

# **NATIONAL SCHOOL SAFETY CENTER**

News Journal  
Fall 1992

# Reading, writing and retaliation

By Ronald D. Stephens  
NSSC Executive Director

Teachers have increasingly become the target of violence and intimidation in America's public schools. Years ago, teachers, along with law enforcement officers or other supervising adults, were held in high esteem.

Today they must rely on much more than official authority — they must have personal qualities and skills to assist them in commanding a level of respect and control necessary to teach young people.

In 1978, the National Institute of Education's *Violent Schools/Safe Schools Study* reported that 5,200 teachers were assaulted or attacked every month — 1,000 seriously enough to require medical attention. Although there has not been a major study since 1978, a composite of other regional and state reports, including news media accounts of violence directed at teachers, indicates that teacher victimization is increasing.

The United Federation of Teachers in New York and the New York City Board of Education have jointly established the Victim Support Program (VSP) to help teachers through the trauma and recovery of violent events. But the physical harm does not reflect the entire picture. Psychological damage can be equally disabling to the teacher. A 1987 U.S. Department of Education survey reported that 29 percent of teachers had considered leaving the teaching profession because of violence and intimidation.

Many report that their university training did not adequately prepare them to

do their work. The California Teacher Credentialing Commission has become so concerned about this issue that it has established a State Advisory Panel to develop recommended teacher training and leadership strategies to better prepare teachers for the classroom. The final report, with recommendations, should be available by September, 1993.

Creating a positive campus climate begins by empowering teachers with the skills necessary to control and manage students. Educators are now beginning to realize the importance of safety factors to the educational process.

Teacher safety will become a major bargaining chip of the 1990s. Already teachers are demanding to know who is in their class, the kind of emergency backup support they will have when a disruptive problem occurs, the type of communication capability available and the kind of support the district will provide to teacher victims.

Supporting the teacher requires a vast array of district services. As state and municipal governments tighten their budgets and cut back on nonteaching positions, the budget reductions directly affect teaching effectiveness. Many of the services that once supported the teacher are no longer available. Reduced custodial care, counseling cutbacks, reduction of school security personnel, textbook and supply retrenchment, increased class size — all of these changes place new requirements on the teacher.

Teacher effectiveness is synonymous with system effectiveness. For education to flourish, it is essential to develop systemwide strategies that comprehen-

sively and collectively engage the community's resources and energies. Our teachers deserve this basic support.

Several key individuals have contributed to this issue of *School Safety*, focusing on the current trends and issues of teacher and staff victimization.

Edward Muir of the United Federation of Teachers examines efforts to prevent school crime and victimization in New York City schools. Historically, efforts there have centered on enhancing supervision, technology and hardware.

Kendall Johnson, a family therapist and mentor teacher in a school for troubled teens in Claremont, California, has written a new book about school crisis management. His article on cumulative traumatic stress provides an intervention model to help schools build teamwork and cohesion after chronic exposure to crisis and stress.

VSP program psychologist/coordinator June Feder and the National Organization for Victim Assistance in Washington, D.C., suggest ways to help understand and support individuals who have been victimized. Peter Commanday provides practical techniques for dealing with disruptive students. Through his Peacemaking Institute, Commanday conducts training seminars that are aimed at improving teachers' chances of everyday survival.

Michael Grant, a veteran schoolteacher, had an explosive device containing one-fourth of a stick of dynamite thrown at his head. Currently on leave of absence from his teaching duties, Grant offers his personal perspective on how schools can prevent such incidents.

Bernard James of NSSC discusses current issues in school liability as they relate to teacher and staff victimization. Who will assume the risk of teaching in today's often violent schools?

A noteworthy local study validates nationally reported estimates regarding the number of students who carry weapons to school. Kelly Jay Asmussen reports about his survey of senior high school students from a small urban city in the Midwest.

**NATIONAL  
SCHOOL  
SAFETY  
CENTER** 

Pepperdine University's National School Safety Center is a partnership of the U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Education. NSSC's goal is to promote safe schools free of drug traffic and abuse, gangs, weapons, vandalism and bullying; to encourage good discipline, attendance and community support; and to help ensure a quality education for all children.

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## School Safety

As part of the **School Safety News Service**, *School Safety* is published by the National School Safety Center to communicate current trends and effective programs in school safety to educators, law enforcers, lawyers, judges, government officials, business leaders, journalists and the public. Annual subscription: \$59.00. Components of the **School Safety News Service** are published monthly September through May.

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Correspondence for *School Safety* and the National School Safety Center should be addressed to: National School Safety Center, 4165 Thousand Oaks Blvd., Suite 290, Westlake Village, CA 91362, telephone 805/373-9977, FAX 805/373-9277.

Prepared under Grant No. 85-MU-CX-0003, funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Education. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Education or Pepperdine University. Neither NSSC nor any of its employees makes any warranty, expressed or implied, nor assumes any legal liability or responsibility for the accuracy, completeness or usefulness of any information, apparatus, product or process described herein. Copyright © 1992 National School Safety Center.

**About the cover:**

In a Lower East Side, New York, schoolroom, a teacher demonstrates on the blackboard. Photo by Jacob Riis, circa 1886, courtesy of the Bettman Archive.

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*Conventional efforts to prevent teacher victimization and school violence have focused on enhancing security forces, technology and hardware. Additional approaches are indicated.*

# School staff victimization: Monitoring the trends

The United Federation of Teachers (UFT) has been tracking incident reports from New York City school staffers for more than 20 years. This process was instituted because the anecdotal reports from teachers did not match the official reports from the board of education. The UFT noted a serious underreporting problem.

The UFT's early reports were rather simple. Union representatives in schools were given forms to report assaults and thefts. For years, the form was called the "assault/robbery form." All the data was hand entered on long ledger sheets. The union's School Safety Committee and the school system's Office of School Safety agreed in the mid-1970s to share data. The board's data collection and reporting was also done by hand.

## Early reports

What kinds of problems were found in the 1970s? Contrary to what some people believe, they were not the good old days. Note these examples from the 1978 annual report:

September 23: — "A large group of male students kicked open my door."

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*Edward Muir is director of the School Safety Department of the United Federation of Teachers in New York. He is a frequent contributor to School Safety and consultant to NSSC.*

While one student held me against the wall, the others grabbed at my breasts, buttocks and thighs."

October 6: — "She approached me from the rear and attempted to strangle me. Her grip was so tight around my neck that I could not even call for help."

October 18: — "One of the boys pushed me. I fell backwards, hitting my spine and head on the corner of the closet. The headaches, vomiting and blurred vision became quite severe."

November 16: — "Two unknown males entered my room, assaulted me and ripped the gold chain from my neck."

November 30: — "Parent assaulted me with fists and with an umbrella. She would not let me out of the room."

December 13: — "While attempting to stop two students from fighting, one student turned to me and kicked me in the groin and scratched my face. I was out of work for seven weeks."

January 6: — "A student assaulted me. He tried to strangle me with my own jewelry. He punched me in the face and attempted to stab me with a twelve inch knife."

January 13: — "As I sat behind my desk

I was hit by a Jack Daniels bottle thrown in my door."

March 1: — "During a conference with a male parent, the parent punched me in the jaw and neck. When he left the building he told the principal that I was a dead man."

March 21: — "Three youths entered my room and asked my name. When I told them, one hit me on the head. As I stood up to defend myself, one sprayed a substance into my face. I was immediately blinded." (This teacher was hospitalized with acid burns to the corneas.)

Each of these incidents is pretty tough, but not one mention of a gun was made.

## Focus on manpower

Formerly, a great deal of the focus centered upon increasing the number and improving the performance of security guards, called Student Service Officers. They were poorly trained and poorly paid. Many came from a federal jobs program, the Comprehensive Employment Training Act. The requirements were minimal, with unemployment a major criterion. Officers wore no uniforms and were utilized solely in the high schools. Some proved more trouble than they were worth.

In the 1977-78 school year, incidents involving teachers totaled 3,367 — an

increase of 7 percent from the previous year. Included were 2,287 physical attacks and 834 thefts, of which 164 were robberies or forcible thefts. Because of simple data gathering procedures, little else can be concluded concerning the staff. However, one trend continues. The majority of incidents occur in a distinct minority of schools.

In the mid-1970s, Los Angeles psychiatrist Alfred Block published an article comparing the symptoms of school crime victims to the symptoms of war-time victims suffering from combat fatigue and post-trauma stress. UFT's work with teacher victims showed Block's theory to be valid.

The union offered services of a very practical nature to the membership impacted with these problems. Victims were advised of their rights and the procedures to follow in order to protect those rights. However, through providing this advice over the phone and in person, it became apparent that staff victims had a great many needs that were not being addressed.

During the 1980s, the school security force in New York improved markedly. One important step provided guards with uniforms and radios. They were given improved training and deputized as special officers with arrest powers. The Office of School Safety expanded its operation into the middle and elementary schools. By the end of the decade, the office became a division; it was the sixth largest police force in the nation, with over 2,500 officers.

#### **Focus on technology**

Along with increased staffing, the board of education invested more money in security technology, though not always with the desired results. One of the first attempts, SCAN, was a victim of the 1975 recession. SCAN was a personal alarm system placed in 20 high schools, with each staff member given a pen-sized activator. When activated, a signal was sent to a console in the security room. The console would indicate the location of the activation and assistance

could be designated.

With the budget crunch, the system collapsed. In some instances, the person monitoring the console was laid off and no replacements could be found. Activators were lost and could not be replaced. The board could not afford to continue the repair contract. One school was just partially wired for the system when the project was abandoned.

Another significant investment was made in burglar alarms that rang at a central station when activated. This elaborate and expensive system was only moderately successful. At times the noise of passing trucks or nearby subway trains set off the alarms. Another problem was police response time. In some New York City police precincts, a school break-in is a very low priority crime. Additionally, it was determined that the perpetrators often knew that they had at least half an hour to carry out their spoils.

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*Computerized card entry systems have been very successful in the high schools. Students are given a photo identification card. As they enter school, they are required to insert the card into a terminal. The computer determines if the card is valid, marks the student present for the day, indicates if the youngster is "wanted" by a dean or guidance counselor, and even flashes "Happy Birthday!"*

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Closed circuit television was tried in several large schools and was found wanting. The concept is good — cameras monitor corridors and exits so that a small security staff can respond to trouble in a hurry.

Problems existed with vandalism, such as spray-painted lenses. There was a lack of maintenance and repairs for cameras and monitors and too little staff to establish short monitoring assignments. Long assignments caused "EGO," eyes glazing over, so that riots in corridors went unseen and unreported.

Perhaps the worst application of a good idea came with a type of two-way public address system, sometimes called

a talk-back system. The concept was similar to SCAN. However, instead of being remote and portable, the activator was hard wired to the wall a few feet below the public address speaker. Aside from being very limited in emergency situations, in some schools, students hit the switch many times throughout the day.

#### **Effective investments**

Some technology investments did prove to be effective. Computerized card entry systems have been very successful in the high schools. Students are given a photo identification card. As they enter school, they are required to insert the card into a terminal. The computer determines if the card is valid, marks the student present for the day, indicates if the youngster is "wanted" by a dean or guidance counselor, and even flashes "Happy Birthday!" Young intruders can thus be ex-

cluded from the school.

Perhaps the New York program that received the most attention was the metal detector program. As the 1991-92 school year began, 20 high schools and two middle schools were involved. The project included a number of security officers who went from school to school with hand-held detectors. The 22 participating schools were visited once a week by the detector teams.

To move the students into school promptly, every third or fourth student was "scanned." In the first two years of the program, there was significant improvement in the reduction of weapons and incidents in those schools. How-

ever, by the end of June 1992, some flaws became evident. Students learned the routine. Incidents rose on days when the detector squads were not there.

Another technological component that accompanied the metal detector concept was the electro-magnetic door lock. While students were arriving and being screened, some method was needed to ensure that guns and knives were not smuggled through side and back doors. Assigning a security officer at every exit was wasteful; that person became a \$25,000 per annum lock.

The electro-magnetic door locks, which delay opening and indicate at a central station that an exit is being attempted, seemed to be an answer. One significant problem arose over the use of these locks: they did not conform to fire department regulations. The solution included tying that system into the fire alarm and placing a smoke detector system throughout the building.

**The current picture**

At the beginning of the 1991 school year, New York City schools had 2,500 trained security officers deployed in more than 1,000 school buildings. Some schools had safety technology and programs. Several other factors have had a serious impact on the safety picture.

The city of New York, along with the rest of the Northeast, was in the midst of a recession. An early retirement program ushered 4,000 experienced teachers out of the system in June of 1991; little more than half were replaced by new teachers. School opened in September of 1991 with 2,500 fewer teachers and 25,000 more students, pushing enrollment above one million. The ratio of school staff to students was far past the point of peril.

The second factor was the alarming increase in the possession and use of guns by teenagers in the city.

The 1991-92 school year proved to be the most violent for staff since records have been kept, with over 4,000 incidents. City schools experienced 131 incidents involving guns in and around campuses, compared to 45 for the prior year.

Thirty-two people were shot and 4 people were killed. The following are examples.

November 19: — Teacher shot in left arm as he departed a Brooklyn school.

November 25: — Teacher shot and wounded, and student shot and killed at a high school.

January 7: — Teacher shot as she was returning to school from a meeting. She later died of her wounds.

February 4: — Shots fired into teacher's car as she was parking in front of the school.

April 16: — Student shot and burned teacher with a stun gun.

June 2: — Teacher forced at gunpoint to drive perpetrator out of the area.

In addition to the technology programs and security personnel, the city police department assigned more police officers to the schools. But the 1991-92 school year was still the worst on record for staff safety. Why?

It is surmised that the loss of many experienced teachers, a worse ratio of staff to students and cutbacks in supportive services were responsible for the increased violence.

Security forces, technology and hardware can only do so much. If a school system suffers from understaffing, overcrowding and inexperienced staff at all levels, there will be severe problems regardless of the security package that is provided.

The data show that a high percentage of staff victims are new teachers. Despite all efforts — security officers, security technology, procedures and policy — a vital piece is missing. How can we prevent a staff member from becoming a victim?

**Proposed strategies**

By late winter last year, a series of vio-

lence prevention workshops were introduced at five school sites throughout the city. Reports from participants were most encouraging.

The UFT was also instrumental in placing the Straight Talk About Risks Program (STAR) into New York City schools. The anti-gun violence program was designed by the Center to Prevent Handgun Violence. First introduced to local middle schools on a pilot basis, it will expand into the high schools and lower grades over the next two years. It is much too soon to evaluate the program. STAR complements a number of mediation programs already in place in our schools.

Schools certainly cannot tackle this problem alone. When dealing with the gun issue, help is needed on the enforcement end. Very stiff federal and state penalties for anyone who sells a handgun to a child are ineffective. The same buy and bust programs used in the war on drugs could be utilized against gun sellers.

The UFT goes well beyond the bread-and-butter issues, operating many collaborative programs with the board of education. The Victim Support Program is one such effort.

Three full-time staff members and five part-time people serve thousands of staff school crime victims. Sometimes, a phone call and a letter is all that is needed. At other times, people need help dealing with the school system's bureaucracy or the criminal justice system. Some victims need psychological counseling, which is provided in a number of formats, including short-range, individual or group sessions.

All of these programs, involving both prevention and intervention, depend upon a reporting system that provides an accurate picture of the safety and security situation in each school — one that can provide systemwide data in trends, as well as time and location studies of incidents in any school.

Hopefully, with an accurate information base, additional solutions will soon emerge to eradicate the senseless victimization of school staffers.

*An attack against a teacher can have serious emotional and psychological consequences. Concerned response helps victims regain a sense of control and focus.*

# Reducing the trauma of teacher victimization

Victims of violence and abuse often experience debilitating pain. In addition to the pain resulting from physical injury, victims often experience psychological trauma. The sudden, unexpected rupture of the fundamental sense of safety caused by victimization can lead to varying degrees of psychological distress.

Problems can include initial feelings of shock, disbelief, confusion, disorientation, helplessness and vulnerability. Later, individuals may experience other strong emotional reactions including fear, anger, rage and self-blame. Additional problems may develop, such as sleep disturbance, nightmares, depression, phobic reactions and other kinds of difficulties. These reactions may persist for weeks, months or even longer, and may affect many areas of functioning.

## Second injury

In addition, victims often suffer injury not only from the incident, but also from the system that fails to provide sufficient support as well. Many victims report that, rather than receiving help in the aftermath of an incident, they are ostracized, avoided, ignored and sometimes even abused. This phenomenon is so widespread that researchers have termed

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it the "second injury," since victims are injured twice: first by the assailant and then by systems and individuals who let them down.

## The trauma of victimization

On November 10, 1991, Gail was teaching geography to her fifth-grade class. The students were attentive and involved. Suddenly, the door opened and a student intruder approached. He pointed two guns at her and fired three times. No bullets were discharged.

Later the school administration informed her that the guns were "just toys." They then followed with advice to pull herself together and resume her classroom duties. That night Gail suffered a severe and debilitating asthma attack, had terrifying and recurring nightmares, and subsequently became afraid to leave her house.

On April 16, 1992, six intruders pushed their way into John's high school English class. They arranged themselves along one side of the room while blocking the door. For no apparent reason, one started a fight with another. While John was distracted, a third approached him on the left and deeply slashed his arm with a razor, causing him to need more than 30 stitches.

Since the incident, John, a 20-year school system veteran, has been confused, withdrawn and unable to work. He reports that, after three months at home,

his principal has called him only once.

In September 1989, the United Federation of Teachers and the New York City Board of Education initiated the Victim Support Program (VSP) to provide services to school staff victimized by school crime. Included are psychological counseling and various forms of practical assistance. In the past three years, VSP has reached more than 6,000 injured staff members and provided intensive services to almost 1,000.

In general, VSP has found that for many victims, the treatment that they receive in the aftermath is a critical factor along the road to recovery. Thus, when victims perceive concern, support and protection, they appear much better able to cope with the emotional onslaught that victimization produces.

In contrast, when victims perceive either the absence of support or active insensitivity, they may feel far more violated than after the original assault. For example, teacher victims report that while, on some level, they can come to terms with the actions of the assailant — perhaps a student driven by a loss of control or an intruder driven by greed or fear — they cannot come to terms with lack of support from those from whom they might have expected help. This experience, when it occurs, compounds the psychological injury, so that victims feel abandoned and betrayed.

At first, this phenomenon might seem

perplexing for two reasons. One, it flies in the face of our widely accepted notions about support for people in need, and two, it contradicts general conceptions about pro-social behavior among people in helping professions.

### Response to victims

The response to victims is complex and may interfere with the wish, as well as the ability, to show support. Victims seem to bring out a "universal fear of contamination" in others. Individuals around victims respond as if victimization were "catching," as if feeling or showing empathy for the injured person makes them similar to that person and thus, vulnerable to the same fate.

"Blaming the victim" or refraining from support increases psychological distance and reduces feelings of vulnerability, causing people who might be potentially helpful to back away. This is particularly true where there is both physical and psychological proximity, as in the case of teacher victims in relationship to colleagues and supervisors.

Other issues compounding the risk of second injury for teachers include supervisory accountability for school incidents, which might attribute blame to the individual victim rather than school security conditions, and the inclination of teachers to blame themselves, feeding the corresponding tendency in others.

Many school staff victims receive adequate and sufficient support; indeed, many report that they are treated with care, concern and sensitivity. Those who perceive such support fare considerably better in the aftermath of victimization than those who do not. They have fewer difficulties, appear better able to cope with problems that do arise and to get on with their lives, and seem to experience fewer residual problems down the road. The available support appears to give them an emotional cushion that buffers the intense response to violation.

### Support for victims

What constitutes adequate support?

While specific needs may vary from indi-

vidual to individual, there are general principles which can guide interaction with those who have been hurt.

#### 1) *Respond as quickly as possible.*

This might seem obvious, but victims often speak with bitterness about delays in securing administrative, security or medical assistance. One teacher told of a delay of more than 20 minutes before help arrived after she reported that a gun-wielding intruder had entered and then left her student-filled room. These kinds of experiences can add greatly to feelings of distress.

#### 2) *Find out what individuals need.*

This may not be so easy since victims themselves do not always know what they need. For example, many injured people experience initial emotional numbness. This affords protection against overwhelming feelings of distress in the immediate aftermath, yet may also cloud their judgment about the best course of action.

Roy was attacked in his classroom by student intruders who robbed him of his wristwatch, beat him and fractured his nose. After he secured superficial medical attention in the school emergency room, he agreed to return to his teaching duties for the day and then agreed to a previously scheduled classroom observation by his supervisor. Days later, at home recovering from his injuries (which required several months away from work), he spoke with rage about inadequate and unreasonable requests.

The point is that someone needs to ascertain the best course of action following an incident, with the focus on meeting the victim's needs.

3) *Be available.* Some victims have a need to talk and for someone to listen. They may feel frightened, confused and agitated. Some may need reassurance. Some may need guidance or company while they wait for medical or other kinds of help. Above all, it is important to ensure that the injured person is not left alone.

When Joe, a school system veteran, recalled being attacked in the school by a gang of armed intruders who punched

his face and damaged his eye, he noted that following his report to the principal, he was left alone in an office for close to an hour to complete paperwork. Then Joe was sent home by himself. This increased his feelings of bitterness and isolation and contributed to his decision not to return to teaching.

4) *Be aware of critical periods following an incident.* Although individuals may be vulnerable throughout the course of recovery, there are periods in which shows of support are particularly important. These include the immediate aftermath, the initial days after the incident, court appearances, encounters with police and other criminal justice personnel and the return to work.

Although school personnel cannot be involved at each juncture, they can be involved at important points. In addition, particularly in cases where there is extended time out of work, individuals appreciate periodic contact.

Lil, brutally assaulted by a drug-crazed intruder and requiring a six-month convalescence, spoke with great affection and gratitude about the calls and cards which she received during that time. In fact, the show of concern enabled her to return earlier than she had anticipated. This contrasts sharply with the many sad and angry reports from teacher victims about no calls and no contact.

The return to work is often a benchmark in the course of recovery. It is not surprising that individuals frequently re-experience arousal of emotional distress and vulnerability. Displays of concern from colleagues and supervisors can help victims adjust. In fact, just before they go back to work, individuals should be encouraged to take an accounting of any special needs and requests and discuss these with their supervisors. Concerned response helps victims to gain a sense of control and focus.

An attack against a teacher or school staff member can have serious emotional and psychological consequences. Available and adequate support can greatly ease distress and be a powerful tool in recovery. □

# Understanding crisis reaction and trauma

As caretakers of a community within a community, administrators of schools must deal with the effects of tragedies that occur both on and off school campuses. Whether the immediate tragedy is suffered by a student, staff member or a large group of people, the rippling emotional trauma that occurs can have long-term effects on the school environment.

The crisis reaction and its accompanying trauma is a unique experience shared by most victims. When individuals are victimized by violent crimes, they experience both a physical and emotional reaction. The severity of the reaction is affected by five factors:

- the intensity of the event;
- the suddenness of its occurrence;
- the duration of the event;
- the victim's ability to understand what happened; and
- the stability of the victim's equilibrium at the time of the event.

Individuals exist in a normal state of equilibrium. Each individual establishes his or her own boundaries, usually based on a personal understanding of the world. Occasional stressors will move the individual out of this state. Most people, however, return to a familiar and comfortable range of equilibrium.

Trauma throws people so far out of their normal range that it is difficult for them to restore a sense of balance. After they do establish a new balance, it will differ from the previous one and will have new boundaries and new definition.

Trauma may be precipitated by an acute stressor or many chronic stressors. An acute stressor is an event that is sudden, arbitrary and often random. Examples include crimes perpetrated

by strangers, natural disaster, man-made disaster, accidents and acts of war.

Chronic trauma refers to stressors that occur over and over again, each time pushing the individual toward the edge of the state of equilibrium, or beyond. Examples of chronic stressors include familial abuse and chronic illness.

Developmental stressors occur during transitions in life, such as adolescence, marriage, parenthood and retirement. Planned stressors include beginning an advanced degree, accepting a new job or planning a vacation.

An individual suffering from chronic or developmental stress may be more vulnerable and at a higher risk for emotional trauma after an acute stressor occurs.

The emotional response of the crisis reaction has three stages. Feelings of shock, disbelief and denial accompany the first stage, which may last only a few moments or may continue for months.

During the second stage, victims experience a cataclysm of emotions: anger, fear, frustration, confusion, guilt or grief.

Anger may be directed at God, human error, the criminal justice system and even oneself. Anger may become confused with the desire for vengeance. Just as anger is a normal response, so is the desire for revenge, which often subsides even though overwhelming rage may continue.

In the aftermath of a catastrophe involving life-threatening injury or death, a sense of terror may emerge. Terror is a residual emotion that results from the physical response of panic. It may become the foundation for panic attacks in the future.

Frustration is a by-product of the feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness that accompany a crisis event. After the initial impact, frustration may con-

tinue when victims or those supporting them are unable to successfully obtain help.

Often plaguing the victim and causing confusion is the question "Why me?" While it is a question that usually has no answer, humans tend to seek order and rationality in their existence. Hence, unanswered questions lead to even more frustration. In the effort to establish an answer, victims turn inward, feeling guilt and blaming themselves for the crisis and victimization. Survivors frequently are plagued with internal questions concerning why they survived while others died.

Intense grief or sorrow over losses is not uncommon. Losses to the victim include loss of personally significant property or loved ones; loss of control over one's life; loss of trust or faith in God or other people; loss of a sense of fairness or justice; loss of a sense of immortality and invulnerability; loss of identity or future; and loss of meaning or values.

The third stage of the emotional response is the reconstruction of equilibrium. Out of the emotional upheaval, the victim establishes a new equilibrium. This can be a very difficult, time-consuming process. Experiencing both good and bad days, life for the victim during this phase often resembles a roller coaster ride.

Most people live through a trauma and are able to reconstruct their lives with outside help. Trained professionals can assist victims through several processes that help them recover, including re-defining values and re-establishing meaning, trust, identity and a new equilibrium and future.

*Adapted with permission from The National Organization for Victim Assistance in Washington, D.C.*

*When a teacher is victimized in the line of duty, who is held liable? Must teachers and other school personnel assume the risk and teach at their own peril?*

# Unsafe working conditions: Who assumes the risk?

Liability. Mention of the word in almost any context generates an immediate audience. In law, the specter of liability is the most effective catalyst to improving, preventing and avoiding the obligations such a decree imposes. Among public policymakers, the desire to avoid liability acts as a constant incentive to carefully consider the implications of any decision.

However, a discussion that combines the issues of liability, safe schools and teachers generates a surprising and dissatisfying silence. The voices advocating changes in the campus environment are far outnumbered by those who rarely, if ever, consider the role of violence against teachers in the continuing decline of the educational process in our nation's schools. The anomaly is even more striking in the face of the evidence of increasing violence against teachers in schools. Do teachers and other school personnel assume the risk and thus teach at their peril?

## **Personal risk**

Consider the case of Josephine M. Keane. Mrs. Keane was a Chicago school teacher who died "in the line of duty." The court reviewing the lawsuit brought on behalf of her estate described

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her case in this manner:

"[Keane] was employed by the City of Chicago Board of Education as a school teacher and was assigned to the Lewis-Champlin Grade School in that capacity. The complaint alleges that on April 20, 1961, Mrs. Keane, while on the school premises in her capacity as a school teacher, was assaulted and killed by Lee Arthur Hester, a student enrolled at the school."<sup>1</sup>

On the liability issue the court was succinct:

"[Keane] maintains that, under the circumstances alleged ... the City owed a duty to the deceased to furnish police protection, and that the doctrine of governmental immunity does not absolve the City from liability. We disagree."<sup>2</sup>

In another case, Lynda Tredway, a teacher at Spingarn High School in the District of Columbia, filed suit alleging unsafe conditions after being raped in her classroom after school one afternoon while grading papers.<sup>3</sup> The intruders assaulted her with a knife, and then robbed and raped her. Tredway's suit was dismissed. The court concluded that workers' compensation was the exclusive remedy for her injuries. "Physical attacks by third parties sustained in the performance of the employee's duties," expressed the court, "are clearly covered [under workers' compensation]."<sup>4</sup>

These outcomes are quite ordinary. Teachers are met with decidedly differ-

ent rules on liability that make it difficult — almost impossible — to add their voices to those prompting changes in the campus environment. Public policy on school safety for educational employees has simply not kept pace with the quickly deteriorating reality of classrooms, posing challenges not covered in basic teacher education training curricula. As a result, the response of the law is inadequate and, in some cases, nonexistent. If public policy is to respond in the future, there must be more discussion about the role and limitations of traditional approaches to protecting teachers.

## **Immunity from suit**

Two major features dominate the landscape of liability law with regard to violence against teachers. The first is immunity from suit and the second is the public duty doctrine.

Governmental immunity, simply put, is the protection from ordinary liability suits that governments inherently possess. The concept is a derivative of the English common law notion that the Crown could not be sued without its consent. There is also a contemporary economic justification — any money judgment ultimately paid as a result of a liability finding is funded by the taxpayers.

So long-standing is the notion of immunity that the Eleventh Amendment of

the United States Constitution contains a guarantee that states are immune from liability suits brought against them in federal courts. Clearly, if a state wishes not to answer for injuries that arise as a result of most government activities, it may do so as a matter of law. However, as a matter of public policy, few states take such an absolute position.

Most states have made immunity from liability suits conditional on circumstances and procedure. This partial abrogation may merely reflect the fact that states have recognized that accountability for certain hazards can easily be managed through a self-insurance fund or by obtaining blanket policies of insurance, as would a homeowner or businessperson.

In a general discussion about conditional immunity, two distinct immunity scenarios are usually helpful to illustrate the approaches. In the first setting, school operations are given blanket immunity for all injuries that occur, provided that the injury arises out of negligence rather than intentional conduct of its employees. Texas has such a statute. It provides:

No professional employee of any school district within this state shall be personally liable for any act incident to or within the scope of the duties of his position of employment, and which act involves the exercise of judgment or discretion on the part of the employee. ...

Professional employee, as used in this section, includes superintendents, principals, classroom teachers, supervisors, counselors, and any other person whose employment requires certification and an exercise of discretion.<sup>5</sup>

Under these conditions, liability — particularly a money judgment — is difficult to establish. An injured teacher may still bring suit against the person(s) causing the injury, but in most instances, the juvenile or parent will not have the resources to pay the judgement that liability imposes.

In the second liability scenario, schools are prepared to assume liability

for injuries arising only out of certain specified activities, with immunity pertaining to everything else. The state has usually decided to insure against these occurrences or has limited by law the amount of recovery it will pay.

Regarding those activities, liability is an institutional rather than personal matter. Personal liability may still arise when injuries are inflicted intentionally or when they result from activities that are outside the scope of employment of the individual.

This setting accurately describes the environment in most states. Arkansas, for example, has a statutory scheme that waives immunity for an event that takes place on campus, but which also limits the amount of recovery. Its Education

Code, section 6-17-113, provides:

Code, section 6-17-113, provides: The Department of Education is authorized and directed to establish a self-insurance fund or negotiate for and procure a group or blanket policy... insuring [school employees] against civil liability for acts or omissions of each employee in the performance of his or her official duties... in the amount of \$250,000 for each incident.

#### Public duty doctrine

Most teachers are surprised to learn that the local governments that employ them have only a general duty to provide an environment adequate for education. Recent teacher injury cases that have argued for liability, based on the existence of a special relationship which imposes a

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*The voices advocating changes in the campus environment are far outnumbered by those who rarely, if ever, consider the role of violence against teachers in the continuing decline of the educational process in our nation's schools.*

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duty to provide effective campus security, have lost because of the so-called “public duty doctrine.” The doctrine, when combined with general principles of immunity, creates an environment in which teachers do assume the risk of attacks and injury.

All states have adopted some version of the “public duty doctrine.” Under the doctrine, a government is not liable for negligence in failing to supply general police protection. In fact, the doctrine provides immunity for all discretionary acts and nonpolicy-making public jobs.

Police, fire and other municipal services fall into this category, designed for the general advancement of the public good and welfare. Liability does not attach to such services because governments could otherwise not afford to provide them, given the cost of paying judgments for injuries due to negligence and insuring against future occurrences. Exceptions to the rule have been found only in instances where the municipality

Connecticut laws produce much the same effect, but take a slightly different approach. Its Education Code, section 10-235, provides that: Each Board of Education shall protect and save harmless any member of such board or any teacher... from financial loss or expense, including legal fees, ... if arising out of any claim of alleged negligence... resulting in any injury, which acts are not wanton reckless or malicious, provided such [employee], at the time of the acts... was acting in the discharge of his or her duties or

was under a special duty to a particular individual, such as protecting a material witness from threatened injury by third parties.

In the *Keane* case, described above, the court held that the city of Chicago did not owe any special duty to the teacher. The court observed that:

[f]ailure on the part of a municipality to exercise a governmental function does not, ... expose the municipality to liability. ...[T]he duty of the City to protect Mrs. Keane from criminal acts was no more than the general duty to all citizens to protect the safety and well-being of the public at large. Failure of a policeman to prevent others from violating the law, to the injury of some third party, does not of itself subject the municipality to liability for the injuries. To hold that under the circumstances alleged in the complaint the City owed a “special duty” to Mrs. Keane for the safety and well-being of her person would impose an all but impossible burden upon the City, considering the numerous police, fire, housing and other laws, ordinances and regulations.<sup>6</sup>

**Liability and a special duty**

With this background, it is easy to see why no incentives exist to make teacher safety a specific item on the school safety checklist of a local government official. The force of logic of the law and policy on the matter has a pernicious quality. It is actually better to do nothing than to address the subject and in doing so create a special duty.

The general requirements for the special duty exception are as follows: (1) the government must be uniquely aware of the particular danger or risk to which the person is exposed; (2) there must be allegations of specific acts or omissions on the part of the government; (3) the specific acts or omissions on the part of the municipal employees must be either affirmative or willful in nature; and (4) the injury must occur while the person is under the direct and immediate control of employees or agents of the municipality.<sup>7</sup>

The case of *Bloom v. City of New York* is a textbook example of how a special duty may be created by making teacher safety a priority. In *Bloom*, a teacher filed suit for injuries suffered while attempting to break up a fight between students in the lunchroom. Two security guards were also assigned to the area, and one guard agreed to accompany Bloom to the spot where the disruption was taking place.

The court applied the public duty analysis to the case, but with a surprisingly different outcome. “[T]here is no special duty to provide police protection to a particular individual,” reasoned the court, “unless that individual established a special relationship with the entity.”

The court noted that “[o]ne way in which a special duty can arise is by a municipality assuming an obligation to protect a specific class of persons from a specific danger, which protection is relied upon by members of that class.”

Then the court provided a blueprint for special duty liability. “Municipal liability can also occur when there is a direct relationship between the plaintiff and the governmental body, as where the government assumes an obligation to protect a specific individual from a specific danger.”

The court agreed that the school “did not owe Bloom a special duty of protection because of his status as a teacher/employee and the existence of a general security plan. Nevertheless, it would seem clear that if the security guard agreed to accompany Bloom to the scene of the confrontation and provide assistance, and Bloom relied upon such anticipated support, a special relationship would exist.”

Thus it seems clear that when schools do nothing, traditional rules of immunity provide an almost complete blanket of protection — or at least permit the local government to define the scope and method of liability it is willing to assume. The workers’ compensation system most often holds the key to the scope of liability in these instances. In the *Tredway* case, in which the teacher was

assaulted and raped in the classroom, the court provided a rationale for favoring such a scheme of liability.

[Workers’ compensation] serves a major purpose of... namely, to limit the government’s liability to a low enough level so that all injured employees can be paid some reasonable level of compensation for a wide range of job-related injuries, regardless of fault. ...[The] savings, both in damages recovered and in the expense of handling the lawsuits, should be very substantial and the employees will benefit accordingly.<sup>8</sup>

It also seems clear that when teachers play a role in providing a safe school environment with the support of school security or law enforcement, this cooperation provides the basis of a special relationship out of which liability for failure to discharge a special duty may be found.

After *Bloom*, teachers concerned with safety on campus would do well to require that a campus security person or a peace officer be present on campus at all times. The reasoning of the case suggests that teachers do assume the risks of an unsafe school environment when standing alone. But, a well thought-out, general school safety policy augmented with designated security experts changes the traditional liability equation, providing greater incentives for local government to keep teachers safe.

Since most school districts already have some security personnel on campus, knowledge of the law may succeed in making campuses safer, or at least in making government accountable when teacher safety is compromised. □

**Endnotes**

1. *Keane v. City of Chicago*, 98 Ill. App. 2d 460, 240 N.E. 2d 321 (1968).
2. *Id.* at 322.
3. *Tredway v. District of Columbia*, 403 A.2d 732 (1978).
4. *Id.* at 733.
5. Texas Education Code §21-912.
6. 240 N.E. 2d at 322.
7. *See generally*, 57 Am Jur 2d, Municipal, School, and State Tort Liability at 66.
8. 403 A.2d at 734.

*One teacher who was violently assaulted while on the job tells how he believes victimization of teachers can be eliminated by effectively controlling the school environment.*

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# Teacher authority: The great illusion

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I have been teaching approximately 20 years at the secondary level (grades 6 through 9) in one of the toughest districts in New York City. I am a six-foot, 230-pound, bald, Afro-American male. With my beard and mustache, I cut a very menacing swath as I walk through the hallways at school.

Until recently, I believed that I was king of my domain, a strong but fair disciplinarian who was respected by my colleagues and liked by my students. I believed that there was little in my domain that could harm me. After all, did I not make home visits and come out unscathed?

An explosive device containing one-fourth of a stick of dynamite was thrown at me at school, detonating about two feet from my head. Since the incident, all of my previous assumptions have changed. I am currently on a "line of duty" leave of absence from my teaching position, as I try to recover from this horrid experience.

Just after it happened, I remember regaining consciousness and seeing the overhead lights of the ambulance cabin. I had no idea what had happened to me or how it had happened. Since then, while

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in therapy, I have had the opportunity to reflect and now have some insights as to how this could have happened.

## **Illusions of influence**

No matter what the ages of the students or the teacher, no matter where the school is located or the type of class, teaching depends a great deal on illusions. At the secondary level, this is even more true.

Chief among these illusions is that teachers have a great deal of authority in and around the school environment, that they wield awesome powers and can suspend a student with just one look.

It is no surprise to anyone who has taught in recent years that this is far from the truth. In reality, teachers are among the most vulnerable people in a school building, and it is only by maintaining the illusion of invulnerability that they can do their jobs at all.

The real danger comes when teachers themselves begin to believe in the myth. When this happens they are immediately at risk of becoming part of a growing statistical group: teachers who have been assaulted while in school. This is what happened to me.

I believed that all was under control, that backup was available, and that my presence would bring order. It is my firm belief that unless this current trend of violence is abated, there will be another statistic that will become even greater —

teachers killed in the line of duty.

This predicts a grim scene, but one that is destined to be played over and over unless something is done to address the problem. It is not too late, but certain beliefs must be eradicated before the tide will be turned. It is not enough for teachers to control the classroom domain. It is the entire school environment that must be controlled.

Any good illusionist will tell you that what is important is what people perceive as the truth, not what actually is there. Teacher control and authority is similarly based on perceptions. Consider the three main areas of any school facility: the school grounds, hallways and group meeting areas, and the classrooms themselves. Little is said about the teacher's role outside of the classroom, on the school grounds or within the school building itself. The perception of what is expected and who is in control in these environments determines what happens in the classrooms.

A common junior high school scenario serves as an example:

It is 3:00 p.m. and a crowd gathers around two students as they begin to square off for combat. There is screaming and taunting by the growing crowd. Teachers are leaving the building for the day, weary and on their way home.

There was a time in recent history, less

than 10 years ago, when just the sight of teachers in the vicinity would cause students to back off and nonchalantly try to fade into the background. If a dean appeared, the crowd would scatter. Teachers could risk walking into the crowd, separate the combatants and disperse the onlookers.

Then, a mere look was enough to stop any student in his or her tracks, and a scowl would spell doom. Now, what is more likely is that the teacher will choose to fade quickly from view.

### **Risks are too high**

Have teachers become less caring and more callous toward students? Not really. If a teacher were to wade into that crowd, at best, he or she might be ignored. At worst, this teacher might get a bottle thrown at his or her head.

In the past, students knew that anyone who assaulted a teacher would face immediate expulsion from school. Today, all that will probably happen to a student is a five-day suspension from school, and for some, that suspension is an excused holiday.

This is not to say there are no teachers that will step in and break up a fight occurring outdoors. However, it is understood that you do so at your own risk, both physically and mentally.

A great deal of a teacher's influence depends upon the outcome when there is a confrontation with students. If the teacher emerges second best, he faces physical harm and his reputation will suffer proportionately. These results have repercussions in the classroom with students that were not even involved with the original incident. Many of my colleagues would rather not take this type of risk just so a student can have a five-day vacation.

### **The illusion of control**

Hallways are more controlled than areas outside of the building. While incidents that occur inside are more contained, the risk of injury is just as real inside as it is outside. The risk may be even greater because there is an illusion of control, causing teachers to be more at ease. Af-

ter all, what could possibly happen with everyone watching and your colleagues within earshot? But even the most alert individual cannot see everything or be everywhere.

What has brought us to this battlefield mentality? What has caused this decline in teacher authority and respect?

### **Fear of litigation**

The answer is fear — the fear that charges will be brought against the school system for any number of outrageous acts that have reportedly been perpetrated against little Johnny. You find many school systems across the country paralyzed because of this fear.

Expel Johnny for assault? What about his rights to an education? Place him in a special school for disorderly students? What about his sensitive psyche? What about his right to freedom of expression?

Lost in all the bickering is the curtain of illusion that once protected the teacher on the job. Remember, it is the appearance of order that keeps most people in order. To illustrate this point, think back to your own days as a student. Did anyone ever really know the kid who was rumored to have been sent to reform school because of disruptive behavior? Most never did, but the story was well-known and accepted by all students in the school, and they feared what might happen to them if they also behaved poorly.

When I went to school in southern California, I knew that if I was bad I would be sent to a certain alternative school. There, it was rumored, the students beat you up every day and the teachers all weighed 300 pounds and chewed nails. That was enough to keep me from getting too far out of line.

### **Regaining control**

Remember, teachers do not receive weapon or hand-to-hand combat training. What often stands between teachers and physical harm are their voices and their wits. If teachers are to continue to do their jobs in safety, then the illusion must be re-created and enforced.

This can happen in a number of ways.

First, every school should be designated as a safe zone both in the law and in the minds of all who attend. Any drugs, guns or weapons of any kind should be sufficient reason for expulsion from school. Any assault upon a teacher should also be grounds for expulsion. In addition to expulsion, criminal prosecution should occur for any of these offenses.

Secondly, all extracurricular activities need to be given top priority in school budgets. Shops, computer classes, bands, teams and clubs are the reasons many students want to attend a specific school. The thought of losing shop privileges has made many a student stop and think twice about misbehaving, for fear of being sent elsewhere.

Third, it must always appear that administrators of the school system are 100 percent supportive of their teachers. Students must not be given the opportunity to assume that a disciplinary action against a particular teacher was a result of one student's action.

What happens behind closed doors and off the record is another matter. Many administrators will, once the door to the office is closed, read the riot act to a teacher who acted stupidly and put himself and the students in danger. But this same administrator will keep this encounter confidential.

On the other hand, some principals will run out with the slightest provocation, taking statements from students first, then interviewing the teacher. The students learn that all one has to do to send the system into frenzy is cry, "Wolf!"

The final responsibility for teacher and student safety rests with the teacher. Alert teachers have uncanny instincts for trouble. They seem to know when trouble is in the air and are very sensitive to changes in the environment that signal danger.

But one should never depend on instincts alone. All it takes is one split second and a teacher could end up as I did, waking to the fuzzy image of flickering lights and the interior of an ambulance.

*Many teachers complain that they did not learn how to handle violent or disruptive students in their pre-service training. Here are a few practical suggestions for dealing with trouble.*

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# The trouble with trouble

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Most school personnel are not being taught practical techniques for handling trouble, techniques that would increase their chances for everyday survival. The Commanday Peacemaking Institute is dedicated to training professionals to stay safer — in schools, on the streets and at home.

No longer is the urban, inner-city school the only place where serious trouble occurs. Schools in all types of areas are experiencing an increase in the number of incidents of violence or disruption. The following are some concepts and immediately usable techniques taught by the Peacemaking Institute in a series of workshops in schools all over the country.

The trouble with trouble is that the emotions of individuals involved often cloud their judgment and their ability to effectively communicate. For instance:

- Sometimes a disruptor's infuriating verbal abuse in your face feels like a personal attack. In the disruptor's reality, it has nothing to do with you — you just happen to be there.
- To a disruptor, saving face will always be more important than adhering to any school rule.
- We answer what disruptors say instead of learning what they really mean.

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*Peter Martin Commanday is the director of the Commanday Peacemaking Institute Corporation in Congers, New York.*

- Too many of us believe that a disruptor should “stop” just because we say so.

The following mental self-defense techniques will help a person stay safe.

### **Never take it personally**

It was the beginning of the day. The students were coming into the school building in a reasonable order. A female teacher had started up the stairs to her classroom on the third floor, when she saw Jason sitting on the steps.

*“Hi, Jason.”*

Silence.

*“Jason, it is time to go to your home-room class.”*

Jason jumped to his feet, glared at her and screamed: *“Get the f--- out of my face. Who do you think you are, b--- Don't tell me what to do; you're not my mother!”*

The great temptation is to respond to Jason with an angry lecture or with sarcasm. It is a good idea to squelch that response. The remark is rarely related to you, even though the venom is directed at your face.

No matter how personal the remark seems, whatever is said must not be taken personally. When you face this kind of verbal abuse, detach yourself emotionally. Instead of an emotional response to “get back” at the disruptor, use a peacemaking approach. For example,

you can respond with absolute silence.

Silence is a very effective tool. Most disruptive students cannot handle it. They become uncomfortable and break the silence either with a tirade of loud abuse or a demand to be left alone. In either case, the disruptor is now focused on you — you have become the visual target. This is good, because it gives you the opportunity to create a change in the disruptor's behavior.

An alternative approach might be to ignore the personal attack and respond with a neutral remark such as:

*“Jason, what's up?”*

This remark is not as casual as it might appear. You are now offering the disruptor the opportunity to choose the topic for discussion. Sometimes this approach will elicit another personal attack, but rarely does it happen. More often, this remark stimulates the disruptor to say something related to the situation. After the first few words, the disruptor frequently reveals his or her real sources of frustration or fear, making it clear that the disruption is not concerned with you — you are just the recipient of the outburst.

You might consider a third type of response — a non sequitur. Say something that is totally unrelated to anything that has happened up to this point:

*“Jason, who let out the white rabbits?”*

The question has no value in itself. It

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can work wonderfully in that it may get the disruptor to stop, look up quizzically and say:

*“Lady, you’re crazy.”*

Once again you are the visual target — the focus of the disruptor’s attention. This attention allows you to continue with your silence or casual remark — all in hopes of getting Jason to tell you what is upsetting him.

We have all been cursed at. Sometimes we ignore it, sometimes we respond mildly and other times we get verbally aggressive. When you choose not to respond in kind, you are in fact disarming the disruptor of a potential weapon. Do not give the disruptor ammunition — never take it personally.

### Everybody saves face

Saving face has become a common term in school settings. When kids are “dissed” (insulted) in school, they are hurt and react very strongly to regain their status in school and on the streets.

Kids can lose face in various types of situations. The following are some examples.

#### *The student is alone.*

Jason is sitting on the steps just before class, with serious thoughts about his mom. She is in the hospital and he isn’t too sure what is wrong with her. He loves his mom and in their daily struggle to survive emotionally in the absence of a father in the house, they have formed a strong bond. He doesn’t see or hear the teacher come up to him.

*“Jason, what are you doing here? You belong in class. Please leave right now.”*

In this setting the student is alone — he has no audience. But he still loses face, as he feels the teacher should have read his mind and not bothered him with this stupidity. He loses face within himself with what seems to him to be an insensitive and disrespectful invasion of privacy. So, he lashes out at the person who has invaded his space — the teacher.

Even in a private setting with a disruptor, it is best not to give lectures or

orders. Instead, take a more personal approach:

*“Jason, how’s it going?”* or *“Jason, what’s up?”*

If you don’t know the student’s name, try:

*“Hi, how’s it going?”* or *“Hi, what’s up?”*

On a one-to-one basis, a peacemaker stays personal and avoids questions that come from his or her organizational identity as teacher, dean or counselor.

Above all, a peacemaker uses a personal tone of voice, rather than the cold official tone we all know too well how to assume. Convey to the student that you care about him or her and you will more likely end up with a conversation rather than a disruptive incident.

#### *The student has an audience.*

If a student loses face with peers watching, he or she will suffer many future indignities. A student in this position has the curious goal, not of winning a conflict, but of prolonging it. In this way he will be seen by his peers as a “brave knight,” defying the odds against the system no matter what the cost.

The goal of the peacemaker remains the same in this setting. Find a way to make yourself the visual target. Attract the disruptor’s attention and, at the same time, offer the hope that if he or she will cease prolonging the conflict and allow intervention, there will be a positive outcome.

It is not possible in this space to discuss the various physical techniques of body position one should use when approaching one or more disruptors, particularly in a crowd of other students. Let us assume, for convenience, that the peacemaker has safely passed through the crowd and into the area of conflict. The question now is, What do you do to make yourself the visual target?

If you know both names of the disruptors or combatants, try using humor, a great tool:

*“Sara, Janet — how much did you charge for tickets to this fight?”*

If you do not know all names, use

none. You do not want to attract the attention of only the person whose name you call. He or she may turn and become vulnerable to being hit. You also do not want to seem more favorably inclined toward the one student whose name you know.

Another way to get the attention of the disruptors/combatants is to use sound. Bang hard with your hand on something or slam down anything to make a loud noise. Or, you can whisper something startling to the disruptors that the crowd can’t hear. When I am with boys I sometimes whisper, “Your fly is open.” To girls I whisper, “He isn’t worth it.”

If the conflict is really heated — a screaming match that is about to erupt into an actual fight — you can use extreme measures. If there is a nearby chair or table, climb up on it. You can act crazy, say crazy things, start singing. (I once shouted a hodgepodge of nonsense syllables and said I was speaking a foreign language.)

Whether you play to the audience or to the combatants, remember that your immediate goal is to get the attention of the combatants in a way that allows each to save face. If you cause one or more of the volatile combatants to lose face, you will escalate the situation.

Once you have their attention, you will want to move them away from the war zone. The further away they are from the crowd or the place of the conflict, the greater the possibility of keeping their attention.

#### *A group of students has gathered.*

A group of students is assembling together when they should be elsewhere. Let’s assume that the students are standing in a group in the hall just before class, but after the bell has rung.

As has been said, when you approach a group of students, it is best not to address one or several of them by name. Instead, if you choose to speak, address the whole group. In addition to the reasons already mentioned, when students are in a group and doing something wrong (and they always know), calling their names will in-

cense those who were singled out. You are likely to get the response:

*"Hey, man, why me? I'm not the only one here."*

One very effective method of attracting and keeping the attention of groups is to use hand signals rather than voice command. Everyone saves face when you motion what to do, rather than order what to do. As you attempt to move the disruptors from the combat zone to another room, motion with two hands, palms up, fingers together and swing your hands in the direction you wish them to move. Do not single out any individual. This technique is usually successful. But if it's not, you can try verbal requests, taking care always to keep your tone personal and calm.

Whether you are alone with a student, or with two kids with a surrounding crowd, or dealing with a group of kids which needs to move on, remember to allow all those involved to save face. If you show respect first, you increase the probability that the disruptors will respect your efforts.

### **No surprises**

After the volatile behavior has been controlled in a conflict situation and the peacemaker is making progress in defusing the incident, the disruptors do not want any surprises. One of the most frequent ways to get a disruptor to re-escalate the situation is to introduce an unexpected factor into the equation.

How can a peacemaker prepare a disruptor for what happens next? This specific situation demonstrates the technique:

You are in the hallway alone with John. John pulls a knife and waves it threateningly in the air, shouting to no one in particular how he plans to use it. You defuse the situation. John now asks: *"What's going to happen next? Am I going to get suspended?"*

Most people will think these two questions are connected. I think not. The first question is not related to being suspended or any other delayed consequence of his behavior. What is not being asked,

is a very different question: "In the next 90 seconds or so, what is going to happen to me?"

I suggest that you answer the unasked question in the following manner:

*"John, we are going to go down this hallway, to stairway #6, down to the second floor and across to room 223, as I want to see if the substitute teacher has showed up. Then we will go to stairway #1, down to the first floor to room 104. We'll go in, I'll close the door, and then you can tell me everything. I'm going to listen and not interrupt."*

What you will probably see next is fascinating — a sigh of relief. The individual's body will actually show his or her acceptance of your description of the next 90 seconds. The disruptor sees it as a time not to be frightened, a time of reasonable safety.

"No surprises" is a method of discussing before the fact what is about to immediately happen. Students live in a world of unexpected events. Surprises from parents, teachers and the rest of the world are always happening to them and they are, for the most part, not ready for the onslaught.

You lessen the tension and offer comfort, as well as respect, by verbalizing quietly and personally in a matter-of-fact manner, the details of the immediate future. The last part of your description should center around hope. By saying, "I will listen to everything you have to say, and will not interrupt," you offer the disruptor the hope of having the opportunity to express what is on his or her mind to someone who wants to listen.

### **Win small, sequential victories**

How often have you heard a teacher say to a student: *"Stop that."*

In minor situations, that can work. In a conflict, it is not wise to ask for everything all at once. When dealing with a disruptor, do not try to stop everything all at once.

A moment ago, we mentioned John, who pulled out his knife in the hallway. We did not say how the peacemaker defused the situation. Let's look at what to

say and what not to say in this type of situation. Some might choose to say: *"John, give me the knife."*

He may indeed do just that — "give it to you." Do not make such a dangerous suggestion. Very few combatants in this position will immediately weaken themselves by conceding to such a demand. Instead, suggest very small, almost inconsequential moves:

*"John, please move that knife just a bit to the left. It makes me nervous. See, I won't move, just a bit to the left. Thanks."*

Once this is done follow with:

*"What's up?"*

Each time you talk about the knife, ask for a small movement. Win small sequential victories — these are easier for the disruptor to accept.

If you are in a room, the last step might be to get John to place the weapon on a table or chair. Once this is done, while you are talking, casually move in front of the item to put it out of John's sight. Then, at the appropriate time, place it in your back pocket.

If you are in the hallway, you might not have such an easy series of moves. In the past, I have had the disruptor slowly lower the weapon until I finally suggested that he put it back in his pocket. Once we were in a room, away from the crowd, I then again attempted to get the weapon placed on a table.

It is important not to give an order to a person who is displaying a weapon in a threatening manner. Instead, try to win small, sequential victories.

In a dangerous world where people behave unpredictably, violence may often erupt immediately and suddenly. School personnel need practical techniques to reduce the probability that anyone will be hurt. Hopefully, these suggestions will be helpful. □

*The Commanday Peacemaking Institute offers a series of workshops on how to manage a crisis with "mental self defense" techniques. Contact Peter Martin Commanday, 7 Greenfield Terrace, Congers, NY 10920, 914/268-4420.*

# NSSC Publications

The National School Safety Center (NSSC) serves as a national clearing-house for school safety programs and activities related to campus security, school law, community relations, student discipline and attendance, and the prevention of drug abuse, gangs, weapons and bullying in schools.

NSSC's primary objective is to focus national attention on the importance of providing safe and effective schools. The following publications have been produced to promote this effort.

**School Safety News Service** includes three symposium editions of *School Safety*, newjournal of the National School Safety Center, and six issues of *School Safety Update*. These publications feature the insight of prominent professionals on issues related to school safety, including student discipline, security, attendance, dropouts, youth suicide, character education and substance abuse. NSSC's News Service reports on effective school safety programs, updates on legal and legislative issues, and reviews new literature on school safety issues. Contributors include accomplished local practitioners and nationally recognized experts and officials. (\$59.00 annual subscription)

**School Safety Check Book** (1990) is NSSC's most comprehensive text on crime and violence prevention in schools. The volume is divided into sections on school climate and discipline, school attendance, personal safety and school security. Geared for the hands-on practitioner, each section includes a review of the problems and prevention strategies. Useful charts, surveys and tables, as well as write-ups on a wide variety of model programs, are included. Each chapter also has a comprehensive bibliography of additional resources. 219 pages. (\$15.00)

**Set Straight on Bullies** (1989) examines the myths and realities about schoolyard bullying. Changing attitudes about the seriousness of the problem are stressed. It studies the characteristics of bullies and bullying victims. And, most importantly, it provides strategies for educators, parents and students to better prevent and respond to schoolyard bullying. Sample student and adult surveys are included. 89 pages. (\$10.00)

**Child Safety Curriculum Standards** (1991) helps prevent child victimization by assisting youth-serving professionals in teaching children how to protect themselves. Sample strategies that can be integrated into existing curricula or used as a starting point for developing a more extensive curriculum are given for both elementary and secondary schools. The age-appropriate standards deal with the topics of substance abuse, teen parenting, suicide, gangs, weapons, bullying, runaways, rape, sexually transmitted diseases, child abuse, parental abductions, stranger abductions and latchkey children. Each of the 13 chapters includes summaries, standards, strategies and additional resources for each grade level. 353 pages. (\$75.00)

**Developing Personal & Social Responsibility** (1992) is designed to serve as a framework on which to build successful school and community programs aimed at training young people to be responsible citizens. 130 pages. (\$9.00)

**Gangs In Schools: Breaking Up Is Hard to Do** (1988) offers an introduction to youth gangs, providing the latest information on the various types of gangs — including ethnic gangs, stoner groups and satanic cults — as well as giving practical advice on preventing or reducing gang encroachment on schools. Already in its seventh printing, the book contains valuable suggestions from law enforcers, school principals, prosecutors and other experts on gangs. The concluding chapter describes more than 20 school- and community-based programs throughout the country that have been successful in combating gangs. 48 pages. (\$5.00)

**School Crime and Violence: Victims' Rights** (1992) is a current and comprehensive text on school safety law. The recently revised book offers a historical overview of victims' rights, describes how it has been dealt with in our laws and courts, and explains its effect on America's schools. The authors cite legal case histories and cover current school liability laws. The book explains tort liability, sovereign immunity, duty-at-large rule, intervening cause doctrine and foreseeable criminal activity, as well as addressing their significance to schools. The concluding chapter includes a "Checklist for Providing Safe Schools." 127 pages. (\$15.00)

**Educated Public Relations: School Safety 101** (1986) offers a quick course in public relations for school district public relations directors, administrators and others working to achieve safe, effective schools. The book explains the theory of public relations and successful methods for integrating people and ideas. It discusses how public relations programs can promote safe schools and quality education and gives 101 specific ideas and strategies to achieve this goal. 72 pages. (\$8.00)

**School Discipline Notebook** (1992) will help educators establish fair and effective discipline policies. The book reviews student responsibilities and rights, including the right to safe schools. Legal policies that regulate discipline methods used in schools are also explained. 53 pages. (\$5.00)

**The Need To Know: Juvenile Record Sharing** (1989) deals with the confidentiality of student records and why teachers, counselors, school administrators, police, probation officers, prosecutors, the courts and other professionals who work with juvenile offenders need to know and be able to share information contained in juvenile records. When information is shared appropriately, improved strategies for responding to serious juvenile offenders, and for improving public safety, can be developed. The second part of the book reviews the legal statutes of each state, outlining which agencies and individuals are permitted access to various juvenile records and how access may be obtained. A model juvenile records code and sample forms to be used by agencies in facilitating juvenile record sharing also are included. 88 pages. (\$12.00)

*Points of view or opinions are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Education or Pepperdine University. Prices subject to change without prior notification.*

# Resource Papers

*The National School Safety Center (NSSC) has produced a series of special reports on a variety of topics related to school safety. Each NSSC Resource Paper provides a concise but comprehensive overview of the problem, covers a number of prevention and intervention strategies, and includes a list of organizations, related publications, and article reprints on the topic.*

**Safe Schools Overview** offers a review of the contemporary safety issues facing today's schools, such as crime and violence, discipline, bullying, drug/alcohol trafficking and abuse, gangs, high dropout rates, and school safety partnerships.

**Alternative Schools for Disruptive Youth** thoroughly covers the historical background of alternative schools and the academic research that has been done on their effectiveness.

**Corporal Punishment in Schools** outlines the arguments for and against corporal punishment. It also discusses the alternatives to corporal punishment that have been developed by schools and psychologists.

**Drug Traffic and Abuse in Schools**, after summarizing students' attitudes and beliefs about drugs, covers drug laws and school rules; the legal aspects of student searches and drug testing; and the connection between drug use and truancy, crime and violence.

**Weapons in Schools** outlines a number of ways to detect weapons on campus, including using searches and metal detectors, establishing a security force, and eliminating book bags or lockers where weapons can be hidden.

**Role Models, Sports and Youth** covers a number of programs that link youth and sports, including NSSC's urban school safety campaign that uses professional athletes as spokesmen; several organizations founded by professional athletes to help youth combat drugs; and a number of programs established to get young people involved in school or neighborhood teams.

**School Bullying and Victimization** defines bullying, offers an overview of psychological theories about how bullies develop, and covers intervention programs that have been successful.

**School Crisis Prevention and Response** identifies principles and practices that promote safer campuses. It presents reviews of serious schools crises — fatal shootings, a terrorist bombing, armed intruders and cluster suicide. Interviews with the principals in charge also are included.

**Student and Staff Victimization**, after outlining schools' responsibility to provide a safe educational environment, covers strategies for dealing with victimization.

**Student Searches and the Law** examines recent court cases concerning student searches, including locker searches, strip searches, searches by probation officers, drug testing, and searches using metal detectors or drug-sniffing dogs.

**Increasing Student Attendance**, after outlining the problem and providing supporting statistics, details strategies to increase attendance by preventing, intervening with and responding to students who become truants or dropouts.

# Display Posters

**"Join a team, not a gang!"** (1989) — Kevin Mitchell, home run leader with the San Francisco Giants.

**"The Fridge says 'bullying is uncool!'"** (1988) — William "The Fridge" Perry, defensive lineman for the Chicago Bears.

**"Facades..."** (1987) — A set of two, 22-by-17-inch full-color posters produced and distributed to complement a series of drug-free schools TV public service announcements sponsored by NSSC.

All resources are prepared under Grant No. 85-MU-CX-0003 from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions in these documents are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Education or Pepperdine University. **Prices subject to change without prior notification. Charges cover postage and handling. Check must accompany order.**

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*Business/school partnerships represent one of the most important educational trends sweeping the country. Corporate America is making a difference.*

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# Architects of excellence

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The civil strife that tore apart central Los Angeles earlier this year drew widespread public attention to a troubled inner city, where jobs are scarce, urban blight taints the landscape and gang activity is a predominant recreation for youth.

New business districts have begun to rise from the ashes, but the critical issue is the long-term future of urban Los Angeles and its young residents, those who represent the next generation of a poverty-stricken community.

An innovative youth support program — a partnership between the California Community Colleges and Southern California Edison — is addressing that future by focusing on development of self-esteem and academic skills in African-American male teen-agers. Southern California Edison is the sponsor of the program; funding was procured with the assistance of the California Community Colleges Foundation, which promotes partnerships between businesses and the community college system to fund special projects.

## **Business-school partnerships**

“The partnership with Southern California Edison is an innovative example of how private industry and community col-

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*Tani Welsh is the manager of Educational Services at Southern California Edison.*

leges can work together to improve educational opportunities for inner-city youths,” said David Mertes, chancellor of the California Community Colleges.

Titled the Interscholastic Alliance of African-American Males (IAAM, pronounced “I am”), the program offers high school juniors the opportunities to enroll in community college courses, interact with prominent members of the Los Angeles business community, participate in community service projects, and participate in career counseling programs and internships.

Support of IAAM is part of the Southern California Edison (SCE) commitment to assist in the rebuilding of the greater Los Angeles region.

The Alliance is serving 75 African-American youths selected from Middle College High School and Washington High School in Los Angeles, and Morningside and Inglewood high schools in the suburb of Inglewood.

Middle College High School, a collaborative effort of the Los Angeles Unified School District and the Los Angeles Community College District, is serving as the program’s official home. The school was created on the campus of Los Angeles Southwest College to help reduce the high dropout rate in the college’s service area, provide improved educational opportunities for students from inner-city neighborhoods and remove students from street gang

environments.

Roughly half of the students in central Los Angeles drop out of high school. Even more alarming is the fact that a young black male has at least a three times greater chance of being murdered as he does of graduating from high school with eligibility to enter the University of California system.

Middle College High School serves 300 students: 159 African-Americans and 141 Latinos. Many have expressed fear of gang influence in their neighborhoods and exhibit a strong desire to finish high school and advance to college.

Students enrolled at Middle College High School must sign a compliance contract, which is designed to teach them responsibility and respect for education. Teachers and administrators at the school go beyond the typical workload, providing counseling, tutoring and other assistance to students and helping them make positive choices that alter the course of their lives.

Middle College High School celebrated a milestone this year, graduating its first class.

## **Family environment**

The Alliance is providing its participants a type of close-knit “family” environment. The family theme is echoed in the collaboration of organizations supporting the effort: SCE; Los Angeles Unified School District; Inglewood Unified

School District; Upward Bound; Equal Opportunity Program for Students; Transfer Center, California State University, Dominguez Hills; and the University of California, Los Angeles, Partnership Program.

The goal of the program is to improve the youths' chances of achieving success and fulfillment with family, community, school and employment. Sixty-five percent of the Alliance students are expected to graduate from high school while obtaining advanced academic or vocational training in college. Such training will enable them to receive a college associate degree, a certificate, job skills or allow them to transfer to a four-year institution.

Academic training will go beyond the boundaries of the Middle College High School campus to incorporate athletics, community service, career-related internships and field trips to African-American cultural institutions. IAAM programs will be supplemented with training in basic first aid, safety and water rescue techniques. Students also will be provided with swimming lessons and advanced first aid training in preparation for a lifeguard examination.

### Bringing it home

The hope is that students will take what they learn back to their neighborhoods.

"My ultimate purpose in heading IAAM is to help African-American male youths successfully address African-American male issues, so that they build constructive, positive community environments," program director Moses Robinson said.

In addition to receiving support from adult mentors, which include business leaders, teachers and administrators, each student receives peer support from a "buddy" assigned through the Alliance. As students' self-esteem and academic skills improve, they will be provided opportunities to serve as role models for youths in similar programs and/or in elementary schools.

Raising students' self-esteem will be one of the chief challenges of the pro-

gram. Many of the Alliance participants represent the first generation of their families aspiring to a college education. They may have suffered the loss of family members to inner-city violence, come from single-parent families, exhibit behavioral problems, and have little or no parental or peer support in their lives.

Alliance organizers believe higher self-esteem can be promoted by demonstrating to students that members of the community at large have an interest and stake in their success.

Southern California Edison strongly believes that every youth should be given an opportunity to succeed in this world. The IAAM program provides that advantage.

SCE is one of the most active supporters of the California Community Colleges system. In addition to supporting the Alliance, SCE funds the Early Start Program for junior high school students at El Camino College, where youngsters are given a preview of their academic futures as an incentive to graduate from high school. Additionally, it provides student scholarships at community colleges in its service area, including an Edison employee mentor for each student recipient.

As a business partner of the California Community Colleges Foundation, SCE serves as an advocate for excellence and innovation within the community college system, which encompasses 107 campuses throughout California.

In its five-year history, the foundation has administered 111 grants worth \$44 million. The programs developed by the foundation provide student employment opportunities in both the public and private sectors, scholarships for students in need of financial support, and academic incentives for students at risk of dropping out of high school.

The students assisted by the foundation are the future of California, and con-

sequently, the future of the communities and employers in our state. By joining with the foundation to enhance educational opportunities for those most in need, business leaders make an investment in their own futures and that of California's communities.

### An investment in the future

Business support of schools and colleges is playing an increasingly important role in the education of our youth. In California alone, state government budget cuts have drastically reduced the amount and types of services schools can provide to students at all levels.

The concept of the business-college partnership is one of the most important educational trends in our country. There is no better way to stress the importance of academic achievement to those individuals whose future is jeopardized by social and economic misfortune. Nor is there a better method to introduce professional and industrial technologies to the men and women who will likely be using them in this century and beyond.

Business support of education provides guidance for students seeking to make the most of their skills; represents an investment in the students as well as the communities in which they live and work; and most importantly, demonstrates a commitment to disadvantaged populations that may have no other champions.

Our educational system can work. And businesses and corporations can be the architects of excellence in our schools. □

PHOTO COURTESY OF SCE

# School Safety News Service

Publishing on your behalf to advocate changes that will positively affect schools nationwide, the **School Safety News Service** is the definitive and most comprehensive source for school crime prevention planning available.

Subscribers receive monthly updates on the most critical issues facing our schools. News updates from around the country provide insight and strategies related to drugs, gangs, weapons, discipline, schoolyard bullying and other concerns vital to the safety of all schoolchildren. Thought-provoking

commentary from prominent experts complement the hard-news reports.

**The School Safety News Service** includes three issues of the *School Safety* newsjournal, published in the fall, winter and spring, and six issues of *School Safety Update*, published in October, November, December, February, March and April. Annual subscription is \$59. For more information or to subscribe to the **School Safety News Service**, write: NSSC, 4165 Thousand Oaks Blvd., Suite 290, Westlake Village, CA 91362. Please enclose check with your order.

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# From fistfights to gunfights

For educational excellence to be achieved, schools must be safe and hospitable places for teachers and students. Yet, in an ever-increasing number of our schools, students and teachers are expected to endure violence, fear and intimidation on a daily basis.

Violence within the schools of America has increased dramatically over the past decade and continues to escalate at an alarming rate. Gang encroachment, drug and alcohol abuse, poverty, child abuse and neglect, overcrowded classrooms and lack of parental supervision and discipline have rendered the once "safe harbor" of the classroom a microcosm of today's social ills.

In a case heard by the U.S. Supreme Court, *New Jersey v. T.L.O.*, Justice Powell commented on the growing problem of violence in schools. He wrote:

Without first establishing discipline and maintaining order, teachers cannot begin to educate their students. And apart from education, the school has the obligation to protect pupils from mistreatment by other children, and also to protect teachers themselves from violence by the few students whose conduct in recent years has promoted national concern.

Most people equate school violence with large urban areas such as New York, Chicago or Los Angeles. While there has been ample reporting of the violence plaguing big-city schools, violence has invaded suburban and rural schools with little notice by the national media.

A bill introduced into the House of Representatives of the U.S. Congress (H.R. 4538, "Classroom Safety Act of 1992") summarized the rising tide of violence in America's schools thusly:

- Nearly 3,000,000 crimes occur on or near school campuses every year;
- One fourth of the major school districts now use metal detectors in an attempt to reduce the number of weapons introduced into the schools by students;
- Twenty percent of teachers in schools have reported being threatened with violence by a student;
- The despair brought on by poverty and disenfranchisement that affects millions of our youth is rapidly entering the schools;
- Schools are being asked to take on responsibilities that society as a whole has neglected, forcing teachers to referee fights rather than teach;
- Teachers are staging walk-outs to protest the violence which denies interested students the opportunity to learn.

Teachers and administrators require special skills to cope with potentially explosive situations and violent students. Yet, they are not receiving those skills in their university preparation programs. The California Legislature, believing that "certificated school personnel often are not prepared effectively in their professional programs to cope with potentially violent situations or with violent youth," amended the California Education Code (California Senate Bill 2460, Green, 1990). The revised code will require the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC), the state agency that regulates teacher preparation and licensing, to undertake leadership activities directed toward establishing appropriate standards of preparation for teachers and other certificated personnel concerning violent behavior by students.

Anticipating that a requirement for training teachers and principals in handling violence in schools would be forthcoming from the CTC, Pepperdine University began developing a violence

prevention curriculum to be included in the training of future teachers and administrators.

In June of 1992, a grant from the Pacific Telesis Foundation enabled the teacher preparation program to begin developing and field testing a model curriculum for creating a safe school environment. The model curriculum will be designed to be presented in an applied, hands-on, interactive mode. The training will focus on skills that teachers need to maintain a safe, secure and welcoming school climate. The curriculum will also address skills teachers need to help build confidence, self-esteem and pride in their students — attitudes crucial to creating and maintaining a positive and cohesive campus climate.

In addition to the faculty of Pepperdine's Graduate School of Education and Psychology, curriculum developers will draw upon the resources of the Pepperdine School of Law and the National School Safety Center, a resource center administered by Pepperdine University and funded by the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice.

The model curriculum will be field tested with the teachers at Broadway Elementary School in the Los Angeles Unified School District, a partnership school with Pepperdine University. Broadway School serves a diverse student population in an area plagued with social problems. Poverty, crime and racial tension severely inhibit the instructional process. In the past year, two parents of Broadway students have been killed in gang-related incidents.

After further development and field testing, the model curriculum will be made available to other universities for use in teacher and administrator preparation programs. The target date for completion of the model curriculum is January 1, 1993.

*H. Woodrow Hughes, Ph.D., is the Associate Dean for Education in the Graduate School of Education and Psychology, Pepperdine University.*

*A new category of crisis is emerging in many schools, causing overwhelming personal stress, job burnout and collective despair for its victims. Fortunately, an intervention strategy has been developed.*

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## The tip of the iceberg

The first two years of this decade have brought unprecedented difficulties to the schools. Budgetary cutbacks, economic recession, increased litigation, the unending flow of federal and state mandates, political tidal waves, and increasingly brutal violence in the homes and communities served by schools conspire to make children's lives more tenuous and their schooling more tumultuous. The impact of these difficulties is felt in the classrooms, the staff room and the crisis response team conference rooms throughout the country.

Critical incidents affecting schools appear to be increasing in frequency, complexity and intensity. As a result, a whole new category of crisis, which no longer fits the model presented thus far, is emerging in many schools. This category includes critical incidents which occur within a context of chronic traumas to the individual or group. Explanations, projections and interventions based upon single-incident crises seem to miss the mark in many school settings. A new way of describing and responding to crisis is needed — that new model may be termed Cumulative Traumatic Stress.

The following case study will serve as an illustration:

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*Kendall Johnson, Ph.D., is a mentor teacher in a school for troubled teens and maintains a private practice as a family therapist.*

**Location:** *Inner-city elementary school district in the Midwest.*

**Situation:** *Following the report of an off-campus shooting death of a first-grader, the Crisis Response Team responded to the classroom and school of the victim. After a routine post-violent death intervention, the team saw an unexpected drop in staff morale. This reaction came as a surprise for all involved, because the staff had dealt with a number of incidents more critical than this.*

**Complications:** *Precedents for the incident were disclosed. The police were investigating the shooting, which was considered to have occurred under suspicious circumstances. The child's 13-year-old brother, who had pulled the trigger of the shotgun, had previously been investigated for killing a third sibling with a shotgun two years earlier. In addition, the staff indicated that this incident was not an exception to the chronic high levels of traumatic incidents which they responded to several times a week.*

*They attributed these incidents to the social and economic depression in the area. In the past few years, several giant manufacturing plants that employed a large percentage of the population had been closed and relocated. Neighborhoods which used to be nice were now decimated, populated by those too disad-*

*vantaged to move. Homes were deteriorating, burned down or inhabited by transients. Drugs, violence and crime were increasing. With the home front a battlefield, the schools played an increasingly pivotal role in stabilizing the lives of their students.*

**Reactions:** *Individual staff members universally complained of overwhelming personal stress symptoms. In relation to their work they showed signs of spiritual depletion, which manifested itself in depression, isolation, pessimism, numbness and concern that their work no longer had meaning or purpose. On the team level, there was evidence of contagious job burnout, organizational distrust and collective despair.*

In order to meet staff and student needs in this setting, and an increasing number of settings like it, the model of classroom and staff debriefings for critical incident stress has to be modified. The modifications have to address more than individual symptoms and team cohesion and confront larger, deeper social issues.

### **Cumulative traumatic stress**

Cumulative vicarious trauma refers to a set of critical incidents affecting a clientele with sufficient intensity and frequency to result in: (1) chronic individual delayed stress symptoms among

individual service providers; and (2) disintegrating effects upon service teams.

Professionals in close contact with clients who experience a variety of ongoing crises and traumas develop post-traumatic symptoms; their exposure to a number of such experiences can have a cumulative effect. Teachers, health and mental health professionals can be so affected. Cumulative vicarious trauma can be debilitating to both individuals and the teams they serve.

Work-related effects of cumulative vicarious trauma in individuals include chronic work-related symptoms commonly associated with delayed stress response. Individuals suffering from cumulative traumatic stress exhibit many signs of physical, emotional, attitudinal and spiritual exhaustion.

The composite signs of depression, including apathy, lack of caring, sense of powerlessness and chronic fatigue, plague those who have experienced too much trauma. The individual may initially become isolated and tend to over-identify with the staff or school to the extent that family and friendship relationships suffer. His or her attitude will eventually reflect unhappiness and dissatisfaction with work, and can result in detachment from or even hostility toward clientele.

Perhaps most characteristically, too much direct or indirect traumatic stress leads to a decline in optimism, personal sense of purpose and faith that the work is meaningful and useful. In extreme cases, this spiritual depletion can extend to the individual's view of his or her entire life or of life itself.

Cumulative traumatic stress (CTS) affects more than the individual. When it is a work-related phenomenon, CTS is likely to affect all members of the team. CTS stems from incidents affecting the entire team, and it is contagious.

CTS initially manifests itself on the staff level through morale problems and relational difficulties within the team. It develops into distrust of leadership and of the supporting organization, and takes the form of defensiveness at various lev-

els of the team. As a whole, the staff suffers from contagious job burnout. This can eventually lead to a collapse of team mission and purpose and collective despair. Cumulative traumatic stress leads to both personal distress and work team disintegration.

### **CTS debriefings**

Cumulative Traumatic Stress Debriefing (CTSD) is a group intervention. The goals are to address and moderate traumatic stress symptoms and to build group cohesiveness among participants. CTSD is designed to address issues which are eroding individual and team functioning.

Because of the complexity of the incidents leading up to debriefing, the chronic and diverse reactions, and the team level factors addressed, CTSD tends to utilize props such as flip charts, blackboards and checklists, although that varies with the style of the leader.

CTSD protocol follows a specific, predetermined set of phases. These phases include introduction, incidents, complications, reactions, coping strategies and planning.

The introduction phase consists of the same basic format of other debriefings: explain the purpose of the meeting, introduce the leader, outline the format of the meeting and lay ground rules.

### *Incidents phase*

The incidents phase of CTSD serves two purposes. First, it allows the group to narrow the focus of discussion to the three or four most difficult incidents experienced in the recent past. This involves the group reaching consensus as to which incidents were, in fact, the most difficult. This process leads to the second purpose, that of individuals expressing and acknowledging their experiences.

A good approach to facilitate the incidents phase begins by having each participant write down three or four key incidents which they feel affected the team over the past six months. Using a blackboard or flipchart, the leader can have participants call out the incidents they

have written down and place checks after repeat mentions of specific events. After the list is complete, the leader can explain to the group that they need to decide together which were the three or four most important.

### *Complications phase*

Events do not take place in a social vacuum, and their meaning and effects need to be understood within their context. The purpose of this phase is to identify and acknowledge the various factors which complicate the key incidents and the ongoing post-incident environment. Complications can include:

- the nature of the client community;
- background factors and precedents;
- key themes;
- organizational issues;
- practical and logistical problems; and
- the interpersonal context.

A good approach for assessing these factors begins by having participants fill in a checklist of possible complications. The checklist should provide prompts, but also provide space for individual comments and additions.

### *Reactions phase*

This phase explores, acknowledges and validates current personal reactions to cumulative stressors. The process begins with personal assessment and continues by sharing these individual reactions. Once the composite personal reactions are brought into the open, the pattern of cumulative stressor effects upon team members as individuals emerges.

Because of the wide range of possible symptoms, and the team members' tendency to minimize their own symptoms or dysfunction, a printed checklist is useful to help members identify their own distress. Discussion of reactions aims at acknowledgment of the extent and universality of chronic stress reactions within the group.

### *Coping strategies phase*

This phase shifts toward empowerment and focuses on individual coping tech-

niques. The purposes are to teach situational stress management, inoculate against further incidents and develop individual plans for self-care.

A good approach uses checklists of coping strategies for initial self-assessment, followed by discussion of participant's use of such strategies to alleviate chronic stress symptoms. This discussion can identify key additional means of coping which members can incorporate into their individual plans.

When deciding whether to use props such as checklists, the leader should consider the extent to which the group is open and able to learn and share from each other. Healthy group functioning and the degree of mutual support determines whether the approach should be didactic or facilitative.

#### *Planning phase*

This final phase has two major purposes: to explore the effect of cumulative traumatic stress upon staff functioning and to develop a plan for incorporating staff level stress management into team preparedness and operations.

The planning phase begins by reviewing the types of incidents which beset the group and the complications listed during the complications phase. Then the group explores the following areas for possible change: client community; broader organization; staff preparation; training and conditioning; and school policies, operations and communications; interpersonal reactions and relationships. In addition, each member is asked what he or she personally needs from other team members.

Close the planning phase with a general review of incidents, complications, individual reactions and group reactions. Reinforce plans for individual and group changes, and note referral resources. To complete the debriefing, offer a final opportunity for each participant to express anything left unsaid and to address his or her hopes for the future.

#### **Individual applications**

In crisis intervention contexts, individu-

als sometimes disclose that they are in crisis because of the combination of a number of past incidents and current complications. They struggle with daily decisions about life choices and practical strategies for the future. This situation presents a puzzling glut of information for interviewers to work through, unless some system of organization keeps the session from being sidetracked and hopelessly bogged down.

The following modified CTSD approach has proven useful in such situations. When it has become apparent that a number of incidents and complications figure heavily in the individual's distress, the intervener can provide focus by drawing the following 2 x 2 box on paper or a blackboard:

<b>Incidents</b>	<b>Reactions</b>
<b>Complications</b>	<b>Planning</b>

If the situation is a crisis intervention, complete the chart during the session, assessing appropriately the individual's need for structured support and risk factors. If the situation is the beginning of an ongoing counseling relationship, use several sessions to gather more comprehensive data. When working with an individual, you may use the complications stage to explore the complications considered in team debriefings, along with personal factors such as family issues, individual background and prior trauma.

Staff and students who have been victimized by school crisis need appropriate and skillful care. Those who choose to accept the challenge of working with traumatized children and traumatized communities need to be prepared to do the very best job possible. They themselves need support in this very important work. Cumulative Traumatic Stress

## **Red Ribbon Week campaign promotes anti-drug message**

President Bush has proclaimed the week of October 24 to November 1 as National Red Ribbon Week.

Many localities will mark the occasion with rallies, ceremonies, special activities and contests.

The red ribbon was designated as the symbol of intolerance of illegal drug use and a commitment to a drug-free lifestyle following the murder of Federal Agent Enrique Camarena by drug traffickers.

Red Ribbon Week provides an opportunity for schools and communities to unite to raise public awareness regarding alcohol and other drug abuse. Positive attitudes, a key factor in the prevention of drug usage, can be generated through the simple wearing of a red ribbon.

Repetition of the "no use" message reinforces its meaning. The visual impact of hundreds of red ribbons sends a nonverbal message that demands attention. Strong public commitment to a drug-free environment benefits the entire community.

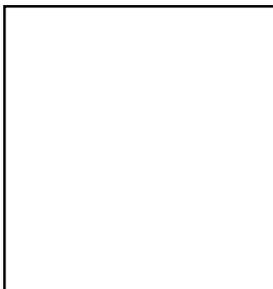
Debriefings have been helpful in providing such support.

Throughout the country, school districts are developing crisis response teams to respond to trauma in the lives of their students. It would behoove them to address the post-crisis needs of staff members and address the issues of cumulative traumatic stress as well. □

*This material is adapted from School Crisis Management: A Team Training Guide by Kendall Johnson, available from Hunter House Inc., Publishers, P.O. Box 2914, Alameda, CA 94501, (510) 865-5282.*

# NSSC Documentaries

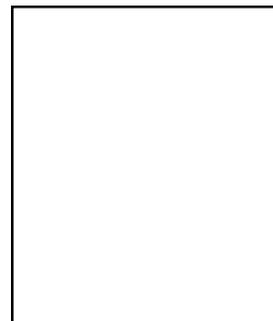
## School Crisis: Under Control



"Imagine a gunman invading your school. Or terrorists planting a bomb. Or a classroom of students held hostage. These situations may seem unreal — even impossible.... Every school — urban, rural or suburban — is vulnerable. When will a crisis strike your school? And will you be ready?"

These words, spoken by acclaimed actor Edward James Olmos, combine with news footage of actual school crisis events to provide an eye-opening introduction to "School Crisis: Under

Control," a 25-minute, award-winning documentary on school crisis prevention, preparation, management and resolution. This informative videotape is designed to help schools and communities prepare for the unexpected by designing crisis prevention and response plans. These plans will improve the community's ability to overcome such disasters and also will help schools avoid potential liability.



"Feeling good about yourself can't be bought on a street corner. It must be built from within. But there are dangers you should know about. Those pressures we call 'risk factors....'"

This powerful message to America's troubled children is presented in "High-Risk Youth/At The Crossroads," a 22-minute, award-winning documentary on youth drug abuse prevention hosted by actor LeVar Burton.

By combining real-life profiles and commentary from nationally renowned authorities, the documentary provides a compelling case to look beyond current drug abuse intervention strategies exemplified by the "Just Say No" campaign. Researchers have identified individual, family, peer, community and school-related problems that make kids more prone to use illegal drugs. The focus on positive response suggests that the most promising approach to "high-risk youth" and drug abuse is one of *prevention*, not simply *intervention*. This important theme is reinforced throughout the fast-paced program.



Principals play pivotal roles in keeping their schools safe and effective places of learning. But, without the support of parents, teachers, law enforcers and other legal, government and community resources, they cannot fulfill their responsibility.

A recipient of eight national and international awards of excellence, "What's Wrong With This Picture?" is designed to encourage dialogue between school principals and their community resources. It presents the critical issue of school safety in a frank and

straightforward way, dramatizing real-life incidents of school-related crime and violence, drug abuse and suicide.



Whoever thought bullies were all talk and no action needs to view the film "Set Straight on Bullies," produced to help school administrators educate faculty, parents and students about the severity of the schoolyard bullying problem. The message is clear: bullying hurts everyone.

The 18-minute, Emmy-winning educational film tells the story of a bullying victim and how the problem adversely affects his life as well as the lives of the bully, other students, parents and educators.

"I'm always scared. I'm scared to come to school ... I don't want to be afraid anymore," the bullying victim says. In fact, NSSC based the film on research indicating one in seven students is either a bully or a victim of bullying.

## NSSC Documentaries Order Form

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(\$50 VHS) \_\_\_\_\_ copies

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"Set Straight on Bullies"  
(\$50 VHS) \_\_\_\_\_ copies

"School Crisis: Under Control"  
(\$65 VHS) \_\_\_\_\_ copies

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Charges cover postage and handling, and are subject to change without prior notification. **Check must accompany order.**

*Results of a recent study suggest that weapon possession in public high schools is no longer just a big-city phenomenon, but one likely to be found throughout the United States.*

# Weapon possession in public high schools

Hundreds of thousands of students make new educational discoveries with enthusiasm every day, yet fear of violence hinders the school attendance of thousands more. Estimates show that about 8 percent of urban students skip school daily to avoid violence.<sup>1</sup> The threat of school violence is so real that it overrides their desire to learn. Other students respond by arming themselves for protection against school violence.

According to *Newsweek* magazine, “the root causes of this bizarre and lethal trend include all the usual demons of American society — the easy availability of guns, the rise of drug-related crime, parental irresponsibility, and so on.”<sup>2</sup> The most advanced technological and industrialized nation in the world is also the most violent. This may be startling news to some, but to others it is the sad reality that begins in kindergarten.

## Fear factors

Students are victimized twice when they experience violence in school — once when they are the victim and again when their learning opportunities are interrupted.<sup>3</sup> Experiencing a crime, or feeling threatened by the possibility of experiencing a crime, creates fear factors that

cannot be ignored. Everyone in the school community is a potential victim, and each one is affected every time an incident occurs.

Should it be conceivable that students need to protect themselves during the course of an ordinary school day, anywhere in America?

Times have changed considerably, and although weapon possession is not a major problem in most school systems, it has become one of the top five concerns of school administrators. Young people have always managed to carry weapons of some sort to school, but today’s weapons are much more lethal.

The national school-based Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is administered periodically to measure the prevalence of priority health-risk behaviors among the nation’s youth. In 1990, the YRBS examined the prevalence of weapon possession by school-age students in all 50 states and three territories. Approximately 20 percent of all students surveyed (grades 9-12) had carried a weapon in the 30 days preceding the survey. However, students were not asked if this behavior had occurred while they were at school.

## Weapons in school

This article focuses on actual weapon possession in public high schools. The information is based on a survey that was administered within a small, urban, pub-

lic high school system and then compared with what has been accepted as the national average.

Unfortunately, the amount of empirical research on this subject is limited. More research is needed to help educators plan appropriate courses of action to deal with this problem. Conducting research of this kind poses a delicate problem: to protect the rights of students answering survey forms, yet collect data that may help educators protect their staff and students from potential violence.

Five primary questions were investigated in this sample:

- What percentage of public high school students carry weapon(s) to school?
- What are the reasons indicated for carrying weapon(s) at school?
- What is the frequency of students carrying weapon(s) at school?
- Is the threat of violence to students who attend public high school real or perceived?
- Does the fear of violence hinder students’ school activities during school hours?

For the purpose of this study, any item that is taken to school with the intent to hurt someone or to protect oneself is considered a weapon. Many students carry items, such as pocket knives, to school and do not consider them to be weapons. Many are not aware that the school has a

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*Kelly Jay Asmussen, M.Ed., is affiliated with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where he is working on his Ph.D. in Community and Human Resources.*

policy that prohibits such items at school and unintentionally violate school policy. Obviously, other students carry these items knowing that they are illegal at school.

The survey was administered to 859 public high school students in grades 10, 11 and 12. The participating school system is a Midwestern city with a population under 250,000 and a public high school enrollment of 5,747.

Participating in this survey were 437 female students, representing 50.9 percent of the sample and 422 male students, representing 49.1 percent.

### **National averages confirmed**

The study showed that 15.6 percent of the students reported that they had carried a weapon at school during the 1991-92 school year. More than 6 percent of the surveyed students carried a weapon to school on a regular basis (more than six times during the school year), while 12 percent had carried a weapon to school more than one time during the year. The percentage of students who had carried a weapon during the 30 days preceding the survey was 10.4 percent.

Tenth-graders had the highest incident rate of weapon carrying. This group accounted for almost 50 percent of all weapon-carrying students in this sample study. More than 19 percent of the 10th-grade students, 14 percent of the 11th-grade students and 12 percent of the 12th-grade students carried a weapon to school during the year.

Nearly one-fourth of all male students, compared with only 6.6 percent of the females, carried a weapon to school during the year. This figure is consistent with the 1990 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey results showing that males were four times more likely to carry a weapon at school than females.

The weapon carried most often was a knife (9.3 percent), followed by a handgun (2.6 percent), club (2 percent), some other type of weapon (1.7 percent) and other gun (0.3 percent). Twenty-five students reported carrying a gun of some

type. The reported levels for both knife and gun possession are in line with reported national averages.

Of the students who carried a weapon to school, about 9 percent reported that they carried the weapon "for their own protection," yet 70 percent of these individuals also reported that they had not been approached at school by anyone with a weapon.

Very few students carried a weapon for their friends or to gain status (5 percent). A little more than 1 percent carried a weapon for an admitted illegal purpose; all of these students reported that they had been arrested previously. Another 5 percent carried weapons for "other reasons." Almost 40 percent of the students who carried a weapon to school carried more than one weapon at a time.

While at school, students typically carried the weapon on their person, most often in a coat pocket or under their clothes. However, if they concealed it somewhere in the school building, it was usually in their locker. Nearly 20 percent of the students surveyed had concealed a weapon in their car in the school parking lot during the school year. This is 5 percent more than those who actually carried a weapon into the school building, which helps confirm the national average of weapon possession for high school students.

Over half of the students (54 percent) had seen another student carry a weapon at school during the past year, while more than 70 percent had heard that another student had a weapon at school.

### **Reporting weapons at school**

Of the 403 students who would report a weapon on campus to a staff person, more than one-third would opt to trust a specific teacher or counselor with this information. Students who would tell a staff person that someone was carrying a weapon at school would do so for personal safety, as well as for general school safety. Yet, more than 50 percent of the students would not tell because they "didn't want to get involved." Another 40 percent of the students indicated they

would not report because they were afraid of retaliation, did not want to report a friend, or for other reasons.

A total of 66 students (13 percent) had been approached in a threatening manner by someone at school who possessed a weapon. Of those who reported being approached, 50 students had been approached three or less times. Eight students had been approached more than four times. Yet only 13 students actually reported any of these events to a staff member. Almost 60 percent of the students who carried a weapon at school had been approached by another student who had a weapon at school.

Further illustration is provided by student reports of criminal activity at school. More than 27 percent of the students responded that they had participated in an activity at school that could have resulted in their arrest. Interestingly, 14.6 percent of the students surveyed had already been arrested at least once. Almost half of the students who had been arrested carried a weapon to school more than one time during the year.

When asked about handgun accessibility, nearly one-third answered that someone owned or kept a handgun where they lived. Over one-fourth of the students who had carried a weapon to school on more than one occasion during the school year had access to a handgun from their own home.

According to the survey, the fear of weapons at school interfered with the education of more than 9 percent of the students. Interestingly, nearly 80 percent of those who were affected by fear had not been approached by anyone who had a weapon. Actually, only 2 percent of those who reported that fear of weapons had hindered their education also reported that they had been approached by someone at school with a weapon.

### **Surprising results**

The findings in this sample support previous research that indicate approximately 20 percent of high school students carry weapons to school. For a

small urban city in the Midwest to have similar findings may come as a surprise to some community educators.

More than half of all the students surveyed had seen a weapon at school during the past year. Nearly three-fourths of the students had heard that another student was carrying a weapon at school. Again, this indicates that students have knowledge that other students possess weapons at school, but do not actually report the weapon carriers as they indicated they would in the survey. Peer pressure may be the silent enforcer in these cases.

The 10th-grade classes surveyed had the highest level of weapon possession of the three grades for both males and females. This might be attributed to their fear of being victimized. In speaking confidentially with students in this survey, many expressed that they "had heard how bad it was going to be on the high school level," so they "brought their protection" with them, "just in case."

Additionally, students made comments to the effect that certain junior high schools were much worse than the senior high schools they were now attending. This may indicate that the fear of violence may carry over from previous school experiences and then slowly decrease as students progress through high school.

Students indicated that if they carried a weapon to school, they would do so to "protect themselves." This answer is the most baffling finding of the study. The community from which the data were collected is considered to be a law-abiding, peaceful city, without a serious crime rate. The crime rate is steadily climbing like many other urban areas, yet people feel safe in most areas of town. Why are nearly 20 percent of the high school students afraid to go to school without arming themselves, prepared to protect themselves, should the need arise?

It is surprising that no more than 9 percent of the students reported that threat of violence hindered their educational or extracurricular activities. Stu-

dents reported seeing weapons at school frequently; weapon carriers reported coming into contact with other weapon carriers frequently. Nearly 20 percent of the students either had a weapon at school or access to one, at home or in the school parking lot.

One previous study of inner-city youth found "that 78 percent of the students expressed fear of being a victim of a violent act, 42 percent had seen someone shot or knifed, and 22 percent had actually seen someone killed."<sup>4</sup> It is not surprising that those who see this kind of violence on a daily basis may become immune to it and expect to see such action. When this happens, the number of incidents reported by students may decrease even further.

Related studies on interpersonal violence in schools suggest that learning is seriously disrupted when students and teachers are in direct danger or fear of attack. If a teacher cannot feel comfortable and confident in the classroom, how can students relax and learn? When fear is involved with the learning process, it makes no difference how good the teacher is or how good the teaching tools are. Teachers who harbor fear tend to be absent from school more often than those teachers who do not experience this fear factor.

A recent survey in Illinois found that 4 percent of the teachers had been attacked in or around the school, 15 percent were victims of attempted attacks, 18 percent felt scared at least part of the day, and 20 percent avoided being alone after school (when students seek help individually).<sup>5</sup>

Violence against teachers seems to escalate when students perceive the rules to be arbitrary, unfair and applied inconsistently.<sup>6</sup> Yet teachers are only occasionally targets of violent attacks; most acts of aggression in American schools are directed toward other students.

### **Not just a big-city problem**

Our youth are exhibiting behaviors at school that merely image our society at large. What is sad is that these behaviors cause some schools to fortify themselves

like prisons. Students are monitored when they enter, passing through security checks, many with metal detectors. There are surveillance cameras everywhere and students appear to be fenced in with security wire.

School officials need to identify and strengthen the local resources available to help cope with school violence. There is a need to strengthen the family unit through educational programs offered through our schools, emphasizing conflict resolution, effective decision making, citizenship, cooperation and simple courtesy. Because risk taking is a common link between drug use and violence, educational interventions that identify high-risk behaviors and teach safety skills may be a good starting place.

The implications are increasingly clear: students feel a need to bring weapons to school. The results of this study suggest that weapon possession in public high schools is no longer a big-city phenomenon, but one likely to be found throughout the United States.

Communities and schools need to make an informed decision concerning how they address this problem. No community is immune to violence at school and should prepare for it accordingly. Any type of disturbance should be an opportunity for creating a more positive school climate. A wise administrator will want to prepare programs aimed at educating students, parents and teachers in preventive strategies. □

### **Endnotes**

1. "Student and Staff Victimization." NSSC Resource Paper. National School Safety Center, June, 1989, p. 3.
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4. Schubiner, H., R. Scott, A. Tzelepis, E. Podany, and K. Konduri. "Exposure to Violence Among Inner-City Youth." *Journal of Adolescent Health Care*, 11 (4), p. 376.
5. Morison, Kevin P. "Not all havens of safety." Trends and Issue 91 from *The Compiler*, Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, Fall, 1991.
6. Evans, William H. and Susan S. Evans. "The Assessment of School Violence." *Pointer*, 29 (2), pp. 18-21.

# Changing youths' attitudes about guns



In working to develop a curriculum designed to change youths' attitudes toward guns and violence, the Gun Safety Institute (GSI) of Cleveland, Ohio, recently commissioned research from the Child Guidance Center of Greater Cleveland. The "Development of the Gun-Proneness Questionnaire: A Measure of Attitudes toward Guns and Violence among Urban Youth" results are summarized below.

The gun attitude survey was administered to students in their classrooms, supervised by their teacher and a GSI staff member. Anonymity was assured.

The data analysis yielded the following four factors, which address the question of *why* many youth are attracted to guns.

**Excitement.** The respondent is stimulated by the potential pleasure guns would bring. Guns are perceived as fun. High scores were awarded for agreement with items like the following:

*I bet it would feel real cool to walk down the street with a gun in my pocket.*

*It would be exciting to hold a loaded gun in my hand.*

*I'd like to have my own gun.*

**Power/safety.** Analysis showed that these two issues were inextricably linked in the students' thinking. Beyond the issue of guns, these children felt that safety was achieved primarily through power. Additionally, this power was not psychological in nature, but concrete and physically aggressive. Inherent in this mindset is a lack of faith in adults to provide protection, as well as lack of confidence in their own interpersonal skills such as ne-

gotiation, assertiveness and conflict resolution. High scores occurred when respondents agreed with statements like:

*It's a good feeling to win a fight.*

*Belonging to a gang makes people feel safe because they've got people to back them up.*

*If I carried a gun I wouldn't have to be afraid of people out on the street.*

**Comfort with aggression.** Attitudes regarding aggression and violence in everyday life were measured in this subtest. There were few direct references to guns. Here it is shown that the desire to have a gun is not only related to feelings about guns per se, but is also related to beliefs about aggression and conflict in general. Adolescent rejection of adult values may contribute to the desire to own a gun; gun-proneness did increase from the fifth to the seventh grade. High scores were given when a pupil *disagreed* with the following:

*Problems could almost always be worked out without fighting if people would just talk things out.*

*A person who is strong inside can walk away from a fight even if kids make fun of him or her.*

**Aggressive response to shame.** This factor encompasses the belief that shame resulting from an insult can only be undone through aggression. There are two stages in this pattern. First, a high score indicates individuals sensitive to insults or mockery, and second, a reliance on physical aggression is the means of re-establishing a positive self-concept.

Sample items are:

*A kid who doesn't get even with someone who makes fun of him is a sucker.*

*If someone insults me or my family, it really bothers me, but if I beat them up, that makes me feel better.*

*If someone disrespects me, I have to fight them to get my pride back.*

A total of 461 fifth, seventh and ninth-grade students in the Cleveland Public School System took the survey. Females comprised 54 percent of the sample, males 46 percent. The racial and ethnic composition of the sample was: African-American, 65 percent; Caucasian, 20 percent; Hispanic, 7 percent; and other, 8 percent.

This sample of urban youth had a high degree of exposure to guns. Almost all had heard shots fired in their neighborhood. A majority reported that they had held a gun and that a relative of theirs had been shot with a gun. Almost one-half stated that there was a gun in their home. Many reported actually seeing someone shot. Forty-one boys and three girls said that they owned a gun; 14 boys and six girls had been shot.

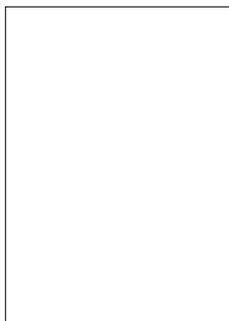
There was a statistically significant difference between the sexes, with boys expressing a higher average level of gun-proneness. Grade level was also significantly related to gun-proneness, with lower scores from the fifth-grade students than from the seventh-graders and ninth-graders, who did not differ from each other. Gun-prone attitudes were not related to racial or ethnic backgrounds.

Overall, gun-proneness seems to be a function both of feelings and beliefs about guns themselves *and* of more general feelings and beliefs about aggression and fighting.

These results have important implications for the development of a curriculum designed to decrease students' attraction to guns. The curriculum should address the issue of aggressive response to interpersonal problems. Learning effective, nonviolent means of dealing with conflict will enable students to protect their self-esteem.

*Prepared by Sue Ann Meador, associate editor of School Safety.*

# Drive-by shooting: Gangs and guns



States that have serious street gang problems have now started to fight back. Legislatures at the state and local level are discussing policies and passing laws designed to take the fun and profit out of gang activity. These laws — designed to make juvenile and adult gang members accountable for their activities — have long been advocated by juvenile justice law enforcement experts.

Juveniles are becoming more acquainted with guns, and the firearms are turning up in schools at an alarming rate. More teen-age boys die from gunshot wounds than all natural causes combined, and a black male teen-ager is 11 times more likely to be killed with a gun than a white male teen-ager.

Between 1984 and 1988, the firearm death rate among teen-agers increased by more than 40 percent.<sup>1</sup> According to the Centers for Disease Control, 2.5 million teen-agers carry weapons.<sup>2</sup>

Heightening the alarm are the increasing activities of gangs whose turf-oriented, “survival of the meanest” philosophy has resulted in gunplay in and around campuses across the country. Drive-by shootings have become signature acts of juvenile gangs.

A few states have now passed laws designed to discourage drive-by shootings. These laws seek both to call attention to the increase in drive-by shootings and to provide stiffer penalties for those prosecuted. The typical law makes it a crime to shoot a firearm from or at a vehicle, without regard for whether the vehicle is moving or parked. The variations apparent in the laws suggest that legislators have attempted to tailor these laws to the

types of incidents taking place in their jurisdictions.

California has taken a highly visible approach to the problem of drive-by shootings. It passed an emergency bill on drive-by shootings designed to increase the sentences of gang members by an additional four years — to be served after the sentence imposed for the assault or homicide.<sup>4</sup> The preamble to the legislation contained the following admonition:

It is the intent of the Legislature to increase the penalty for drive-by shootings that cause a victim to suffer permanent paralysis or paraparesis. By increasing the penalties for these types of crimes, gang members who in recent years have accounted for a dramatic increase in drive-by shootings may be more effectively removed from the streets of our communities for a longer period of time.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, California legislators removed the usual secrecy from the prosecution of juveniles who violate the law, making their delinquency hearings open to the public.<sup>6</sup>

Rhode Island recently passed legislation that provides for a minimum 10-year sentence and a \$5,000 fine for anyone who “shall discharge a firearm from a motor vehicle in a manner which creates a substantial risk of death or serious injury.”<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the Texas legislature passed a law that punishes drive-by shooters, without regard for whether someone is injured as a result.<sup>8</sup>

Some states have taken steps in this area with little fanfare, expanding cur-

rent laws to support the prosecution of drive-by shooters. Washington recently expanded its reckless endangerment statute to include this activity.<sup>9</sup>

Drive-by shooting laws represent a significant response to juvenile gang violence. Some practical problems remain. For example, such shootings have risen in popularity because, in most cases, identification of the vehicle involved in the shooting is difficult to obtain. Victims and passers-by are ducking for cover. In cases where license numbers are obtained, the vehicles involved are often stolen and untraceable to the shooters. But the laws do signal a change in policy, and a change in tactics is sure to follow.

When Isaac Fulwood Jr. resigned as chief of the Washington, D.C. Police Department in the summer of 1992, he made the announcement at an inner-city high school, where he commented on how much times have changed:

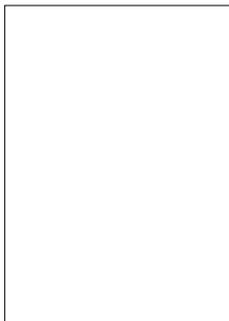
There was no such thing as a drive-by shooting or a daily crime count. ... Too many young people now become either criminal or victim or both. Communities may vow to take back the streets, but that won't happen unless communities can reclaim the children from the streets.<sup>10</sup>

#### Endnotes

1. Statistics attributed to Secretary of Health and Human Services Louis Sullivan, see *Stopping the Violence*, The Seattle Times, Editorial, September 5, 1992.
2. Innerst, Carol, *Pistol-packing kids put schools on alert*. The Washington Times, August 23, 1992, at A1.
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4. 1992 Cal. ALS 510; 1992 Cal. SB 1649; Stats. 1992 ch. 510.
5. *Id.*
6. Cal. Wel. and Inst. Code at 676 (1992).
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8. Texas Penal Code, §22.021.
9. Revised Code of Washington, 9A.36.050 (1991).
10. *Isaac Fullwood's Commitment*, The Washington Times, September 11, 1992 at F2.

*Prepared by Bernard James, special counsel for NSSC.*

## Getting what you bargain for



Labor law has had a profound effect on the working environment. Nowhere is the impact greater than upon the issue of safety in the workplace. When concerns of safety arise, it is not uncommon for union workers to withhold labor until conditions improve. Even educators have experience with the process.

Teachers in Chicago filed a grievance alleging that unsafe working conditions existed at a school where eight cancer-related illnesses, including five deaths, had occurred within a seven-year period. The city immediately responded.<sup>1</sup> The teachers returned to work after investigation showed no link between the illnesses and the school.

In Tucson, Arizona, teachers and the union filed an unsafe working environment complaint against the school district because of leaky roofs at several sites. The district responded with plans to fix the roofs, ironically concluding that there was no health or safety hazard created because "20 other district schools [also had] leaky roofs."<sup>2</sup>

Given the rise in violence on school campuses, one would expect that teachers and their unions would take a similar attitude toward the conditions created by violence, gang activity, drugs and weapons. Surprisingly, this is not happening.

The lack of coordination between unions and teachers on the issue of safe working conditions is odd for two reasons. First, unions play a major role in defining safe working conditions in the collective bargaining agreement. In one recent court decision in which teachers sued for back pay, the collective bargaining agreement defined unsafe working

conditions in the following manner.<sup>3</sup>

Teachers shall not be required to work under unsafe or hazardous conditions or to perform tasks which endanger their health or safety. Unsafe conditions are understood to include lack of electricity, water or inappropriate working temperatures. Teacher attendance shall not be required whenever student attendance is not required due to inclement weather or unsafe working conditions. All such days are subject to being made up at the discretion of the Superintendent.

The court in the case upheld the award of back pay when it became clear that the refusal of the teachers to work was justified by the unsafe working conditions clause. The judges concluded that "we believe that, in this case, both the *contractual provisions* of the agreement under consideration and the legislation passed in conjunction with the declaration of a state emergency in 1977 necessitate a conclusion that these days were missed on account of the weather."

Thus, it would seem that unions could simply make the safe schools issue an agenda item for the collective bargaining session. The interest of the teachers is certainly served by bringing safe schools issues to the bargaining table. Moreover, it is also in the best interest of the school district. Given the range of occurrences already recognized within the term "unsafe working conditions," liability may be created by the failure to add an occurrence that is both prevalent and disruptive of the educational environment.

Second, unions may find that the fail-

ure to raise the issue of safe schools as a part of their duty to bargain on behalf of teachers may result in union liability to teachers. Under the causes on this issue, unions share a duty to respond to conditions that "adversely affect the safety of the workplace."<sup>4</sup> When such actions are not pre-empted by federal law, the union may be liable for negligence in its duty of fair representation.

Interestingly, any duty from which liability might be found is also created in the collective bargaining agreement. Agreements requiring that the union "shall" make certain that the work environment of its members is safe actually create such a duty, while agreements that avoid the mandatory language are not so construed.

In one such case, the court ruled that "that under the collective bargaining agreement the union had taken over for itself a managerial function, the full independent right to enforce safety requirements," adding that the safety responsibility assumed by the union was separate and distinct from the usual duties of a purely representative nature, such as those involved in the processing of grievances.<sup>5</sup>

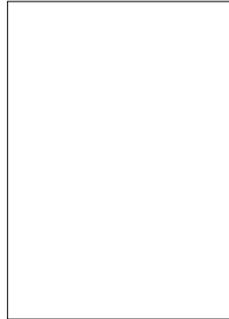
Given the historic working relationship between teachers and their unions, it should be relatively simple to add safe schools issues to the labor conditions checklist. At a minimum, current grievance procedures could be expanded to include specific complaints about school violence. When school boards become familiar with the effect of unsafe schools on the educational environment as a labor issue, changes will not be far behind.

#### Endnotes

1. *School Found Safe*, Chicago Tribune, December 19, 1986, at 3.
2. United Press International, November 1, 1983.
3. *Montour School District v. Montour Education Association*, 417 A.2d 1331, 1332 (1979).
4. See annotation on Liability of Labor Union for Injury of Death Allegedly Resulting From Unsafe Working Conditions, 14 A.L.R. 4th 1161.
5. *Id.* at 1180.

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# The truth — simply told



*Do or Die* by Leon Bing, Harper-Collins Publishers, 1991, 277 pages.

Reports of yet another barrage of automatic gunfire bring reactions of horror. Because the public may tend to mentally stereotype gangs and the violence they generate, personal distaste for the anarchy gangs represent may preclude any desire to understand the reasons behind such actions. But beyond the generalized labels are real people, and those who live within the shadow of gang territory tell their own stories.

In *Do or Die*, realistic human portraits emerge: G-Roc, B-Dog, Monster Kody, Bianca, Claudia and others. They are carefully defined by their words and actions in such a way that the reader may discover a growing liking for them. The reader becomes caught in their narrative and concerned for their fate.

What quickly becomes clear, should the reader have a stereotypical image of gangbangers, is that these are individuals. There are no mindsets cast in stone. "I don't really like to do drive-bys," says G-Roc, "because innocent people might get hit, you know?" Further reading reveals that G-Roc does indeed shoot people, but his personal code precludes what to him is a non-necessary taking of life. A reference to someone who mistakenly killed the wrong people in a multiple shooting evokes the phrase, "...what he did is scandalous."

The why of gang involvement gradually emerges, in terms moving because of their simplicity. From a juvenile pro-

bation camp staff member, regarding adolescent masculinity: "...in any other community but Watts there would be legitimate ways to express those feelings. Little League. Pop Warner. But if you're a black kid living in Watts those options have been removed. ...The gang offers everything those legitimate organizations do. ...You feel wanted. You feel welcome. You feel important. And there is discipline and there are rules."

From a mother, whose gang-member son died before he turned sixteen, comes the bleak recognition that economics play a large part in the determination of childrens' futures. The working poor exist "at the bottom of the present-day American economic barrel," and for this woman reality is mirrored in a resigned acceptance of a way of life that "came as naturally to her boy as hanging out at malls comes to suburban kids."

From both Crips and Bloods comes confirmation that the money from drug sales can provide comforts for the extended family, allowing escape from a marginal existence. Relocating, the dream to "make it out," is a potentiality too beneficial to be ignored. The price for such escape, acknowledged and accepted, is the destruction of their own community.

There are no lengthy expositions upon social injustice or the trauma of violence. For insight, for a look at reality, *Do or Die* is a necessary piece of self-education for those seeking to understand the gang phenomenon. It should be noted, however, that though understanding may come to the reader, it is neither solicited nor awaited by those living the gang

lifestyle. "It don't matter what you say about gangbanging', you know, don't matter if anybody understand it or not. We just bringin' home the hate. ...That's the kind of world we live in."

## A message from the inside

"Cancelled Lives: Letters from the Inside," a video produced by Brett Hodges, co-produced by Ann Panizzon and directed by Martin Good. Milestone Media, Inc., Santa Barbara, CA, 1991.

Perhaps nothing will deter a resolute adolescent bent upon crime and violence, but viewing *Cancelled Lives: Letters from the Inside* might give serious pause to those who have not yet taken that "first step" toward delinquency.

Designed as a preventive measure, it offers real words written by real people in a compelling format. Excerpted are passages from letters sent to loved ones and friends, letters written from inmates in custody in various juvenile facilities, jails and grim prisons, to those on the outside.

The situations are painful. A variety of well-known actors narrate vignettes depicting individual descents into gang activity and drug abuse. The hellish results of sexual abuse, told in a victim's own words, touch the heart.

Authenticity is the keynote of this production; locations are obviously not sets in a studio. Inexpressibly sad faces communicate what words cannot. The noise and claustrophobic conditions are captured, as is the essence of humiliation during a requisite, supervised, pre-incarceration shower.

There is nothing "fake" or contrived about this production, nothing insincere or condescending. There is no moralizing, only truth, simply told. It is enough.

Prepared by Sue Ann Meador, associate editor of School Safety.