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# SecEd

The ONLY weekly voice for secondary education

Issue 163 • January 17 2008 Price £1.00

[www.sec-ed.com](http://www.sec-ed.com)

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### The tornado of the teaching profession



You would do well to meet a teacher with more passion for his job – or who is more respected by colleagues – than David Torn. We spoke to the Teaching Award winner about the secrets to his success and his views of



**Breaking the cycle:** This former New York gangster is meeting school children in the UK in a bid to turn them away from gang culture. We report on a new project that originally started in response to the Columbine High School massacre in America and has now arrived in Britain. See page 3.

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**Writing wrongs:** American author Christoph Arnold

## American gangsters bring anti-violence message to Britain

by Pete Henshaw

Former New York gangsters are visiting UK schools to speak of their experiences.

The scheme, called Breaking the Cycle, started in the United States in response to the Columbine High School massacre, and now aims to show children in British schools that violence is no solution.

The programme, which stresses honest communication and forgiveness as a way of resolving conflicts, is launching today (Thursday,

January 17) at St Bonaventure's School in Newham, east London.

After speaking at hundreds of schools, mostly in the New York area, ex-gang member Sergio Argueta now hopes to speak to thousands of children in the UK.

The sessions involve New York sheriff Paul Van Blaricum and author Christoph Arnold, and the programme also hopes to find UK speakers to help bring the message to schools across the country.

Mr Argueta, 29, knows gang life from the inside – his brother and friend were killed in gang violence.

He told *SecEd*: "I loved gangs – I loved the support, the caring, the protection. I thought I was part of a brotherhood."

As a gang leader, Mr Argueta planned a drive-by shooting in retaliation for his friend's murder. As a result of his decisions, his best friend was sentenced to 12 years in prison for killing a man with a shotgun after they were jumped by members of a rival gang. He then realised that his life had to change.

He now has a master's degree in social work and has founded an

organisation dedicated to educating young people on the importance of resisting gang life and its devastating effects.

Mr Arnold, meanwhile, is a teen counsellor and author of many books on education, while Sheriff Van Blaricum is a 30-year veteran of the Ulster County police in New York, whose background includes a 1998 tour of service for the United Nations International Police Task Force in war-torn Bosnia.

For more information, contact 01580 883300 or visit [www.breakingthecycle.us](http://www.breakingthecycle.us)