems), to cyber bullying, as well as creating a highly effective school environment.

At 3 p.m., Jim, Megan and I presented the 'Deans Roundtable' discussion. The three of us had done this last year and ended with such a positive tone that we chose to do it again in 2009. This year the discussion began with how the deans' job had changed over the last ten years or so. Much of the discussion centered on new technology, for the students (cell phones, ipods, iphones, texting) as well as the staff (reaction to the student technology, and technological changes in the running a school). Changes have also occurred due to recent court rulings about truancy and the legal age when students may withdraw from school. The discussion then gravitated toward more of the nuts and bolts of the daily grind of the dean, or in the

case of many of the participants, vice principal. The participants ranged in experience from less than one year to almost 20. The participants' home schools also ranged in number of students as well as socio economic status and cultural make up. This made for a rich discussion on any topic that arose. In the end, it became obvious to all that we as disciplinarians of the school struggle with the same issues regardless of previously mentioned qualifiers. We all have 'angry parent' phone calls, difficulty with staff enforcing rules consistently, the intricacies of special education, truancy, students not getting along, the list goes on. The other commonality that came out of the discussion was the need for strong support from the building principal, as well as having an administrative team that works together. Having a weak link can make it tough on the rest of the team. Other words of advice that surfaced would be not taking issues personally, getting involved in positive activities around the school, and making sure you laugh every day. All in all it was a good discussion with great people, and we as deans look forward to presenting again at the next year's Assistant Principals Conference.



Illinois State Deans' Association Membership Application

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Title _____

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I wish to become a member of ISDA. Please find my membership dues enclosed.

Membership dues include the ISDA Newsletter.

1 Year Membership Dues: \$45 • November 1, 2008 – October 31, 2009

Please make checks payable to: **Illinois State Deans' Association**

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