

SAFE SCHOOLS

NEWSLETTER



Issue 4

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Safe Schools NEWS

Program Evaluation Email

Within a few weeks time, principals will be receiving questionnaires as part of the Safe Schools Program Evaluation for DoDEA. The questionnaires will be emailed directly to each principal with specific questions regarding Safe Schools planning and the applicability of the Safe Schools Handbook in that planning process. Questions will also seek to determine the success of the program.

School Performance Indicates At-risk Youth

On 11/30/00 Robert Blum, an investigator for *The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health* (<http://www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/addhealth/>), explained that academic performance is a useful predictor of whether students are at risk of behaviors involving weapons, drinking, smoking, or early sexual activity. One out of four teens interviewed reported they had used or carried a gun or a knife, or had been involved in an incident in which someone was injured by a weapon. The prevalence of violence was higher than researchers expected. Blum's paper, "Protecting Teens: Beyond Race, Income and Family Structure," has been published in the December 2000 edition of the *American Journal of Public Health*.

Of the twenty-five "**risk factors**" or indicators that students are at risk, academic difficulty is the most



useful indicator. The study indicates that helping students improve their academic performance helps protect youth from the risk behaviors. On 12/1/00 Shepard Kellum from the American Institutes for Research explained that if students perform better in class, their feelings toward schoolwork and their behavior in school improve.

The study of ten thousand Middle and High School youth confirmed that “**protective factors**”, or influences that help protect students from risk behaviors, include a close relationship with parents. The tables below present findings from the study.

Factors associated with weapon-related violence

■ Risk factors ★ Protective factors

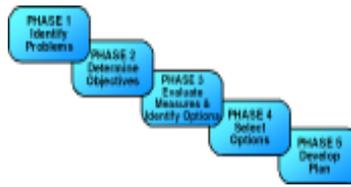
	MALES			FEMALES		
	White	Black	Hispanic	White	Black	Hispanic
Frequent problems with schoolwork	■	■	■	■	■	■
Number of best friends who drink	■	■	■	■	■	■
Frequently hangs out with friends	■	■	■		■	■
Degree of physical maturity		■	■			■
Easy access to guns at home	■	■			■	
Family member suicide or attempt		■	■			■
Ever repeated a grade			■		■	
Has bad temper		■			■	
Rape/sexual abuse history			■		■	
Extended family in home (youths)			■			
Friend suicide or attempt					■	
Extended family in home (adults)			★			■
Frequency of parent presence at dinner		★				
Joint decision-making in family		★			★	
Wants & expects to attend college		★				★
Positive parent/family relationships	★	★	★		★	★

Factors associated with alcohol use

■ Risk factors ★ Protective factors

	MALES			FEMALES		
	White	Black	Hispanic	White	Black	Hispanic
Number of friends who drink	■	■	■	■	■	■
Frequent problems with schoolwork	■		■	■	■	■
Degree of physical maturity		■	■		■	■
Frequently hangs out with friends	■	■	■	■		
Frequency of parent drinking				■	■	
Friend suicide or attempt					■	
Rape/sexual abuse history					■	
Work 20 hours a week during school						■
Has bad temper						■
Family joint decision-making						★
Frequency of parent present at dinner					★	
Frequency of hobbies				★	★	
Number of siblings					★	★
Positive parent/family relationships		★			★	

Source: Center for Adolescent Health, University of Minnesota



Applying the 5 Phase Process

PHASE THREE – Evaluate Measures & Identify Options

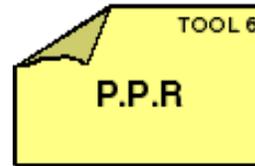
PHASE 3 Evaluate Measures & Identify Options

The purpose of Phase Three is to evaluate current policy, intervention programs, and physical security measures. Accomplish this phase in the context of the problems identified during Phase One and the Climate Improvement and Risk Reduction Objectives established during Phase Two. After evaluating the current situation, decide how to improve your existing security measures, adopt new ones, or do both. During this phase, it is essential to use members of the school security team to assist you in the process.

All security measures, whether old or new, fall into one of the three categories: policy, program, and physical security.

- **Policy Measures:** Rules and/or regulations stipulating expected norms, standard operating procedures and special operating instructions (e.g., anti-bullying policy).
- **Program Measures:** Ongoing activities that reduce school violence and improve the learning atmosphere (e.g., conflict resolution programs).
- **Physical Security Measures:** Equipment and/or personnel used to enhance school security (e.g., access badges).

Use the automated tools in your Safe Schools Handbook to help you conduct the evaluation of your school’s existing measures. Use Tool 6, the Policy and Program Review, to assess existing policies and intervention programs in the



categories of Climate Improvement and Risk Reduction. Principals and assistant principals are best suited to conduct the review of

school policy. However, many others (i.e., counselors, teachers, nurses) within the school organization may also prove useful with the program review. The DoDEA Safe Schools Handbook contains descriptions of over a hundred intervention strategies in eleven different intervention areas (i.e., *anti-bullying, behavior management, conflict resolution, gang prevention/resistance, hate prevention, life skills development, parental involvement, sexual harassment, substance abuse, suicide prevention and military programs*).

Tool 7, the Physical Security Review, should be used in a similar manner to address physical security measures. Conduct the physical security assessment of



the school by walking throughout the entire campus/grounds to inspect each area. School security officials can contribute their training and expertise to help identify physical security needs and decide if existing security measures are adequate.

PHASE THREE, when coupled with the first two phases, helps you to avoid “solution jumping”. In other words, follow these steps and the choices you make will be based on information and analysis rather than guesswork.

First Response Team



The Incident Response Team (IRT)

The article on Emergency Planning featured in the October issue of the Safe Schools Newsletter highlighted three essential elements of an Incident Response Plan (IRP) - the First Response Team, an Incident Response Center, and an Incident Response Handbook. This month's focus is on the Incident Response Team (IRT), which schools often refer to as the First Response Team, the Crisis Response Team, etc. The IRT should do everything possible to prevent an incident from becoming a crisis. This article summarizes the purpose, objectives, members of the IRT, and their roles and responsibilities.

Purpose

The IRT should ensure the safety of students and staff. It must be available for prevention, intervention, and recovery activities in the event of an emergency. The IRT's function is to:

- + Maintain order and discipline during the time of crisis.
- + Record events as they transpire.
- + Coordinate with external agencies and organizations.
- + Counsel and support students and staff.
- + Identify and refer individuals in need of more intensive assistance.

Objectives

IRT members should be thoroughly familiar with the IRP and assist with the following activities:

- + Stabilize an incident and limit casualties and/or fatalities.
- + Gather information to be provided to safety/law enforcement officials.
- + Provide support to safety/law enforcement officials, if requested.
- + Provide necessary resources to carry out the IRP.

Members

IRT membership, determined locally by the principal, may consist of:

- + Principal
- + Assistant Principal(s)
- + Counselor(s)
- + Faculty
- + Security Personnel
- + Nurse
- + Maintenance/Cafeteria Personnel

Roles & Responsibilities

Pre-Incident

Principals and/or Designee

- + Individualize school plans.
- + Designate and train the IRT.
- + Develop essential school resource lists.
- + Coordinate school communication plans.
- + Keep safety/law enforcement officials informed of plans.
- + Develop emergency notification and warning system.
- + Designate primary and alternate meeting locations for the IRT.
- + Develop mutual assistance with other schools/organizations.

Team Members

- + Assist in the development of individual school plans.
- + Become familiar with IRP operations.
- + Implement procedures for prevention and intervention of crisis events.
- + Train/drill/practice.
- + Be aware of the environment (keep officials informed of developing situations).
- + Report rumors of situations to the principal.
- + Be ready to respond.

During Incident

Principals and/or Designee

- + Conduct an immediate assessment obtaining essential information.
- + Call appropriate officials for help.
- + Signal appropriate emergency code.
- + Activate IRT.
- + Follow appropriate code procedures (include personnel accountability).
- + Report to predetermined area to brief IRT members and assign duties.
- + Assist safety/law enforcement officials, as required.

Team Members

- + Remain calm.
- + Receive appropriate emergency code and respond accordingly.
- + Receive brief of event situation and assignment.
- + Gather information and carry out duties.

**The
January 2001 Newsletter
will describe the
Principal's Emergency
"Grab & Go" Kit.**

Anti-Bullying Actions

Improving the school climate so that bullying is not tolerated requires efforts by the entire school community. Our November 2000 newsletter described how effective bullying prevention strategies include the 85% of students not directly involved in bullying behavior. This article describes specific anti-bullying actions for school administrators, teachers, students and parents.

School Administrator Actions

- 👤 *Use anonymous student questionnaires.* Research indicates students do not tell adults about bullying. Student responses may reveal previously unknown problems.
- 👤 *Define bullying behavior.* Include descriptions of physical, verbal and emotional bullying. The London Family Court Clinic (<http://www.lfcc.on.ca>) bullying definition includes physical attacks, verbal taunts, threats and intimidation, and exclusion from the peer group. Bully-victim relationships usually involve a power imbalance.
- 👤 *Establish an anti-bullying policy.* Use enforceable guidelines and consequences.
- 👤 *Publicize the policy.* Use parent teacher meetings, newsletters, school assemblies, and signs at school.
- 👤 *Provide workshop training.* Teach school staff how to intervene in incidents and consistently support the school's anti-bullying policy.
- 👤 *Improve supervision.* Bullying behavior is usually reported in locations such as the school cafeteria, playgrounds and bathrooms.

Teacher Actions

- 👤 *Present realistic classroom simulations.* Teach students how to intervene in bullying incidents. Discuss the feelings of participants.
- 👤 *Intervene in bullying incidents.* Teacher intervention provides a good example for the 85% of students who are bystanders.
- 👤 *Refer both victims and aggressors to counseling.* Contact parents of both.

Student Bystander Actions

- 👤 *Report bullying incidents to an adult.*
- 👤 *Support victims.* Defend them verbally. Assist them physically.
- 👤 *Confront bullies.* Tell the bully their behavior is unacceptable. Express disapproval by not participating in the laughter, teasing or spreading of rumors.

Parent Actions

- 👤 *Listen to your child.* Decide whether your child might be a victim, bystander, bully, or enabler.
- 👤 *Write specifics.* Prepare to describe incidents to school officials.
- 👤 *Teach your child the difference between telling and tattling.* Telling is intended to help someone. Tattling is intended to get someone into trouble.
- 👤 *Teach your child to be assertive without being aggressive.*

Lessons Learned: The Effects of Media Violence on Children

One of the most heated debates in America swirls around violence in the media and the possible negative effects it may have on children. Many concerned parents and teachers point to studies that seem to indicate the media is to blame for the rise of juvenile violence in America.

However, on the other side of the issue, defenders of the entertainment industry and free speech claim society is using the media as a scapegoat and ignoring the real problems such as parents who neglect to spend time with their children and the easy access of drugs and handguns. Both sides are passionately defending that which they and most people hold dear. One side claims to be protecting America's children, and the other claims to be defending the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

The expression of violence among children in the United States is increasing at an alarming rate and is involving younger children than ever before. This extreme propensity for violence is uniquely American. According to recent studies, homicide rates in the United States are approximately 20 times higher than most other industrialized countries. Since children in those other countries are subjected to many of the same movies, video games, and television shows (often less censored) as American children, one could draw the conclusion that media violence is not to blame.

However, according to a joint statement by the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Psychological Association, and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, the effects of media violence on children "are measurable and long-lasting". The medical experts stated, "The conclusion of the public health community, based on over 30 years of research, is that viewing entertainment violence can lead to increases in aggressive attitudes, values and behaviors, particularly in children".

The statement was the centerpiece of a public health summit on entertainment violence organized by Senator Sam Brownback, R-Kan. in Washington D.C. on July 26, 2000. The Senator called the statement a "turning point", comparing it to when the medical community banded together to declare that cigarettes cause cancer.

However, the group of medical associations rejected the implication that media violence is the primary cause for youth violence stating "We in no way mean to imply that entertainment violence is the sole, or even necessarily the most important factor contributing to youth aggression, anti-social attitudes, and violence. Family breakdown, peer influences, the availability of weapons, and numerous other factors contribute to these problems...."

Because the debate over the impact of violence in media and its effects on children involve numerous studies and many forms of media, the Safe Schools Newsletter will be taking a closer look at this topic over the next several months in the following issues.

Education Issues: SRO Characteristics

The November 2000 newsletter described how U.S. schools are using School Resource Officers (SROs) in increasing numbers to prevent violence. This article describes the characteristics of SRO programs: law enforcement officer, law-related counselor, and law-related educator.



Law Enforcement Officer

SROs prevent juvenile crime and violence at school by learning about and deterring incidents before they occur. SROs attempt to establish rapport with students and school personnel so students feel comfortable alerting the SRO to possible fights, thefts and bomb threats. Virginia SROs documented examples where they were able to learn about tensions from students and prevent reportable incidents. SROs investigate crimes that occur at school, not school discipline infractions. Specific SRO responsibilities include:

- Deter crime by providing a visible law enforcement officer presence at school.
- Respond to incidents of school violence.
- Assist the school principal and the school safety committee in writing

Safe School plans, selecting physical security equipment, choosing intervention programs, and writing school security policies.

- Use Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) guidelines to evaluate the physical security of the school facility.

Law-Related Counselor

SROs use their familiarity with the criminal justice system to educate students involved with the criminal justice system, and their parents, about *options* available to them. SROs are not licensed guidance counselors. However, in their normal conversations with students, SROs listen to students and make them aware of counseling services available from the school and community. SROs support student safety awareness groups in their efforts to involve students in crime prevention.

Law-Related Educator

SROs provide juvenile law classes that define crime, explain laws that affect students, and describe how the juvenile justice system works. The officers visit classes, speak at school assemblies, and address parent-teacher association meetings. SROs *do not replace teachers*; they provide a *helpful source* of information for students regarding the law. Specific classes presented by SROs include topics such as:

- Community, state, and federal laws that affect students.
- Constitutional rights including legal representation and search & seizure.
- Sexual harassment prevention.
- Motor vehicle laws.
- Substance abuse prevention, including alcohol, drugs, and tobacco.