



SAFE SCHOOLS

NEWSLETTER



Issue 3

November 2000

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Safe Schools Newsletter Editorial Staff
 Bob Michela, Allan Labowitz, Brian McKeon, Aryn Wrubel
 Newsletter Design
 Vera MacBride

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Safe Schools NEWS

STUDENT ARTICLES FOR THE NEWSLETTERS

We would like to include a student article(s) in our February Newsletter. The subject of the article would be “Violence in Schools”. The intent is to give students an opportunity to express their thoughts about a subject and to have their opinion published for others to consider. Principals may choose to make this an academic opportunity by including this as a writing exercise for class. Principals who wish to participate are asked to submit to us the articles they nominate for the February Newsletter. The few ground rules would be to limit the word count to 500 words, to submit the article to us by 31 December 2000, and to submit the article by e-mail with follow-up mail of the original. Each article must include the name of the student, grade, and school. Articles should be mailed to Safe Schools, Attn: Brian McKeon; 6101 Stevenson Avenue; Alexandria, VA 22304. The e-mail address is mckeonb@dyncorp.com.



Drug Abuse Resistance Education Results Questioned

On July 16, 2000, Ross Anderson, the mayor of Salt Lake City, Utah, discontinued funding to the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program stating that he thinks the organization “has been an absolute fraud”. Though DARE is used in 80% of American school districts, it has not been proven that the program actually works. Consequently, both liberal and conservative cities have severed their relationships with the organization. Salt Lake City joins school districts in Minneapolis, Austin, Seattle, and Omaha in dropping the program. Supporters of DARE cite the modest cost and say that the presence of armed police officers makes the school feel safer. They also say that it allows the police to connect in a positive way with young people. Opponents claim that none of this matters if the DARE program does not prevent children from using drugs.

Schools Getting Safer

On October 26, 2000, DoEd/DoJ released a new report on school safety: *Indicators of School Crime and Safety 2000*. DoEd reports that the number of crimes at school decreased 20% from 1992 to 1998 and the number of high school students who reported bringing a weapon to school decreased from 12% in 1993 to 9% in 1997. However some statistics did not change. For example, 7% of high school students reported being threatened or injured with a weapon at school and 15% of students reported being involved in fights at school. (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2001017>)

Student Bystanders Key to Preventing Bullying

“Most students are neither bully nor victim. They are however witnesses to the bullying that takes place around them. Students can promote a positive school climate by discouraging bullying behavior among their peers, promoting inclusion of all others in their activities and seeking to foster acceptance of differences.”

Report Recommendations from the *Maine Project Against Bullying* (<http://lincoln.midcoast.com/%7ewps/against/execsummary.html>)

For information on anti-bullying see the article at Intervention Strategies (p. 5).

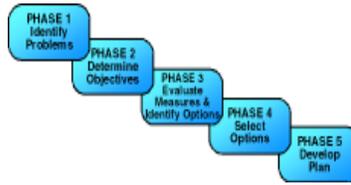


News You Can Use



- 9% of students reported that they avoided one or more places at school because of fear for their own safety.
- 3% of middle school and high school students brought a gun to school (approximately 800,000).
- Three thousand nine hundred thirty students were expelled from school for bringing a gun to school during the 1997-98 school year.
- 28% of students, 23% of teachers, and 30% of law enforcement officials expect violence in public schools to increase.

Source: N. Carolina Center for Prevention of School Violence (CPSV) <http://www.ncsu.edu/cpsv/eoto99.htm>.



Applying the 5 Phase Process

Phase Two - Determine Objectives

This month our feature review article from the Five-Phase Process covers **Phase Two - Determine Objectives**.

This phase is critical to the success of your school's security program. A failure to determine the proper objectives will render the entire Five-Phase



Process aimless. By achieving your objectives you will alleviate the security and climate problems you identified during Phase One.

Write a Risk Reduction Objective for overcoming each security problem identified in Phase One. Risk Reduction Objectives can be determined by analyzing the information identified during Phase One using Tools 1, 2, 3, and 4. Then, write a Climate Improvement Objective for each climate problem found in Phase One. Climate Improvement Objectives can be obtained from Tool 5, the Climate Worksheet.

By choosing realistically achievable, measurable, and clearly stated objectives, you will facilitate communicating them to your stakeholders. Use the criteria included with this article as a guide in your formulation of objectives.

AN OBJECTIVE SHOULD BE:

- CLEARLY STATED
- REALISTIC
- MEASURABLE
- EASILY COMMUNICATED

It is also important to establish priority for the objectives you believe most deserving of scarce resources. The availability of resources will influence the implementation schedule for the policies, programs, and physical security measures you ultimately decide to adopt for your school. Do not discard objectives because of a lack of resources. Maintain your objectives. Once you have determined the importance of implementing a policy, program, or physical security measure and have a basis for making it an objective, hold on to it until the resources are made available. The lack of resources should not be justification for you to lower your goals.

CONDUCTING CRISIS DRILLS

Last month's article on Operationalizing an Incident Response Plan (IRP) cited four key considerations for maximizing operational utility. Rehearsals, one of the four, warrants a closer look and are this month's featured subject in Emergency Planning.

Rehearsals, also known as crisis drills, exercises and practices, are all about preparedness. Being prepared to deal with an unannounced but anticipated event minimizes the consequences of the incident and reduces the possibility of it becoming a crisis. The fundamental questions regarding this issue are how and to what extent personnel should rehearse.

Preparedness can be achieved if all necessary personnel are familiarized with the actions that must be taken to react to each contingency. The main question that must be answered is "who are the necessary personnel?"

The answer to this question varies widely among administrators and educators as it pertains to the involvement of the children/students. Crisis drilling/rehearsal has become a more common part of school safety planning since the incident at Columbine High School. The debate centers on the value and the impact of such drills. Crisis drills involving students are usually a "lockdown", "drop in place" or an "evacuation". Advocates believe drills teach students/staff how to respond and that the lessons learned in drilling might save lives in reality should an event ever occur. Advocates argue that drilling contributes to a feeling of confidence that schools are prepared. Critics believe drills are an overreaction and increase student worries about school violence. In the final analysis, it is the principal's responsibility to make the choice. As is often the case in debates of this nature, the advantages of one can also be the disadvantages of the other. Included with this article are views of advocates (pros) and critics (cons).

PROs

- Drills teach students to guard against dangers in the hallway or outside the building
- Drills teach students and staff how to respond to incidents
- Drills achieve preparedness
- Lessons learned in exercises might save lives in reality

CONs

- Drills make the likelihood of a violent episode seem greater than it is, adding to children's fears
- Drills may overly dramatize a concern instilling fear in children and making kids feel less safe at a time when we are trying to make schools feel safe and possibly undermining efforts to open channels of communication with their teachers
- Some students might become nonchalant during a real catastrophe – not taking it seriously
- Drills might provide information useful to a would-be attacker

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Drills are appropriate for training professionals and coordinating faculty and administrators with police
- If children are included in the drills, the training should be tailored to different ages so that they all understand the rationale of the drill
- Fire drills, tsunami drills, and drills of a similar nature, may be used as a less threatening scenario to exercise the evacuation or lockdown type responses

BULLYING: THE THREE GROUPS

Bullying behavior at school is an international problem that harms the victims, bullies and school community. In a typical school setting, approximately 15% of the students are regularly involved with bullying. The other 85% of the students are **bystanders**. The Norwegian researcher Dan Olweus reports that approximately 9% of the students are **victims** and approximately 7% are **bullies** (*Bullying at School/ Victimization by Peers*, 1993). Some victims are also bullies. Studies by the U.S. Department of Education and Canadian researchers (Pepler, Craig, Ziegler & Charach, 1994) found similar results at schools regardless of the type of school, racial composition or school setting (rural, suburban or urban).

The Harm

Experts report that bullying interferes with learning at school and contributes to a climate of fear. Victims are harmed directly because they are afraid to go to school, distracted from learning and suffer decreased self-esteem at school and later in life. If the problem persists, victims sometimes respond by bringing weapons to school or committing suicide. Research indicates that school bullies who continue their behavior, later have difficulty at work and are more likely to become involved with drug abuse and criminal behavior. Olweus reports that 60% of those characterized as bullies in middle school had at least one criminal conviction as twenty-four year olds. The Virginia Effective Practices Project (www.jmu.edu/csiat/vepp) reports that student bystanders suffer decreased self esteem because they are afraid to defend the victim or report incidents to adults for fear of retaliation from the bully.

The Response

Effective bullying prevention programs work not only with interventions for the 15% of students that are bullies or victims but also with the 85% of students who are bystanders. By including the 85% in their strategy, principals can establish clear anti-bullying policies and create an entire community intolerant of bullying.

What Works

Effective interventions include actions for the student body, individual students and their families. School administrators should establish an anti-bullying policy that defines bullying and includes enforceable consequences. Teachers can integrate anti-bullying education into academic classes. Students and parents can participate by responding to bullies, assisting victims, and reporting specific incidents.

Don't Respond Physically

Experts urge victims not to retaliate. They believe students should not respond physically to the bully because with the increasing presence of weapons at school a physical conflict could have deadly results.

Sources of Anti-bullying Information

DoDEA Safe Schools Handbook (p. 159)

Coalition for Children www.safechild.org
Take a Stand program by Dr. Sherryll Kraizer \$195.00 includes teaching guides and video tape

"Bullying in Schools" *ERIC Review: School Safety A Collaborative Effort* <http://www.accesseric.org/resources/ericreview/vol7no1/contents.html>

Dr. Ken Rigby, Adelaide, Australia <http://www.education.unisa.edu.au/bullying/>

U.S. SECRET SERVICE ISSUES A REPORT ON SCHOOL VIOLENCE

This month the U.S. Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC), in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Education and the National Institute of Justice, released “An Interim Report on the Prevention of Targeted Violence in Schools” (www.treas.gov/uss/ntac). The report is the analysis of information pertaining to the thought process and behavior of children that have committed acts of targeted violence in a school setting.

The term “targeted violence” was developed by the Secret Service to refer to any act of violence where a known perpetrator selects a particular target prior to their violent attack. The target may be a person or a specific place such as a school.

The Secret Service hoped to use its extensive knowledge of targeted violence to learn more about preventing future acts of school violence. The NTAC studied 37 school shootings involving 41 attackers. Incidents that were clearly linked to drug or gang activity were excluded from the analysis.

The investigators used primary source material to review each case and interviewed ten of the attackers. The information gathered included facts about the attackers’ original ideas to commit the crime, their motivation, and how they communicated their intentions. The child’s background information, demography, and details on their access to weapons were also studied.

Preliminary findings focused on the thought process and actions leading up to the attack.

- ☑ Over half of the attackers had the idea for the attack at least two weeks before the incident.
- ☑ In over 3/4 of the incidents, the attack was premeditated. Although few perpetrators planned the attack the same day as it was executed, over half of them had a plan at least two days before the crime.
- ☑ More than 1/2 of the attacks were motivated by revenge, and 2/3 had multiple reasons.
- ☑ More than 3/4 of the attackers had known grievances before the attack.
- ☑ In most cases the attacker told a friend or sibling about his intent to commit the crime.

The fact that the attackers rarely threatened their intended victims directly emphasizes the need to avoid relying on the issuance of a direct threat to predict a violent incident. The study highlighted the importance of distinguishing between *making* a threat (telling the intended victim they intend to harm him or her) and *posing* a threat (engaging in behaviors that would indicate an intended attack).

In September 2000, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) released results of its comprehensive two-year study examining violence in United States schools (October 2000

newsletter p. 6). The report, titled “School Shooter: A Threat Assessment Perspective,” was created to develop a better understanding of adolescent violence through threat assessment, intervention and prevention methods. The FBI report provided a list of traits that could be found in a threatening student. In contrast, the report from the Secret Service stated that “there is no accurate or useful profile of a school shooter”.

The Secret Service comes to the conclusion that the use of “profiles” is not an effective tool for either identifying students who may pose a risk or, once the student is identified, for assessing the risk factor of that particular individual. The report states “knowing that an individual shares characteristics, features, or traits with prior school shooters does not advance the appraisal of risk”.

FBI Report

The FBI report listed traits that could be found in a threatening student.

- Poor coping skills.
- Abnormally low tolerance for frustration.
- Feeling alienated.
- Signs of depression.
- A general lack of empathy for others.
- Exaggerated sense of entitlement.
- Pathological need for attention.
- Low self-esteem.
- Fascination with violence-filled entertainment.

Secret Service Report

The Secret Service argues that there are far too many differences to make profiling an effective predictor of school violence.

- Age varied greatly, from 11 to 21.
- Attackers were racially and ethnically diverse. Nearly 1/4 of the attackers were not of Caucasian decent.
- The attackers came from both stable and dysfunctional homes.
- Some were excellent students, and others were failing.
- Some had been class outcasts and others had been popular.
- Discipline records of the attackers ranged from multiple behavioral problems to incident free backgrounds before the act.
- Less than 1/3 had a history of drug or alcohol abuse and few had been diagnosed with a mental or emotional disorder.

SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS: A GROWING PHENOMENON

If new DoDEA students or their parents seem interested in a School Resource Officer (SRO) program, it is probably because their U.S. school was one of the many schools starting to adopt SROs to prevent violent incidents at school.

- The National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) reports that more than five thousand SROs work at U.S. schools. SROs work in elementary, middle and high schools in at least forty of the fifty states.
- NASRO reports the number of Kansas SRO programs increased 50% between 1998 and 1999. There were one hundred fifty SROs in Kansas on 11/29/99.
- The number of SRO programs in Virginia increased 362% between 7/1/98 and 7/1/99 according to the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services Crime Prevention Center (CPC). There were three hundred fifty one SRO positions in Virginia on 1/31/00.
- SROs in N. Carolina increased 133% from two hundred forty three SROs in 1996, to five hundred sixty seven SROs in 1999 according to the Center for Prevention of School Violence (CPSV).

Definition of SROs

Most states define SROs as law enforcement officers that receive special training so they can work with students and the school community. SROs are local law enforcement officers who are assigned duty at a particular school or schools. CPSV reports explain that SRO programs are a result of schools and law enforcement agencies working together.

SRO Duties

SROs perform three duties: law enforcement officer, law-related counselor, and law-related educator. Law enforcement activities include deterring and investigating incidents of crime and violence at school. SROs are usually armed police officers or sheriff's deputies with the ability to enforce the law. As counselors for students on law-related topics, SROs help guide children to appropriate community services. SROs teach students how federal, state and community laws affect them. They lead discussions on student rights and responsibilities to teach students about the consequences for illegal actions. Classes taught by SROs include substance abuse prevention and service learning projects. SROs report that they spend 50% of their time on law-enforcement, 30% on law-related counseling and 20% teaching law-related classes.

Rapport With Students Prevents Crime

SROs establish rapport with students so that students will alert officers to potential incidents of crime and violence. Virginia's CPC reports that the more students and teachers work with SROs the safer they feel at school and the better they feel about law enforcement. Future newsletter articles will describe the challenges and characteristics of SRO programs.

Sources of Information on SROs

N. Carolina Center for Prevention of School Violence (CPSV) www.ncsu.edu/cpsv/

National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) www.nasro.org