

A SNAPSHOT OF RAMPART GRYD ZONE

(A look into the lives of the children and families you'll be serving)



LA Term interns at the beach

The community is impacted by gang activity in their daily lives hindering their ability to significantly benefit from Rampart's educational and community services. According to the needs assessment, *in 2007 LAPD estimates there are at least 10 active gangs in the GRYD area (excluding Asian gangs), with nearly 47% of gang related crimes being violent.* The needs assessment cited many problems in addressing the issue of gangs, including lack of enough positive police presence around the schools, a disconnect between LAPD and city residents and businesses, need for more youth programs that offer alternatives to gangs and safe

spaces. Youth expressed need for programs to build skills and improve self-esteem, such as sports and recreation, life skills, and adult role models. Rampart suffers from other serious adverse socio-economic conditions: high-density living conditions, concentrations of recent immigrant families, low educational attainment, unemployment, and poverty (with most young Latino families in greatest need).

LAUSD Local District 4 is home to Virgil Middle School and four elementary schools (Commonwealth Ave., Union Ave., White House Place and Esperanza). Most high schools serving the GRYD are located just outside the boundaries. Five parks provide this most densely populated area of the City (43,000 people per square mile) with recreation space, but despite recent efforts they are still unsafe areas especially after dark. With all the services available in the area, the gaps are in not providing a sense of safety, protection, belonging, and parental supports to a population *often lacking access to these support systems because of language, immigrant status or lack of understanding of the systems themselves.*



Service area description. Rampart GRYD Zone covers 1.75 square miles with over 75,000 residents – *the most densely populated in the City.* The residents are culturally and ethnically diverse: 63% are Latino, 26% are Asian and Asian American, 5% are African-American and 4% white or Euro-American.

Research has shown that extremely high poverty levels, unemployment, and declining income lead to thriving gang activity. In 2007, 62% of Rampart households were families, 32% of which struggle with poverty – twice as many as County residents (15%); two out of three households earned less than \$35,000; unemployment in Rampart was at 11% compared to 9% in the County; 14% of GRYD households have only one parent, increasing the likelihood of insufficient supervision of their child's development. Compared to the City (34%) and the County's (31%) adults 25 years and older, 51% of Rampart adults aged 25+ do not have high school diplomas, significantly inhibiting parents from guiding their children in academics.

Coupled with low performing schools (Virgil Middle School had a 2007 API rank of 1—the bottom 10%)¹, these demographics become aggravated by rising gang activity.



Rampart is home to an estimated 805 active gang members (LAPD 2007) in nine major gangs. They were responsible in 2007 for 483 gang crimes, of which nearly half were violent. Within Rampart, 547 violent crimes were committed during a recent 3-month period (6/29/08 to 9/20/08), of which 206 were aggravated assaults, a crime that typifies gang involvement. In 2007, 55% of the 844 violent crimes, excluding rape, occurred between the hours of 4pm and 11:59pm (“youth

homicide hours”) against victims aged 25 years and younger. Between 2005-2007, gang crime increased by 19%. In 2007, 3 out of 6 homicides were gang related. In 2008, Virgil Middle School experienced four gang related deaths between January and May.² In order to deter young people from joining gangs, at-risk youth and families need access to safe places and comprehensive services to provide them with positive alternatives, therapeutic services, and life skills to build on for their futures.

Education. Given the high concentration of families in the area, the low level of educational attainment among adults in the GRYD is likely a significant challenge affecting parents’ capacity to support their children’s educational outcomes. Over half (51%) of the adults age 25 and over do not have high school diplomas, which is significantly higher than the City’s average of 34% and the County’s average of 31%. About one in every three adults age 25 and over has not completed the ninth grade, which may be due to the high number of foreign-born residents. Low educational attainment compounded by low-income levels and high unemployment levels suggest the need for a comprehensive family support network to promote the educational and economic development of families in the GRYD.

Public schools in the area face a variety of challenges, including a lack of resources, high student/teacher ratios, inadequate career and personal counseling services, and language barriers. The majority of our students attend overcrowded Virgil Middle School and Belmont High School, and their academic progress upon Bresee program entry indicates the impact of poor schooling. According to California’s Academic Performance Index (API), both schools received an **API rank of 1 in 2006**, which places them in the bottom 10% of schools statewide. **In 2007**, Belmont High students averaged 393 in the verbal and 412 in the math sections of the SAT; the statewide averages were 493 and 513, respectively. The California Department of Education reported in June 2008 that the number of students graduating from LAUSD has declined for two straight years, despite the fact that enrollment in the 12th grade has been rising sharply. The graduation slump began when California started requiring students to pass an exit exam before they could receive a diploma. A **June 2008** study by the California Dropout Research Project at UC Santa Barbara found that only 48% of LAUSD students will graduate on time, and says this is directly attributed to the “quality of students’ middle school experience and the quality of teachers at their high schools.”

School technology, when it is available, is typically far below industry standards. In addition,

¹ http://search.lausd.k12.ca.us/cgi-bin/fccgi.exe?w3exec=p_sarc3&which=8462

² <http://www.laweekly.com/2008-05-01/news/another-toxic-school/>

because few teachers choose to earn credentials in the high-end multimedia technology field, those classes tend to be instructed by math, English or other similarly trained teachers lacking specialized skills. “Pathways to Our Future” is a report that was written in 2002 by The Children’s Partnership; it was developed in part through a yearlong youth multimedia demonstration project in which Bresee participated. The Pathways report found that teaching at-risk youth skills in web design, desktop publishing or filmmaking “improves their economic prospects by helping them get jobs, resume their education, and follow a productive path to adulthood.” Without the technology resources, expert-level training, and workplace readiness workshops offered at Bresee, people in our community would lack the skills essential to compete for jobs of the 21st century. According to the State of California Employment Development Department, the vast majority of Los Angeles County jobs in the years **2004-2014** are projected to be in office and administrative support occupations, which heavily depend upon technology skills.

Our youth face tremendous safety challenges on a daily basis as well. Recent statistics from the Los Angeles Police Department indicate that 22% of violent crimes in 2007 took place in our service area. The department has also determined the following: 80% of violent crimes are committed by youths 14-24 years old; 85% of the victims are male Hispanic and African Americans, and most violent crime victims are between 14 and 24 years old. Nearly one-quarter of Los Angeles’ gang-related crimes occur within the three police divisions located in Bresee’s service area—Rampart, Southwest and Wilshire divisions—with at least 20 gangs competing for territory while perpetuating violence and mayhem.[1]

The majority of our students attend overcrowded Virgil Middle School, Berendo Middle School and Belmont High School, and their academic progress upon program entry indicates the impact of poor schooling. According to California’s Academic Performance Index (API), all three schools received an API rank of 1 in **2005**, which places them in the bottom 10% of schools statewide. In 2008, they did not meet their English/Language Arts, Mathematics, or other academic outcomes.[2] California Department of Education data for the **2003-2004** school year estimates that only 54% of all entering 9th graders at Belmont High School will graduate with a diploma – much lower than the 81% Los Angeles County rate and 87% California rate.

Limited English proficiency among parents contributes to students’ low school performance. The United Way Zip Code Data Book indicates that 81% of individuals (age 5 and older) in our surrounding zip codes speak a language other than English at home, compared to only 54% in Los Angeles County overall. Local students must also contend with significant public safety issues. Over half of L.A.’s gang-related crimes and 62% of its juvenile violent crimes occur in the three police divisions located in Bresee’s service area. These issues remain pressing in light of a youth population that is exhibiting rapid growth, the continued settlement of new families in the area, and a local economy that has stagnated in recent years.

[1] *Los Angeles Police Department Citywide Gang Crime Summary*, October 2007

[2] http://api.cde.ca.gov/AcntRpt2008/2008AYPCo.aspx?cSelect=19,LOS_ANGELES - Each of the three schools listed, scored 0% proficient in the academic areas listed. Belmont High School met 11 out of 22 state standards and scored well below in LA County’s Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) graduation rate report. See: <http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/> - In LA County, 777 high school graduates were tested in Math; 21% (166) passed; when 647 were tested in English/Language Arts, 29% (187) passed.