



# SAFE SCHOOLS NEWSLETTER



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## Safe Schools NEWS

### President Signs Education Authorization



On January 8, 2002, President Bush signed the *Leave No Child Behind Act* (H.R. 1, P.L. 107-110) authorizing FY02 funding for the Department of Education. The legislation emphasizes teaching students personal

responsibility through character education, involving parents and community members in Safe School Planning, and writing Safe School Plans that prevent incidents of violence. States are required to report on the effectiveness of their Safe School programs, including their progress toward attaining measurable performance objectives for violence prevention, and efforts to include parents in violence prevention efforts (P.L. 107-110, p.579). To view the legislation, visit [Thomas Legislation on the Internet](#) and search by bill number (H.R. 1).





George Washington Manor House, Mount Vernon, Virginia

## DoDEA Director Tafoya Meets with Secretary of Education Paige

On January 10, 2002, DoDEA Director Joseph Tafoya met with Secretary of Education Rod Paige and other Chief State School Officers. The education officials met at George Washington's Mount Vernon, Virginia home to discuss accountability and implementation of the *Leave No Child Behind Act*. DoDEA schools are not affected by funding decisions in the Department of Education authorization because DoDEA is funded through the Department of Defense. However, the legislation indicates the increased emphasis on school security, with \$650M provided for 21st Century Learning Centers (after-school programs) and \$650M for the Safe & Drug Free Schools (SDFS) program. Significantly, SDFS schools are required to write Safe School Plans to prevent incidents of violence at school. Secretary Paige's remarks are available on the Department of Education Internet site ([www.ed.gov/Speeches/01-2002/20020109.html](http://www.ed.gov/Speeches/01-2002/20020109.html)).

## DoDDS-Europe Updates Crisis Management Guide

The December 2001, update to the DoDDS-Europe crisis management guide, *A Guide for Crisis Management in Schools*, describes the purpose, membership, training and responsibilities of the Incident Response Team or Crisis Team. The guide is an excellent example of the Incident Response Planning that should be included in Safe School Planning. The guide describes responses to several emergency situations, including school violence incidents, hostage situations, and bomb threats. For each type of incident, the guide provides an overview, procedures, interventions, and examples of applicable checklists and communications.

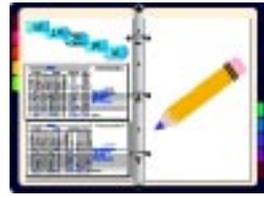
## Indiana Incident Response Plan

Incident Response Plans (IRP) are available on the Internet to school principals writing the IRP portion of their Safe School Plans. The Indiana Department of Education provides a particularly interesting example: *Emergency Guidelines* (Example #2, <http://ideanet.doe.state.in.us/safeschools/pdf/sample02.pdf>).

*Emergency Guidelines* concisely tells teachers how to respond to a student with a gun in the classroom, hostage situations, and terrorist incidents involving nuclear/chemical contamination. The discussion of school lockdown and evacuation procedures includes the insight that sometimes schools need to do both: "During some lock downs, an evacuation may be necessary" (*Emergency Guidelines* p.9).







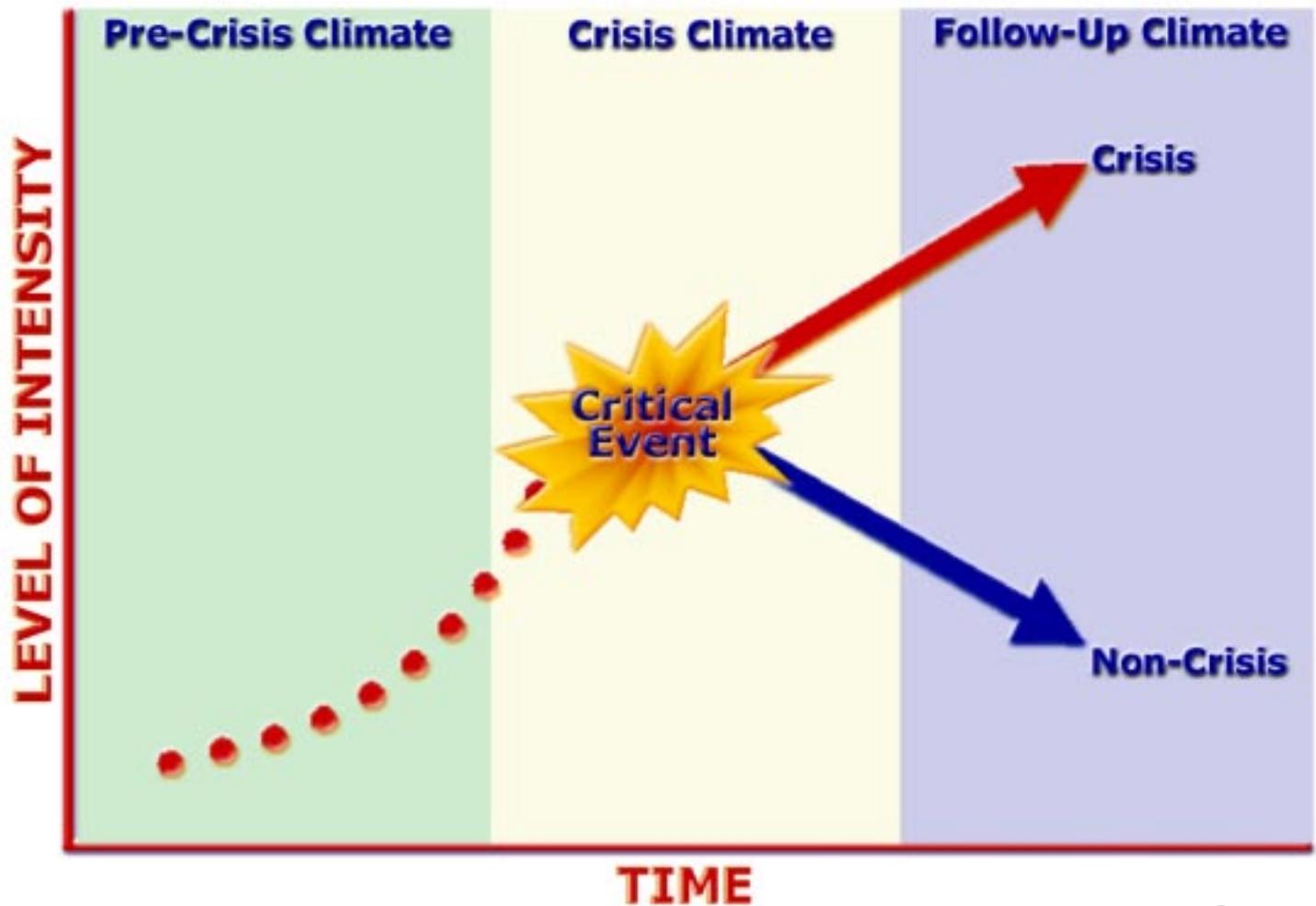
# Safe School Planning

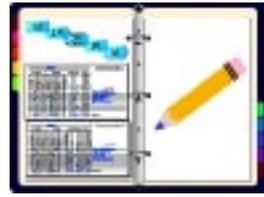
## The Crisis Escalation Theory

The highly publicized incidents of school violence at Jonesboro, Arkansas; Littleton, Colorado; and Santee, California; should have alerted principals to the importance of addressing behavior problems early. Recognizing that student aggression increases gradually in intensity enables principals to select appropriate prevention programs and plan effective interventions. The Crisis Escalation Theory depicted in the graphic below illustrates a concept that school administrators can use to head off a violent incident using early recognition of the “observables” that portend aggressive behavior.

The idea is to enact early intervention. Depending on how a critical incident is handled, a crisis will occur or a crisis will be averted. Effective implementation of an Incident Response Plan will help limit the damage from a critical event. Addressing the “observables” early through effective prevention programs, might prevent a critical event and ensuing crisis.

## CRISIS ESCALATION MODEL





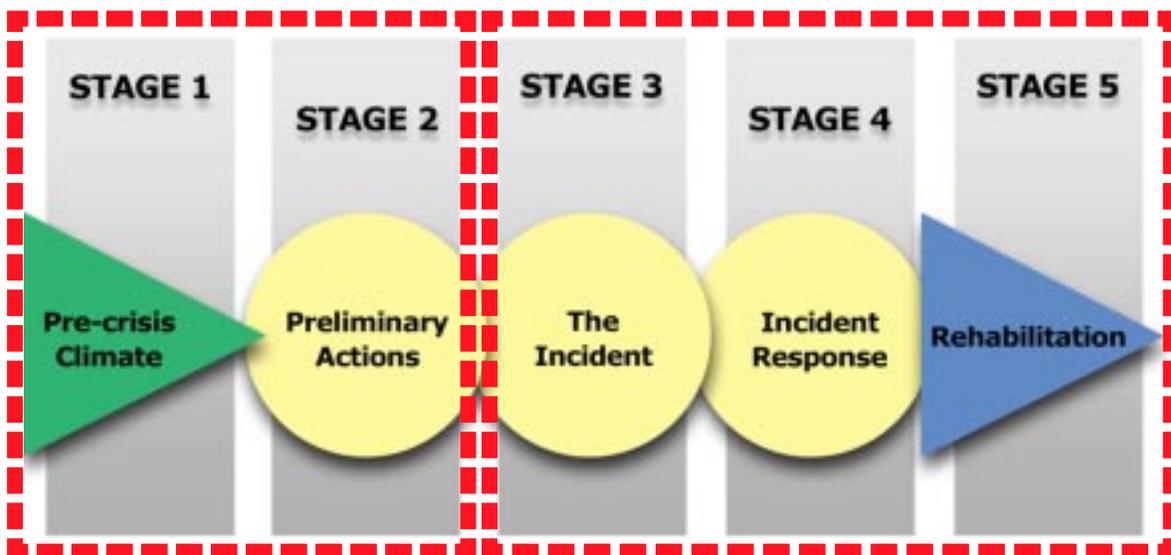
# Safe School Planning

As depicted in the Crisis Escalation Model, a student's aggressive behavior normally intensifies before reaching a critical point. The aggression results in a critical event that either further escalates into a crisis or is managed through appropriate intervention and response thereby avoiding a crisis.

The Crisis Escalation Model helps reinforce the approach many educators have been using to identify early opportunities to recognize and assist aggressive youth. Former principals explain that they invested 95% of their energy in the Pre-Crisis Climate to avoid a Crisis Event. Pre-Crisis actions include educating school staff about the warning signs of at-risk youth and enhancing parental involvement. Prevention programs that teach anti-bullying, conflict resolution and life skills decrease the probability of a Crisis Event by responding to the early indications of students' psychological stress. When using the Five Phase Process, be especially alert during the Policy and Program Review (Tool #6) for the opportunities to identify programs that will be good for groups of students as well as individuals.

## CRISIS ANALYSIS MODEL

**RISK  
REDUCTION  
PLAN**                      **INCIDENT  
RESPONSE  
PLAN**



*Comparison of the Crisis Escalation Model (shown on Page 4) with the Crisis Analysis Model (presented in the DoDEA Safe Schools Handbook), illustrates the importance of selecting prevention programs to decrease tensions during the Pre-Crisis Climate.*



## Critical Incident Stress Debriefings

Several national organizations help schools that experience school violence incidents by providing counseling to victims. The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP, [www.theiacp.org](http://www.theiacp.org)) recommends Critical Incident Stress Debriefings for students, teachers and emergency response officials. IACP explains that promptly debriefing survivors limits psychological effects that interfere with learning. (*Guide for Preventing and Responding to School Violence*). The National Education Association's Crisis Response Guide ([www.nea.org/crisis/b3\\_home.html](http://www.nea.org/crisis/b3_home.html)) reminds teachers to be vigilant for the warning signs of children at-risk for depression or attempted suicide. The National Association of School Psychologists ([www.nasponline.org](http://www.nasponline.org)) provides National Emergency Assistance Teams consisting of trained mental health providers who deploy to schools that experience student shootings.

Schools can arrange for qualified counselors to assist with Critical Incident Stress Debriefings before an incident occurs by involving representatives from faith-based organizations and community mental health providers in Incident Response Planning. Incident Response Plans designate a "quiet room" where counselors provide individual counseling or lead discussion groups for teachers and students affected by a violent incident. The American Counseling Association offers an outline of a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing used at Littleton, Colorado ([www.counseling.org/school\\_violence/littleton5.html](http://www.counseling.org/school_violence/littleton5.html))

Students respond differently to the psychological stress of witnessing violence. School officials familiar with helping children cope with the news of terrorist incidents (Newsletter #2-2) can use similar strategies to help students discern fact from fiction and express their feelings. Young children can create pictures, or participate in role-playing; discussion groups help middle and high school youth verbalize their emotions. Articulating personal thoughts and feelings about the incident and how it was managed helps students and teachers avoid internalized stress. Prompt counseling from qualified personnel limits the damage to students' psychological health and academic performance.



## Peaceful School Climate Improves Student Academic Performance

According to research from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, *principals who enhance school climate by decreasing tension, improve student academic performance*. The study, “School Violence and Student Achievement in Reading and Mathematics Among Eighth Graders,” examined the academic performance of more than two hundred thousand middle school students at more than one thousand schools, and found that as the school climate improved, test scores improved.

The results of the study quantified the benefits of changing student perceptions so children feel safe enough to concentrate on learning. As expected, both perpetrators and victims of school violence are distracted from their lessons and achieve less academically. The actions of individual perpetrators affect the entire school. Students who perceive that they attend a safe school perform better academically than students who are afraid at school.

Researchers compared National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) results describing students’ academic performance, with student reports of misbehavior, victimization, and attitudes toward school violence. The study quantified misbehavior by examining the number of office referrals for discipline, parent notifications, and written reports of student fighting. Student reports of victimization included whether someone had stolen something from them, offered them drugs, or threatened to harm them. *A measure of school climate, according to survey responses, was how safe students who were neither victims nor perpetrators felt at school*. Students reported whether their school experienced significant problems with physical conflicts among students, vandalism of school property, use of alcohol and drugs, possession of weapons, or verbal abuse of teachers.

Principals improve school climate by increasing parental involvement, improving student identification with the school, enhancing the principals’ visibility at school and maintaining a clean and orderly school. Paper copies of the study are available from the ERIC Document Reproductive Service (<http://www.edrs.com/Default.cfm>).

