

On governor's task force

Factions differ on resolving school violence

By SUZIE ROLLINS

School violence and vandalism is a statewide problem.

That's why a statewide conference for educators and students was held for the past three days in the Sheraton-Southfield Hotel. Gov. William Milliken gave the keynote address and discussed the task force he had appointed to focus on school violence and vandalism and determine what can be done to eliminate it.

The goal of the conference was to disseminate the task force's reports

and recommendations and provide an opportunity for educators to exchange ideas on the problem.

The workshop topics included "Alternatives to Suspension and Expulsion," "School Youth Advocacy Program," "Neighborhood Development and Organization," "Parenting Skills," "Police-School Liaison Programs," "Student Involvement-Staff Needs," "Legal Education Programs," and "Coordinated Services to School Dropouts and Potential Dropouts."

Trevor Gardner of the program for Educational Opportunity outlined alternatives to suspending troublemakers, but many of his comments were termed too vague by listeners.

He discussed offering auxiliary classes to students who act up in the classroom and stressed the need to get students involved curriculum changes. In addition, Gardner recommended bringing in parents and grandparents to the school to talk to the students about vandalism.

However, Gardner was criticized for not discussing how the programs would be implemented or how they would be funded.

"How will they be funded?" one principal asked.

"Don't worry about the funding," Gardner answered. "People will pay for good programs."

His response triggered disagreement. When asked direct questions regarding violence in Detroit schools and how to handle it, Gardner refused to comment.

"Who is going to staff these extra programs?" another asked.

"Don't worry about that. We've had parents, teachers, grandparents staff them. That's not a problem," he answered.

"Will they (students) be taken out of their regular classes to attend these programs?" another asked.

"It can go any way you want it," he answered.

Educators admit violence, vandalism is state-wide

By CRAIG PIECHURA

What happens to the "bad eggs" in schools — the students who fight, steal, break windows and "fall between the cracks" as social workers say?

Parents, educators and social service workers were sharply divided on the recommendations by the Governor's Task Force on School Violence and Vandalism.

Task force members presented their recommendations Tuesday morning during a statewide conference at the Southfield-Sheraton Hotel.

At one point it looked as though conference participants might themselves engage in violence as they expressed their wide-ranging views.

Evidence of widespread dissatisfaction was reflected in the fact that there was a run on copies of the 41-page minority opinion report to the Governor's Task Force Report recommendations.

BEGINNING Jan. 1 the Michigan Dept. of Education will open an Office of Safe Schools funded for the first nine months by a \$110,000 grant by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA), a division of the U.S. Department of Justice.

In addition, the office has been promised 30 months funding by the LEAA to establish a state-wide system of combating school violence and vandalism, said Al Hurwitz, executive director of the task force.

Some of the duties of the Office of Safe Schools are to compile a state-wide annual school crime survey and train "broker(s)" who will look after the student's best interests when a student first gets into trouble.

The idea, said Hurwitz, is to follow the recommendations of the report by involving students, parents, members of the state board of education, local and intermediate school districts, social service agencies, youth agencies and police departments.

The task force cited a 1977 National Institute of Education study which stated that in a month's time a typical secondary student stands a 1-in-9 chance of having something stolen in school, a 1-in-80 chance of being attacked and a 1-in-200 chance of being robbed.

Teachers, the study said, stand a 1-in-eight chance of having something stolen in a given month, a 1-in-167 chance of being robbed and a 1-in-200 chance of being attacked.

VANDALISM AND violence can be reduced, one task force member said, by building smaller schools, providing alternatives to regular classrooms and alternatives to expulsion for the chronic offender.

One of the recommendations of the

report states, "It is imperative that we make the student the central figure in the resolution of the problem without victimizing or scapegoating the individual. If it can be established that the student is incapable of participating in a constructive solution, temporary or permanent isolation from the traditional school process should be considered and emergency steps should be taken to refer individuals to youth crisis centers."

SOUTHFIELD HIGH School principal Daniel Hogan said the funds allocated to the Office of Safe Schools aren't enough to carry out all the goals of the task force in the schools throughout Michigan.

"We're going to need some financial help," Hogan said. "I don't think I would disagree with a thing in here," he said, pointing to the report, "but a lot of these suggestions are going to cost a lot of money."

Kenneth Green, director of pupil personnel services in Flint Community Schools, was spokesman for the task force members unhappy with the final recommendations for curbing school violence and vandalism.

Unlike Hogan, Green disagrees with a great deal of the task force report. During the delivery of the task force report, Green shocked some participants by saying it is a "lousy" report.

"I hate to throw a bucket of water on all this sweetness and light but we drew up a lousy report," Green said.

Green said the report was heavily dominated by activist parents and (social service) agency people from throughout the state.

"I feel the report was loaded and slanted to those two groups dominating the task force," he said during the conference.

Outside the meeting room Green explained his feeling that school administrators unjustly bore the brunt of the

blame for school violence and vandalism. Many of the recommendations contained in the report have already been found to be unworkable, Green said.

GREEN BLASTED one recommendation of the report that said students could help settle disputes over another student's guilt by participating in a student court.

"If we tried that in Detroit the 12 students who were sitting on the jury could have their throats cut after school," Green said.

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