NATIONAL SCHOOL SAFETY CENTER

News Journal
Spring 1993

School Safety

About the cover:

Preventing violence has become the newest challenge to schools and communities across America. Cover design by Richard Palmer.

CONTENTS

BY THE VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL SUPERINTEN-DENTS

In an historic effort, seven major educational organizations in Virginia convened to develop a statewide plan of action to combat school crime and violence.

The challenge of change

Few people are unaffected by the increase in violent crime. Of particular concern is the movement of these behaviors into schools, whether they are urban, suburban or rural. One of the most frequently cited problems for educators is community-based conflict that is brought into the school building. School staff traditionally have not been trained to handle the growing frequency of incidents requiring more law enforcement skills than teaching and educational management skills.

It is not uncommon, unexpected or abnormal for child development patterns to include acting-out behaviors, peer conflict and personal/emotional development concerns. What is clearly different is the changing environment in which educators and parents must address these problems. The American Psychological Association estimates in a recent study that the average child who watches television sees 8,000 murders and more than 100,000 other acts of violence before finishing elementary school.

Last year, representatives of major educational associations and agencies met for an open discussion of concerns related to evidence of increases in acts of violence and other disruptive behavior on the part of certain students in the schools of Virginia. This forum provided participants an opportunity to share organizational perspectives for the problem. It also was a forum for the introduction of ideas to assist in maintaining safe educational environments as well as ideas to help young people in developing appropriate discipline.

Providing safe schools
The primary focus of this voluntary planning effort has been the responsibility of schools and their governing authorities to provide safe schools for the children and the communities they serve. Yet, there is strong agreement that the establishment of safe schools is inseparable from the issues of violence and crime in the larger community.

Safe school solutions must ultimately be pursued in the context of a commitment to create safe communities, not just safe schools. Only the broadest possible coordinated response of parents, educators, community leaders, and public and private agencies can produce a long-term effect.

Concerns of the participants of this summit include:
- the continuing effects of prejudice;
- the growing disparity between rich and poor, particularly the increase in the number of children living in poverty;
- the need for our institutions and communities to address cultural diversity and the necessity for young people to respect differences but value our common humanity; and,
- the effects upon our children and schools, not only of substance abuse, but of children born to abusers.

These issues are tremendous barriers to the successes of young people and their communities.

The challenge of change is not limited to our communities. There are challenges in the schoolhouse as well. Students frequently complain of a sense of alienation and even boredom. Students, teachers, administrators and parents express concerns about educational environments that are depersonalized. There is reason to question whether schools are equipped to meet the growing medical and psychological needs of many youths, but there are no immediate alternatives. A curriculum for academic excellence may appear meaningless when some children are struggling just to survive.

Many young people need alternatives to the traditional 19th century school model. Positive staff attitude and commitment must be the foundation for convincing large numbers of "at-risk" young people of their potential. Expectations must be real on the day children first arrive for formal schooling. These are the challenges for our schools and the changing roles that they are confronting. Schooling is not simply being reformed; it is being redefined.

Finally, modern society with its economic demands and changing work and family styles has made more difficult the personal parent-child relationship. Par-

enting may require more skills and attention than ever before, and the necessity of parenting support and outreach programs may no longer be a luxury. Most parents can be counted on to support their children, but an increasing number of young people cannot rely on their parents as resources. For the children of these parents, society must determine its collective accountability and responsibility while not encouraging others to abdicate the role which they have correctly assumed.

Responsibilities identified
Three equally important areas of public responsibility have been identified in this summit process as key to resolving issues of school violence.

Teachers, school administrators, parents, and the appointed and elected officials who provide governance collectively must build the legal, regulatory and programmatic environment that supports individual responsibility and accountability. In turn, the people who deliver programs and administer public systems must aggressively apply their technical and leadership skills to meet the challenges posed by increased violence.

In this context, each school and its community equally share three major responsibilities. *First, schools and their communities are responsible for providing a safe and appropriate school environment.*

The ability of school administrators to manage large numbers of students and adults is affected by problems of school design and the availability of technology. The management of public events on school property and the balancing of individual civil liberties with regulations necessary in compulsory attendance environments have become an increasingly difficult and complex task.

School staff members are the first to admit that their training has not generally equipped them with the skills to manage many of the youth now in their classrooms. They must, however, assume increased responsibility for both effective management of students in a compulsory attendance environment and skilled crime prevention strategies. Schools must train staff for the needs of diverse populations and maintain a safe physical environment clear of foreseeable threats of injury and disruptive behaviors.

Second, schools and their communities must re-examine their programs to be sure that they support the long-term family and educational needs for prevention rather than just intervention.

These efforts need to respond to depersonalization within the school environment and the failure of many students

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Participating Associations

Virginia Association of Elementary School Principals
Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals
Virginia Association of School Superintendents
Virginia Congress of Parents and Teachers
Virginia Education Association
Virginia Middle School Association
Virginia School Boards Association

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to achieve success or adapt to traditional educational structures. The communication links between school personnel and the parents of disruptive children sometimes are weakened by circumstances that neither party can control. Strategies to build this communication and mutual support for each other's efforts are essential for many young people's success.

High priorities in this response should be given to the powerful impact that strong, energized community coalitions may have in developing local solutions. Coordinated interagency planning, targeted on the specific and unique problems of a community and supported by broad-based community and parent involvement, will signal the first step to success.

Schools must make certain that their curriculum is relevant to the development of personal responsibility and that

staff is skilled for the task. Schools must also ensure a strong early childhood education commitment and utilize effectively and early the array of community agency resources when intervention is needed. A properly structured and delivered instructional program must become our best and most effective offense.

Third, schools and their communities must demand and achieve a strong and consistent disciplinary expectation and application of that expectation for every student.

Schools cannot tolerate student behaviors which jeopardize the safety and well-being of other children in compulsory environments. The responsibility of school staff and its governing leadership is to balance conflicting rights and responsibilities. This will, at times, result in normal and appropriate disputes as parents rightfully protect the interests of their children. In this context, however, school administrators with the support of local school boards are the practical advocates of the rights and interests of the collective group of young people. Ultimately, the balance of conflicting interests must be achieved by school boards and the courts.

Blaming others
When the organizations involved in this effort first began work and the issues were being identified, the single concern most frequently cited by the participants was "the tendency to blame 'others' for the problem." There was a concern that across our communities, including parents, educators, and public and private agencies, there was an "unwillingness to accept shared responsibility for solutions." Having completed these discussions and having received numerous expressions of assistance and cooperation from resources ranging from state agencies to individual citizens, the participants recognize the truth of human nature expressed in the first concern but reject the pessimism of the second.

Summit recommendations

Violence in our communities is being studied by many different and responsible parties across our state and nation. The process of consensus building and collaboration used by the summit reflects a path similar to that which each of our communities must travel to achieve the commonly held goal of safe schools. No single set of recommendations will include all that can or should be done. No single set of recommendations can reflect a total understanding of a problem so complex. Each can and should, however, contribute to the public discussion, each offering its own unique perspective of a challenge critical to our nation and our schools.

The following recommendations are offered in that spirit and with a commitment to work with all for safer schools. The greatest desire among participants in this effort is that the recommendations assist in positive and visionary decision-making in the larger community. Standing alone, absent such collaboration, they are likely to be inadequate for this mutual challenge.

Fair discipline

Schools must not tolerate student behaviors which jeopardize the safety and physical well-being of other children in compulsory attendance environments. In exercising our mutual responsibility for the education of each child, school administrators and school boards serve as the practical advocates of the rights and well-being of young people served in the schools.

Despite the difficult task of finding this balance in sometimes conflicting responsibilities, several basic commitments must reflect our joint responsibility to each child as well as to all children.

- All have a right to school environments free from serious disruption.
- Each and all have a right to be treated fairly and without discrimination in the application of discipline.
- Each and all have a right to high expectations and competent professional service.

Every failure by responsible adults, whether a parent or a public service provider, is a setback. Young people must observe in the setting of expectations, communication of expectations and application of our mutual commitments to each other, the first and most powerful lessons in citizenship and personal responsibility.

Access to information

The handling of student school disciplinary records in Virginia is interpreted differently among local school divisions, sometimes resulting in the creation of records systems independent of appropriate regulations. School disciplinary records related to serious and/or criminal activity must be available to public school officials who are charged with protecting the safety and well-being of a school community and are also responsible for the education and intervention support services for students. Although the present statutes and regulations intend this outcome, several revisions will enable clearer interpretation and management of the records and govern the appropriateness of their use.

Availability of weapons

The disturbing reality for many school children and youth is an increasingly commonplace witness to acts of violence in their communities. Also disturbing is young people's easy accessibility to handguns whether by illegal purchase, gift or acquisition in their homes because of negligent security efforts by adults.

The potential for tragedy for young people is the same whether they willfully acquire and bring guns to school intending harm, whether they bring them because of fear, or whether they simply discover them in their homes at an age when they do not perceive the difference between a weapon and a toy. Schools must be the safest places in our communities, but it is unreasonable to expect that school environments will not reflect the adult values of the homes and the communities where children live.

This report has generally refrained from proposals dealing with the larger issues of violence and growing criminal activity in our community. It does seek to address those specific factors most closely related to making schools, and activities on school property, the safest place and most secure activity in the community. In this context, the increased availability of guns cannot be ignored.

Parenting programs

It is not uncommon for schools to find parents, particularly those from what may be considered dysfunctional backgrounds, struggling to raise the child the school also struggles to teach. Many of these parents are caring and desirous of helping their children grow and develop into good citizens but are in need of assistance. It also is true that many of the parents need information, counseling, and a continuum of support and educational programs.

It is probable that the schools' ability to intervene effectively with potentially violent youth will have limited success if the parents, especially those seeking assistance, are not provided an integrated, public agency education and counseling program.

Home-school link

For most parents, the home-school partnership is a vital and necessary link to assure the healthy development of their children and to assure significant educational achievement. This partnership must be strong and continuous.

For a growing number of children, however, the parent, either by choice or through lack of support, is not a participant in this partnership. The children of some of these parents find ways to manage more independently and find their own support areas for success. But for many children this lack of a parent-school support system has devastating results; these children must confront difficult situations or deal with special developmental needs alone.

Our society traditionally has held par-

ents accountable for the welfare of their children related to shelter, clothing, food, medical care and school attendance. It may now be necessary for our society to find new and innovative ways to assure that parents provide these basic legal obligations, as well as assure that they accept responsibility for assisting their children in reaching maturity with some standard of personal and social responsibility.

Alternative programs
Many school divisions provide a wide range of alternative programming for young people who, by their own interests or for other intervention needs, elect such options. These programs often are limited in their availability and frequently are incapable of responding to the growing number of young people who are dysfunctional and unresponsive to traditional educational settings. Many of these programs need expansion and new ones need development.

Of particular importance is the need for programs for children who cannot be permitted to remain in traditional school settings because of their behavior toward other young people. To be possible, such programs may need to be developed regionally. These programs must reflect the joint educational, interventional and disciplinary needs of the student. Without the development of programs which can be a possible alternative to expulsion for some situations, many of these young people will be lost to immediate rehabilitation efforts.

This emphasis on a well-developed continuum of alternative education services may be the single most important factor in successful education-intervention for large numbers of young people who are likely to fail in present educational programs.

Finally, regulations that govern the suspension and expulsion of students and mandate attendance in alternative education programs require further development of such alternate placements to avoid the compromise to other young people's safe environment.

Early childhood programs
Perhaps the strongest and most universally held belief by participants in this effort is the belief that the ability to affect future generations of children rests upon our commitment to succeed with them at an early age. Strong prevention programs, development of home value systems and assurance of early educational success are the only real hope for long-term solutions.

There is clear indication, even respecting differences in statistics, that many young preschool and early childhood programs are not available to large numbers of children who are eligible. Recent census data shows growing numbers of American children living in poverty and many who are literally left to self-care. It is a national problem, beyond the scope or mission of schools, but it does directly affect the child's probability of success. It is a problem for public and private commitment and cooperation.

School and community cooperation
Violent behaviors by young people in school buildings cannot be isolated from the increasing violence in the homes and communities where these young people grow up. Conflicts from the community are frequently brought into the school. The availability of weapons and drugs in the community increases the likely incidence of related behaviors in the school.

A growing percentage of families that are either unwilling or unable to provide personal value and support systems results in larger numbers of young people arriving at the schoolhouse door in distress. Many are at risk of failing to develop attitudes conducive to academic success and personal responsibility. Many children's problems, which originate prior to and outside of the school, clearly affect the educational process and require a response that unites the resources of schools, pubic support agencies and the community itself.

While each community needs to determine for itself how such a network, coalition or team would organize and function, the success of many community

coalitions working on substance abuse have the potential for an effective action model. These community coalitions have included schools, parents, police, mental health and mental retardation social service agencies, the business community and the courts.

Simply stated, unless individual communities decide to organize and mobilize local resources to change community expectations and youth behaviors, it is likely that schools, working alone, will fail. The power of local communities, united and committed to local strategies developed for their children's future, is an American model of community which has worked before and can work again.

Management of school buildings
Each school administration is responsible for a physical environment that is safe for its students, managing both preventable injury and personal safety against criminal acts committed by other students or outsiders. This obligation includes supervision for the movement of people, issues of construction and design, application of telecommunications and technology, and the development of personnel trained in security issues.

The obligation to provide a safe environment is often complicated by the wide range of after-school activities and public events that occur in schools. It would be relatively easy to develop tightly controlled environments. It is more difficult, however, to balance the necessity for a secure environment against the need for a desirable educational environment. At times these competing goals will require difficult choices.

Staff development
Specific informational and training needs for teachers, principals and other school staff were repeatedly identified by organizational representatives. Training should be addressed both in pre-service education and by individual school divisions within staff development programs. The potential of statewide and regional resources, training materials and teleconferencing may be particularly helpful.

Mediation and conflict resolution skills appear to be increasingly important, especially for classroom teachers who have the first opportunity to work with young people in control/conflict situations. In rapidly changing school communities, staffs are facing a larger number of young people from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Teachers need to have clear insight into the cultural milieu of students they teach. Additionally, such insights are important for communication with parents of the young people if the home-school link is to be strengthened.

This appreciation of diversity and the need for school/classroom management skills and instructional strategies for working with disruptive youth were the two themes most often repeated by students who were interviewed or participated in this process.

Many young people, particularly those from ethnic, national and cultural minority groups within schools, frequently believe that school staff do not "understand" them. They particularly are concerned about expectations which they feel are inappropriate and that they do not share. If segments of student bodies and parents perceive that staff members are insensitive or lacking insights into their needs, the ability of schools to support and plan for the students' educational needs is seriously compromised.

Developing social skills
A school's curriculum is the plan of action for students. As such, it is imperative that it constantly reflect students' fundamental educational needs. As their circumstances alter, so must the schools response.

Changing environments have made it even more important for schools to be effective in teaching children fundamental skills in human relations, citizenship and personal responsibility. Each of these components is routinely found in school curricula. What has been suggested is that a more focused and concerted effort may be needed to strengthen and provide applied learning in these areas for all children.

It is increasingly evident that in a competitive social environment young people also need to learn teamwork and mutual responsibility. It may be that the social studies and related curriculum areas need to assist children to apply concepts of civic responsibility in a more direct fashion than presently is done.

In addition to curricula outcomes in this area, it is extremely important for young people to develop the personal skills of conflict resolution, ethnic and cultural insights, and those common principles of character and trust which serve as the "glue" of a society. Children must understand that these commitments support rather than hinder the development of a responsible personal value system in a free society. Schools must be certain that their curricula train children in these values, which is a very different commitment from simply instructing young people about them.

Comprehensive safe school legislation
The committee recommends that the 1993 session of the Virginia General Assembly pass a comprehensive safe school legislative program to include, but not be limited to, recommendations submitted in this report so as to provide an opportunity for other service agencies and the general public to address this most important commitment to our communities.

These recommendations represent a consensus of thought and focus. With guidance and support, these practical steps can enable schools to become safe places. If schools are not free of violence and potential harm, they will be free of an environment conducive to learning. If students and staff do not feel safe, then English, math, science and social studies are moot exercises.

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Specific recommendations

Summit recommendations included specific suggestions for action by schools, communities and the Virginia legislature. For example, the participants recommended that the General Assembly of Virginia pass legislation that would result in the following outcomes regarding weapons:
- Reduce the availability of handguns to minors.
- Re-examine and strengthen penalties included in the *Code of Virginia* for illegal use of handguns, including:
  - Furnishing firearm to a minor.
  - Recklessly leaving a loaded, unsecured firearm so as to endanger the life/limb of a child under the age of 14.
  - Limiting local ordinance fines not to exceed $100 if a minor possesses a loaded firearm in public place or on a public highway.
  - Possessing taser or dangerous weapons on school property, property open to public for school activities or school bus.
  - Willfully discharging a firearm in a public street ... in a place of public gathering.
  - Willfully discharging or brandishing a firearm or facsimile in public, so as to reasonably induce fear of injury on school property or within "school zone;"
  - Unlawfully using or possessing handguns by juveniles. Loss of driving privileges for at least 30 days.

- Eliminate from communities certain paramilitary and automatic-type weapons that have no reasonable sporting and defense use by citizens of Virginia.
- Require that retail gun sellers provide specific information to gun purchasers about firearm laws and the safe handling and storing of firearms.

■ BY LOUIS ROSEN ■

Violence is an old problem with new fears attached to the lives of our children. It is time for violence reduction to catch the attention of educators as well as the public.

Violence prevention: school's newest challenge

No domestic issue has captured the attention of school personnel more dramatically during the early 1990s than the increase of the violence in our society. School people realize that schools reflect the society that provides their constituency and support. That society has become increasingly violent.

Available epidemiological data suggest that violence increased dramatically in the United States during the late 1980s. Murder is now the second leading cause of death for Americans age 15 to 34. Statistical data indicate that killers are getting younger and that small towns are seeing the same kind of increases in violent crime as large cities.[1] A look at the daily newspaper convinces us that violence is permeating the fabric of our lives.

According to FBI Crime Reports, the nation is in the midst of the second great wave of violence that has occurred during this century. The first wave peaked in the early 1930s. The second peaked in the early 1980s, declined slightly between 1984 and 1985, and is approaching peak levels once again.[2] A recent study by the National Research Council indicates that during 1990 the number of aggravated assaults exceeded all previous years in cities of all sizes. The prediction

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is that more than 23,000 people will be killed per year during the 1990s through homicide. Homicide has replaced foreign wars as the greatest danger to the young men and women of America.[3]

Schools are always effected by great crises. The current crisis concerning the increase of violence in our nation is no exception. Keith Geiger, president of the National Education Association, issued a statement in January, 1993, reporting that 100,000 American children go to school carrying guns each day. He also stated that 160,000 children a day miss school, not because of illness or weather, but because of fear of bodily injury, physical attack or intimidation by other students.[4] Teachers and administrators are seeking early retirement in many of our large cities because they do not want to deal with the increase in school crime and violence.

Fighting the war on illegal drugs
During the 1970s, society witnessed a dramatic increase in the percentage of the population who admitted having used illicit drugs. A comparison of surveys conducted over a 10-year period revealed that by the early 1970s, the percentage of the population who reported having had any experience with illicit drugs had doubled to over 10 percent from levels reported in the 1960s.[5] By 1974, the percentage of young adults (ages 18-25) who reported having tried drugs rose

more than 50 percent. Educators and the public became frightened and understandably alarmed.[6]

A variety of anti-drug educational initiatives began in the late 1960s in an effort to stem the increase in usage and experimentation. The efforts differed widely in both general strategy and specific focus. Many of these programs used fear as the primary motivation technique. Although those efforts had some effect on attitudes regarding illicit drugs, they had essentially no effect on the rate of use.[7]

During the 1970s, the emphasis shifted to what were essentially affective, self-esteem approaches. These approaches were designed to influence psycho-social variables that were believed to be linked to the use of alcohol and other drugs. Although well-meaning, these self-esteem programs saw no lasting change in the number of people experimenting with using illegal drugs.[8]

The efforts during the 1980s shifted to a united effort among schools, federal and state agencies, and the communities. The efforts of the schools paralleled areas of emphasis of other agencies. The three areas of emphasis were prevention, discovery and punishment.

In the area of prevention, schools enlisted the assistance of medical doctors, lawyers, law enforcement officers and other community agencies to alert students to the dangers of illegal drug use.

In the area of discovery, court cases, such as *New Jersey v. T.L.O,* reflect the general attitude of the courts in giving school administrators wide latitude in terms of the ability to search students' lockers, book bags and purses when necessary to protect their schools from illegal drugs.

In the area of punishment, as the courts and the criminal justice system increased the swiftness and the certainty of dealing with drug traffickers, school boards and school administrators became stricter in their expulsion proceedings

The attack on cigarette smoking

Another public health success story is the reduction of cigarette smoking in America. As recently as 1964, 40 percent of the adult population were smokers.[11] In 1964, the surgeon general began an articulated campaign relating smoking to lung cancer and heart disease. In addition, all tobacco products were required to include explicit warnings about health dangers on all their packaging.

Separate smoking areas began to appear in restaurants and public places. Airlines now prohibit smoking on flights

in providing free brochures, posters, videos and guest speakers to schools is an example of positive cooperation between schools and public agencies in the resolution of a public health problem.

The use of seat belts

The use of seat belts is another example of improved safety through cooperative problem solving. Seat belts first came to the attention of the public during the 1950s and 1960s.

During this time period, motor vehicle crashes accounted for approximately half the deaths from unintentional injuries in the United States.[14] A large number of those deaths occurred when motorists were thrown out of a moving vehicle. The use of automobile seat belts was found to be an important preventative to vehicular accidental death and has become an important component of automobile safety.

"There is no reason why the tactics used in the war against drugs and smoking cannot be used successfully in a national effort toward the reduction of violence."

relating to students who sold drugs on or near the school campus.

The coalition efforts relating to each of the three areas of prevention, discovery and punishment seem to have produced a great improvement. Current research indicates that the likelihood of a young person in high school or college today actively using illicit drugs is only about half of what it was a decade ago. The use of marijuana is down 20 percent from 1979-1989. Cocaine use is down 50 percent; crack use is down 30 percent; and amphetamine use is down 65 percent from the rate of reported use five years previously.[9] The war against drugs, however, is a long way from being over. Students still say that access to illegal drugs is as great as ever.

Alcohol remains the drug of choice, and school-age students still drink 35 percent of the wine coolers and $1.2 billion worth of beer each year. PCP use is up, and the use of steroids among male youth is alarming. Seventeen percent of youth are still using marijuana and 3 percent are using cocaine — this is also much too high.[10] But at least the figures are generally decreasing and not rising. Schools should take some of the credit for this improvement.

within the continental United States. The public at large was made aware of the dangers of second-hand smoke.

Over the past 25 years, total and per capita cigarette consumption have declined steadily. The prevalence of smoking among adults decreased from 40 percent in 1965 to 25.5 percent in 1990.[12] It is estimated that nearly 800,000 smoke-related deaths were avoided or postponed during that span of time due to the decrease in the use of cigarettes. The goal of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is to reduce cigarette smoking to no more than 15 percent of the adult population by the year 2000.[13]

Schools have played an important part in the education of the young regarding the hazards of smoking. Beginning in the early grades, students are taught the relation of smoking to lung cancer, heart disease and early death. They also learn the dangers of second-hand smoke.

Smoking on school campuses is considered a suspendible offense, and many secondary schools now require that students caught smoking attend special programs. Excellent cooperation exists between the schools and the American Cancer Society. The assistance of ACS

Today auto manufacturers are required to equip all of their passenger cars with seat belts and other automatic crash protection devices. Forty-three states now require that all occupants of moving vehicles have a seat belt on when in a moving vehicle. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration hopes to have every state implement required safety belt laws by the year 2000. It is estimated that seat belts saved a minimum of 4,500 lives last year.[15]

The habit of seat belt usage begins at a young age and schools are doing their part to teach regular use of seat belts as a part of regular safety instruction in grades K-12. Most secondary schools have drivers' training programs which include specific information about the use of seat belts. Behind the wheel training programs require that students use seat belts while learning how to drive. Safety education programs at the high school level usually include information on why seat belts are necessary for every passenger in a vehicle. Students are also taught that failure to wear seat belts in most states is cause for a citation. Schools have been an important part of seat belt education for the past 20 years.

Violence prevention

Educators are by nature pragmatic. There is no reason why the tactics used in the war against drugs and tobacco cannot be used successfully in a national effort toward the reduction of violence.

Experts list poverty, easy access to weapons, domestic violence and explicit violence in the media as important causal factors for the growth of violence in our nation. At first glance, the totality of these four causal factors seems overwhelming. By narrowing our focus and directing problem-solving abilities toward each causal factor as a separate issue, educators and the community can have a positive effect. This is especially true if the type of support received is as multifaceted as that received in the resolution of other national health problems.

The toll of poverty

Dealing with poverty in the United States is an old and difficult problem. Certainly the national attention being paid at present to debt reduction and repairing the infrastructure will help reduce poverty in the long run. The most important contribution educators can make is being certain that every effort is made to keep students in school and off the streets.

Studies dealing with drop-out prevention indicate that good progress is being made in keeping students in school. Current statistics by the Bureau of the Census indicate that 75 percent of all Americans now have a high school diploma compared with 66.5 percent in 1980. Statistics by the Bureau also indicate that 82 percent of students graduate from high school.[16]

Unfortunately, other studies indicate that a large percentage of youth between the ages of 18 and 24 are not in school and do not have a job.[17] This must mean that apprenticeship programs which focus on the educational needs of the "forgotten half" of our secondary students are appropriate. These programs can have a significant effect on reducing street gang membership and the amount of crime and violence committed by youth.

Firearm awareness

Reducing the access of children and youth to weapons is a problem that will require the combined efforts of federal and state laws and parents. FBI statistics indicate that 200 million Americans now have access to a gun — this may mean that schools may have to include some type of curriculum dealing with gun safety in their units on health and safety.

Students need to be taught the facts about the use of weapons in this country and the harm they are causing in terms of murder or suicide. Parent groups can help by asking parents who own a gun to be certain that it is out of the reach of children, stored under lock and key, and bullets are kept separately from weapons.

The startling number of weapons being brought to school and the lethal sophistication of firearms used to terrorize schoolyards and hallways in recent years is sufficient to enlist the support of educators and parents toward some type of control over the sale of automatic weapons. It seems obvious to anyone paying attention to the increase in violence that something has to be done about weapons control and educators have responsibility to be an important part of the debate that is currently taking place.

Media influence

Controlling the amount and kinds of violence portrayed on television and in motion pictures is a difficult area for educators. It is difficult because it may mean that if the television and motion picture industry will not control itself, some type of censorship may be necessary. Censorship is abhorrent to most educators because it could affect the classroom as well as media.

A noncensorship approach may be more attractive for many educators and parents. One approach might be to request that warning labels be attached to videotapes and warnings be given prior to the showing of certain television programs. Statements such as "This program or film contains explicit amounts of violence and may be harmful to the mental health of children and youth," would be an experiment. The use of the label might restrict sales, rentals and Nielsen Ratings and indirectly force the entertainment industry to reduce the violence portrayed on the screen.

If all else fails, educators, parents and the federal government may be forced to form some type of reviewing board that restricts the amount and kinds of violence shown on the screen.

The influence of media may be more powerful than any of us recognize, and the industry should cooperate with educators in conducting careful research on the real effect of television and film on young minds and actions. It is easier to accept some type of censorship if violence is considered a health problem rather than a form of free expression. We would not hesitate to restrict films and programs that encourage the spread of AIDS or venereal disease. The media is helping to spread a dangerous disease. This cannot and should not be allowed.

Family violence

In the Senate hearings prior to her confirmation as attorney general, Janet Reno stated that domestic violence may be at the very heart of violence in America. Intrafamily homicides account for one out of six homicides, primarily among young adults and blacks. Approximately half of family homicides are committed by spouses. Child abuse caused an estimated 1,100 deaths in 1986.[18] Half of those resulted from physical abuse and half from neglect. The number of child abuse fatalities increased 23 percent in 1986.[19] The number of cases of child or spouse abuse where alcohol is involved continues to increase at an alarming rate.

Educators are well-acquainted with the results of domestic violence in the classroom. Too often, bottled up anger against a parent is directed at a teacher or a peer. Domestic violence requires that a closer tie exist between social service agencies and the school. The school needs to be more of a focal point of community action and support and less of an isolated hall of learning. This is already occurring in many communities with positive and encouraging success. Social workers, probation officers and public health workers need to be included as an integral part of the educational community.

Many schools now teach conflict management, anger control and active listening skills as a regular part of the curriculum beginning in elementary school. These programs should help reduce school violence in the short run and family violence over the long term.

The media could help by making a conscious effort to portray adults as responsible and mature rather than violent and foolish. Perhaps some type of well-publicized parent and teacher rating system could be used to influence the media industry.

A national effort

No easy answers exist to reducing violence in our culture. There are no easy answers to the war on drugs either. What we need is a national effort that forms a united partnership of the federal government, the family, the school and the community.

The combined power of professional organizations, parent groups, the federal government and the public at large needs to focus on each causal factor separately. A variety of programs and controls needs to be tried in much the same manner as the war on drugs. The first steps are to become concerned, publicize the problem and commit time, effort and resources toward finding solutions.

Educators are used to challenges. Violence is an old problem with new fears attached to the lives of our children. It is time for violence reduction to catch the attention of educators and the public. If we had been paying attention, we would have noticed that action is long overdue.

For further information, readers may contact Dr. Rosen at the School Justice Institute, 29249 Bates Road, Perrysburg, Ohio 43551, 419/666-6648.

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BY BILL REYNOLDS

As a result of bringing the HOSTS program to Texarkana Independent School District, community volunteers now enjoy positive interaction with schools and students.

Helping one student to succeed

The tremendous challenge facing education in the United States is no secret. For every three children we educate, we lose one. Students who fall behind become discouraged. Once students are discouraged, it is very hard to break the cycle of failure that can cripple them.

Research has shown that the cost of student failure is much more than society can continue to afford. *Educational Leadership* May, 1990, reported that the extra cost to retain a child one grade is $4,500 per year, according to data from the U.S. Department of Education, Center for Education Statistics. The National Dropout Prevention Center estimates the total cost of dropouts to the U.S. economy to be $77 billion annually.

Needs identified
These facts were brought home to the Texarkana Independent School District during the spring of 1992. The district began a search for a program to assist at-risk students from Fifteenth Street Elementary School with their academic skills and self-esteem. Fifteenth Street was identified as a target school for such a program because of low socio-economic levels, low academic performances and increasing discipline prob-

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lems of students in attendance.

Research from the Education Commission of the States suggests that five strategies are effective for eliminating the cycle of failure for at-risk students:
• Mentoring
• Early involvement
• Parental involvement
• Collaboration
• School restructuring

The most promising of the strategies for our district was the use of mentors. Individualized attention has consistently been shown to raise a student's confidence and self-esteem — the building blocks for better academic performance and lifelong achievement.

HOSTS program selected
The Fifteenth Street site-based decision-making team decided to implement the HOSTS (Help One Student To Succeed) program on their campus. This program would provide positive role models and meet the needs that were identified on the Fifteenth Street campus.

HOSTS matches at-risk students with business and community volunteer mentors who work to strengthen students' reading, writing, vocabulary development and study skills. More specialized lessons enhance higher order thinking skills.

HOSTS is not a curriculum, but an instructional strategy that is tailored to

meet each school's goals, philosophies and state objectives. It is a structured mentoring/tutoring program in language arts. This strategy is designed to reinforce lessons provided by the classroom teacher and reduce his or her work load. It has the additional benefits of improving student outcomes and containing costs.

Mentors work one-on-one with the same student — not only tutoring, but also developing a relationship that encourages the student, providing him or her with a good role model and confirming him/her as an individual worthy of special attention.

Background and methodology
HOSTS was founded in 1971 and currently serves over 30,000 children on over 400 campuses nationwide. It works because it breaks the cycle of student failure, accelerates learning and provides students with attention, love and personal caring to restore their confidence and enthusiasm for learning.

Students are selected based on test scores and how well they do on the HOSTS reading assessment test. School staff trained by HOSTS Corporation diagnose each student's needs. Both developmental strengths and areas of deficiency are identified.

After testing, school personnel design a specific instructional program for each child using the HOSTS computerized da-

tabase. The lesson plans in the program are individualized, tailored to each student's age, learning style, reading level, and motivational interests and needs.

Fifteenth Street School's HOSTS mentors are given user-friendly student folders containing learning assignments and activities prepared by the Chapter 1 teacher, who was trained by the HOSTS Corporation. The information in these folders acts as a road map, helping the mentor to reinforce the classroom teacher's instruction without creating an extra burden on the teacher.
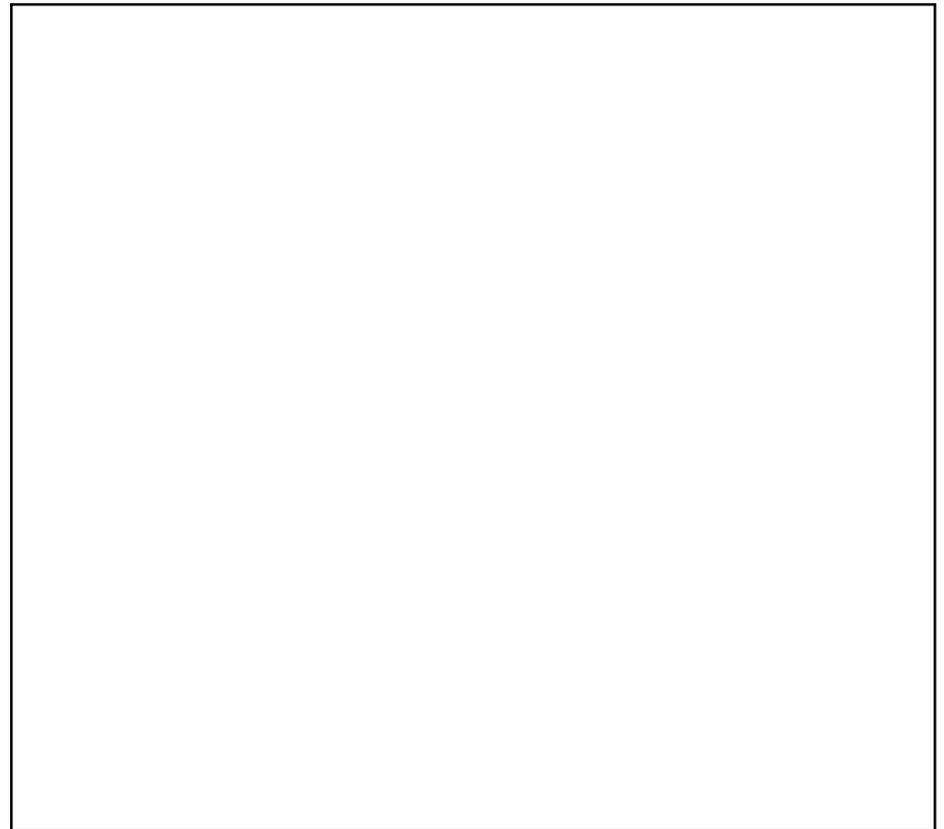
The mentor and the student work through the lesson together. At the end of each session, the mentor makes written notes and comments in the folder about the lesson and the student's progression through the activities. This helps the HOSTS program coordinating teacher in the preparation and modification of the following day's lesson. This teacher also monitors the activities during the mentoring time period and may carry out individual or small group instruction.

The HOSTS program is successful because it is designed for meeting the needs of everyone involved — students, teachers, administrators, parents, mentors and the community. It is a structured, success-oriented program in which everyone wins.

- Schools receive a proven, low-risk program that galvanizes community support.
- Teachers receive a structured program for managing their resources, instruction and time.
- Mentors receive the personal satisfaction of helping a student learn and grow.
- Students get the personal attention and instruction they need for social, emotional and academic growth.

Informing the public

Once the program was approved by the Texarkana board of trustees, the work began at all levels of the school district. School staff developed a public relations campaign to inform the local community about what was planned for the coming school year with the introduction of the HOSTS program.

With the help of the HOSTS Corporation, presentations were offered to all civic clubs and other organizations within the community. Various media gave valuable assistance in creating public awareness of the program and explaining its potential benefits. District personnel were also told about HOSTS and the benefits anticipated to come from the program.

Volunteers are continuously recruited, because each student in the program requires at least one volunteer mentor. Schedules are carefully arranged to assure the maintenance of specific mentor/student relationships.

Promising results

The initial benefits of the HOSTS program in Texarkana include a decrease in discipline problems at the target school and an increase in the grades of the students participating in the program. At the close of the first grading period, 23 of the 60 students in the program achieved the 'A' or 'A-B' honor roll status.

The HOSTS coordinating teachers and volunteers say the program is both popular with the students and effective.

Over 200 members of the Texarkana business community have become HOSTS tutors/mentors. The group of volunteers is a representative cross section: teachers, professors, parents, college students, crossing guards, health professionals, janitors, insurance agents and accountants.

These mentors exhibit a genuine interest in the students and their success, finding their volunteer work to be both intriguing and promising. As one volunteer stated, "I think this is what we're going to have to do to improve our schools. It's been extremely rewarding."

As a result of bringing HOSTS to Texarkana Independent School District, community members now enjoy positive interaction with schools and students. They have a greater awareness and support of the educational process and feel like partners with the school community.

BY GARRY WADE McGIBONEY

Establishing a school discipline system begins with the endorsement of the local school board and includes the development of written codes, disciplinary actions and due process procedures.

Developing a comprehensive school discipline program

A growing number of school administrators and boards of education are seeking ways to develop and implement school discipline policies and procedures.

Since the publication of the DeKalb School System discipline model in the 1985 Fall edition of *School Safety*, over 280 school districts have asked for more information about the specifics of developing and implementing a comprehensive discipline program.

The primary focus of this article centers upon the mechanics, the "how to" of establishing a discipline system.

Local board of education support
Any discipline system is only as good as the level of support provided by the local board of education. Consequently, it is crucial to advise the board members regarding the law, the preventive nature of discipline policies and procedures, and the need for consistency and uniformity of policies.

Board of education policies pertaining to discipline must be consistent with state statutes. They must also provide the foundation for the development and implementation of discipline procedures. The board of education should sanction the development of a general philosophy

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of discipline, a written student conduct code and the use of a hearing tribunal or officer. The board must also establish policies pertaining to students recently expelled from another school district who move into its school district.

The following is an example of a discipline policy adopted by a local board of education:

- A pupil may be suspended or expelled for violation of school rules or for other sufficient reasons. For serious and persistent violations of school rules and regulations, or for other sufficient reasons, a pupil may be expelled from school.

  A recommendation for expulsion shall be the expected outcome for those who have been found to have committed serious offenses, including the possession or use of dangerous weapons, the sale of illicit drugs (including alcoholic beverages), offenses involving physical violence, and destruction of school property or threats to destroy school property. Expulsion of students shall be based on the decision of a student evidentiary hearing committee appointed by the superintendent as outlined in the board of education policy on student discipline hearings.

- The board of education authorizes a committee of certificated personnel to hear student discipline cases and to expel or suspend for extended periods of time any student guilty of violating

an approved or adopted regulation for student conduct published by the school system.

- Members of the student evidentiary hearing committee shall be selected by the director of student relations or a representative and shall be composed of one building level administrator, three representatives from the department of special services and a hearing officer. The three members from the department of special services shall be a psychologist, a social worker and a special education expert. No fewer than three members are required to be present at each meeting, and decisions shall require an affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of the committee hearing the case.

- The committee shall conduct evidentiary hearings on all student discipline cases involving possible long-term suspensions (more than 10 school days) or possible expulsions. At the evidentiary hearing, students are entitled to legal counsel, may subpoena witnesses and may cross-examine school system witnesses.

- Decisions made by the committee may be appealed to the board of education by notification in writing to the superintendent of schools within 20 calendar days. The written notice of appeal must distinctly and specifically set forth the reasons, together with any supporting arguments, as to why the

decision of the student evidentiary hearing committee is alleged to be erroneous. The notice must further specify what portion or portions of the record support the appellant's contentions. No new evidence will be allowed. The board of education shall review the record and shall render the decision in writing.

Written discipline code

The development of a written discipline or conduct code is crucial to establishing a uniform discipline system. Nearly every school has some form of a written code, but a systemwide written code will help to achieve a system of equity.

A discipline planning committee that includes administrators, teachers, school psychologists, school social workers, students and parents should be organized to develop the written discipline code. Using a broad community base to formulate policy will encourage subsequent community support of the policy.

One of the first steps the committee will want to take is to collect copies of written discipline codes of other school districts within the state and at least a few from out-of-state school districts. This collection of written discipline codes will stimulate discussion and perhaps provide some direction for the committee.

Another essential action is to research state statutes to ensure that student discipline codes are in compliance with state law. Through this step-by-step process, the basic rules and regulations of the discipline system will begin to emerge.

The specificity and sophistication of the discipline code contents will vary according to the size, locale and makeup of the student population. Some school systems began with very simple written codes that later became very specific as the result of legal challenges.

From two very different school systems, the following are examples of the contents of discipline codes concerning drugs on the school campus. In the first, the language is very general; the second is very specific.

- *Drugs: students shall not possess or transmit drugs on school property.*

- *For the purpose of this brochure, the word "drugs" shall mean all drugs including, but not limited to, prescription drugs, over-the-counter drugs, look-alike drugs, inhalants, and all other legal and/or illegal drugs.*

All written discipline codes should list the offenses, followed by the possible consequences. For example:
Penalty for possession of drugs may range from short-term suspension to expulsion. The student must be sent before the hearing committee.

Many school systems distribute copies of the written codes to students at the beginning of each school year. Some school districts distribute the written code in the classroom and spend a class period reviewing the contents of the code. Sometime during the first week of school, an assembly program follows to reinforce the importance of good discipline.

Several school districts in Georgia require each student to take a test covering the contents of the written code, followed by a special group meeting with those students who performed poorly on the discipline test.

Reference to the written discipline code is a part of the Individualized Educational Plan for special education students. Frequently, the discipline code is taught to special education students by special education teachers.

Disciplinary actions

The move toward a uniform discipline system should also include the development of disciplinary actions.

One disciplinary action receiving a great deal of interest is the in-school suspension concept. This concept is similar to detention or "sitting in the principal's office." However, an in-school suspension program includes a teacher, some form of counseling and structured time-out from the regular

classroom schedule.

Other possible responses to student misbehavior vary considerably in degree: detention; student/teacher/parent conferences; referral to educational management teams, the school counselor, school social worker and/or school psychologist; verbal warning or reprimand; probationary status; behavior contracts; school chores or Saturday work programs; alternative school placement; short-term suspension; and referral to a hearing committee for possible long-term suspension or expulsion.

Due process procedures

In 1975, the U.S. Supreme Court held in the case of *Goss v. Lopez* that students were entitled to certain due process rights when accused of committing an offense which could result in the loss of approximately 10 or more school days.

It is important for school systems to formulate systemwide procedures for due process related to discipline. These procedures should include a statement of purpose and guidelines for a formal hearing.

The hallmark of the exercise of disciplinary authority must be fairness. Every effort should be made by administrators and faculty members to resolve problems through effective utilization of school district resources in cooperation with the student and the parent or guardian. The following procedural guidelines can govern the formal hearing:

- Prior written notice of charges against a student shall be supplied to the student and the parent or guardian.
- The parent or guardian should be present at the hearing.
- The student, parent or guardian may consult legal counsel. Attorneys may sit in on local hearings, but not as an advisor and/or participating member. (It is recommended that the school administrator responsible for conducting the local school hearing contact the director of student relations if and when an attorney appears on behalf of a student at either a formal or informal local school hearing.)

- The student shall be given the opportunity to give his/her version of the facts and their implications. The student should further be allowed to offer the testimony of other witnesses and other evidence.
- The student shall be allowed to observe all evidence offered, and the student shall be allowed to question any witness.
- The hearing shall be conducted by an impartial hearing authority who shall make a determination based solely upon the evidence presented at the hearing. The impartial hearing officer may be any professional, in the school or from another school, as long as the hearing officer has no prior knowledge of the case and is not the person making the charge against the student(s).
- A written transcript shall be kept of the hearing.
- The hearing authority shall state (within a reasonable time after the hearing) the findings — whether or not the student is guilty of the conduct charged and the decision, if any, as to disciplinary action. The student and parent or guardian will be promptly informed in writing concerning the findings of the hearing authority.
- The student and parent or guardian shall be made aware of their right to appeal the decision of the hearing authority to the appropriate appellate authority. (For suspensions of 10 days or less, the appropriate appellate authority is administrative, i.e., the area assistant superintendent; for suspensions of more than 10 days, the appeal is directed to the local school board or state board of education.) If previous behavior of a student is to be considered (current school year only), it must be made a part of the local hearing.
- If a student is referred to the student evidentiary hearing committee, the witnesses who testify at the local school hearing should also be willing to testify before the student evidentiary hearing committee.

- If a student is expelled, he/she is not allowed to make up any academic work, to participate in any school activities or to be present on campus. A student shall be allowed to make up school work missed as a result of an administratively imposed short-term suspension.

Guidelines for informal hearings
Guidelines for informal hearings should also be established.
- The student must be told with what he/she is charged, who made the charges and who witnessed the offense.
- The student must be provided with an opportunity to tell his/her side of the story.
- The student must be informed about the proposed disciplinary action.
- The student's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) must be called.

It has proven very useful for administrators in a number of school systems to develop a booklet or manual that covers due process procedures such as those previously outlined.

A comprehensive discipline system must include a means by which discipline data can be collected and studied. Several schools and/or school systems have developed computer data collection sources. One school system provides each school with quarterly reports that are summary profiles of the discipline referrals. The summaries include data about the locations of discipline problems as well as the times, nature of the problems, the discipline dispositions, and the ages and grades of the students involved. Patterns that become evident can be addressed in revision of the written discipline codes.

Board support, written discipline codes that include possible disciplinary actions, and due process procedures are the major features of comprehensive discipline programs. These components balance the rights of students with the responsibility of educators to maintain a safe and orderly school environment.

Sexual harassment resource update

The National School Safety Center's April 1993 issue of *School Safety Update* listed several resources for educators regarding sexual harassment. These resources are available either at no cost or for purchase. Please note the following additional information about these resources:

- *It's Not Fun, It's Illegal* — This curriculum for junior and senior high schools from the Minnesota Department of Education is available to Minnesota teachers at no cost. A limited number of copies are available for purchase to teachers outside of the state of Minnesota. The cost is $10.00. Contact the Minnesota Department of Education, Equal Educational Opportunites Section, 522 Capitol Square Building, 550 Cedar St., St. Paul, MN 55101. The phone number is 612/296-7622. (The number published in the *Update* is incorrect.)

- *Young People's Program on Sexual Harassment in the Workplace* — Copies of this classroom activity are available for a minimal charge to school employees in the state of Washington from the Office for Equity Education, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Old Capitol Building, P.O. Box 47200, Olympia, WA 98504, 206/753-2560. Those outside the state of Washington may obtain an order form for this and other resources written by David Horton by call-ing Horton and Associates in Minneapolis, Minnesota, at 612/333-6900.

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,* newsjournal 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, provides 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)

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)

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 and 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 (1992) 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 ninth printing, the book contains valuable suggestions from law enforcers, school principals, prosecutors and other experts on gangs. The concluding chapter describes 20 school- and community-based programs throughout the country that have been successful in combating gangs. 56 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 (Revised edition will be available Fall 1993) 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)

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)

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.

NSSC Order Form

Publications
_____ School Safety News Service ($59 annually)
_____ *Child Safety Curriculum Standards* ($75)
_____ *Developing Personal & Social Responsibility ($9)*
_____ *Educated Public Relations* ($8)
_____ *Gangs in Schools* ($5)
_____ *School Crime and Violence* ($15)
_____ *School Discipline Notebook* ($5)
_____ *School Safety Check Book* ($15)
_____ *Set Straight on Bullies* ($10)
_____ *The Need to Know* ($12)

Resource Papers
_____ *Safe Schools Overview* ($4)
_____ *Alternative Schools for Disruptive Youth* ($4)
_____ *Corporal Punishment in Schools* ($4)
_____ *Drug Traffic and Abuse in Schools* ($4)
_____ *Increasing Student Attendance* ($4)
_____ *Role Models, Sports and Youth* ($4)
_____ *School Bullying and Victimization* ($4)
_____ *School Crisis Prevention and Response* ($4)
_____ *Student and Staff Victimization* ($4)
_____ *Student Searches and the Law* ($4)
_____ *Weapons in Schools* ($4)

Display Posters
_____ *"Join a team, not a gang!"*
Kevin Mitchell ($3)
_____ *"The Fridge says 'bullying is uncool!'"*
William "The Fridge" Perry ($3)
_____ *"Facades..." (Set of 2) ($3)*

Name_____   Title_____

Address_____   Affiliation_____

City_____   State_____   Zip_____

Mail order to: NSSC, 4165 Thousand Oaks Blvd., Suite 290, Westlake Village, CA 91362

BY LORNA BROOKS-BONNER

Dealing with aggressive parents in the 1990s is a different ballgame than when many administrators and teachers first came into the educational arena.

Responding to aggressive parents

Once when I was seated at my desk, a very agitated mother appeared at my door. She was very distraught and would not take a seat when I asked her to. I remained seated, with both hands on the desk and very visible. This parent stood over my desk and began pacing back and forth. At the time, my office was not any larger than a walk-in closet, with only one way in or out. I was trapped. Without interrupting, I allowed her to rant and rave about how a teacher was mistreating her son. After a few minutes, she finally slowed down and was seated. My hands had remained positioned on top of my desk the entire time. At the end of the meeting, when we were finally able to calmly discuss the situation, this now-subdued mother asked me: "What would you have done if I had come across this desk at you?"

In education we talk a great deal about responding to the children of today. Equally important, however, is how we respond to the parents of today's children, especially if the parents come to us in a hostile mode. What is our first reaction? Do we allow the hostility to become a personal attack, or are we able to handle this type of situation in a calm, rational state of mind? This article dis-

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cusses situations that many educators have experienced and offers a means to handle the conflict cycle.

A campus administrator who has not been challenged by an angry parent is rare today. Gone are the days when what the teacher or principal said was automatically considered right — when students and parents alike respected educators and never questioned what they said.

Educators face some very difficult situations. And, until parents are satisfied that school is a haven for fostering respect and a learning environment that nurtures the best in their children, educators will probably continue to face them.

What should we do when irate parents present themselves at our door demanding an explanation or venting frustration about how their children are being treated?

When administrators and teachers are faced with possible threatening situations, they need to ask themselves some questions. How threatened do I feel? How do the students' parents perceive me? How do they feel about the treatment their children receive in my school?

The key to almost all acts of parental hostility is knowing how to diffuse the situation. Remember that this "angry mama" has her child's well-being in mind. For many years, society and educators have imposed white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant values, without appre-

ciation for cultural and ethnic differences. We may not agree with how some parents ventilate their anger, but negatively judging *how*, and not *why*, a parent is angry does not help.

Deciding how to handle any potential conflict is based upon how well you know the people involved. Do the angry parents know you and trust you enough to believe in your judgment?

Unfortunately, many of today's parents often act first, then *possibly* listen afterwards. The administrator's job is to maintain composure and act in a calm, rational manner. We cannot afford to interpret the conflict as a personal attack. Perceive it for what it is — parents upset over something that has happened to their child at school. They want immediate action.

Most parents send their children to school to learn. By quietly reminding parents of this, a hostile situation can often be turned around. The effect of this statement, "I strongly believe that you send your child to school to learn and that is exactly what we want," takes the wind out of the sails of most overly aggressive parents.

Using a strong, clear and forceful voice demonstrates your care and concern. Most hostile parents will stop and turn to look at you. This eye contact is precisely what you want. If a parent refuses to make eye contact, you need to either wait until eye contact can be made

or end the conference.

If the parent is using language that is not acceptable to you, tell the parent you understand that he or she is angry, but that there is no need for profanity. If the parent continues to curse, end the meeting. Tell the parent that you will ask your supervisor to set up the next meeting. Let him or her know that you do not permit abusive language to be used toward you.

In my 23 years in public education, I have had to refer only three situations to the superintendent/assistant superintendent because of an angry parent's con-

The administrator's job is to maintain composure and act in a calm, rational manner. We cannot afford to interpret the conflict as a personal attack.

tinued use of abusive language. In most cases, the parent will adhere to your request.

If a parent is angry, let him or her ventilate. Do not try to interrupt or make comments. Once it is apparent that you will not be baited into an argument or a discussion about all of the issues at once, the parent will usually settle down.

Once the parent is ready to rationally discuss the problem, your job is to determine why the parent is angry and what sequence of events led to the anger. Keep in mind that your responsibility is to educate children. Think in terms of what you can do to break the cycle of conflict.

Understanding some concepts of interpersonal communication will help when handling hostile situations and trying to break the conflict cycle.

Nonverbal communication
Your proximity to another person can be perceived as a threat. Keep an arm's length or a desk's distance between you and an angry parent. "Getting in someone's face" can cause adverse effects. Many irate parents expect you to stay out of their space, but will try to intimi-

date you by moving into your comfort zone. Keeping a desk between you and the parent can help avoid the escalation of conflict.

Never appear hostile or threaten the parent. Position your body at an angle — keeping a distance of at least three feet. This accomplishes three things. You do not encroach on personal space; you offer the person a perceived "escape route" so they won't feel trapped; and you allow at least one leg length as a personal safety margin. Standing this way allows you to move out of the reach of the hostile person.

Be aware of your body language and the message it sends. How you position your hands, legs and entire body plays an important role in how the parent responds to you.
• Avoid concealing your hands.
• Do not move your hands unless you are in the habit of talking with them.
• Try not to make sudden gestures that may frighten the parents.
• Keep your hands open, do not close them to make a fist.
• Your arms should not be crossed, but down at your side or resting on your desk.
• If your legs are crossed, cross them toward parent, not away.
• Lean into the direction of the parent. This sends the message that you are open to hear what the parent is saying.

Watch the body language of the angry parent as well. What is the parent doing with her/his hands? If the parent's hands are hidden in pockets or a purse, pay close attention. You do not know if a weapon is being concealed. If you suspect the parent has a weapon, ask a third person to stay in the room with you or step outside and ask a staff member to

call the police immediately. Do not remain in a situation where you feel uncomfortable. I stress this point, even if the conference does not involve a weapon.

Look directly at the parent during a conference. Your eyes should not appear to be hard and uncaring. Maintain an expression on your face that communicates both your openness to listen and the gravity of the situation.

Do not break eye contact. Many people feel that when you do, you are not being truthful. You must also, however, be familiar with the cultural background of the parent — this would not be the traditional response of someone of the Hispanic or Asian cultures.

Verbal communication
Raising your voice to the volume of the angry parent does not help the situation. You must try to maintain a calm, even voice. Lowering the volume of your own voice or at times talking softer and slower forces the parent to concentrate in order to hear you. This strategy can have a calming effect.

Not only must educators be aware of what they are saying to parents, but they must also be consciously aware of how they speak to them. In conferences, school employees should focus on the feedback offered by the parents, thus eliminating many misunderstandings before they escalate.

Staff members need to be taught how to conduct a conference with difficult parents. They need practical suggestions for dealing with hostile situations. If a staff member communicates an attitude that the parent is inferior or is not important, damage that can never be corrected will occur.

A parent may perceive these negative attitudes from a variety of experiences: how children in the classroom are addressed, how he or she is greeted in the office, and what is communicated to this parent or others via telephone conversations. Many needless conflicts could be eliminated if educators would stop and think before responding to children and

their parents in difficult situations.

Peer conferencing buddies
The best approach for parent conferences is to use a team of school staff members to meet with parents whenever possible. This approach promotes safety and offers legal protection by having a witness present during the encounter with the hostile parent. Requesting and conducting solo conferences with a parent who is known to be difficult is asking for direct confrontation, increasing the possibility of violence.

Establishing peer conferencing buddies — teams of two or more school employees who conduct parent-teacher conferences together — can be a practical solution. These teams need careful training on how to hold joint conferences with parents.

Peer conferencing buddies also need to practice the roles that each member will play during the conference. If more than two persons are on a team, careful planning and practice is especially important. A parent could perceive a conferencing team as the school "ganging up" against him or her.

Prior to the conference with the parent, each peer conferencing buddy is given a role to play that includes specific responsibilities. The buddy may be there to take notes on the discussion and results, to act as a mediator or to keep everyone on task. When there is confusion regarding responsibilities, parents are likely to become more aggressive and intense. Try to keep the situation focused on the issues — the child is at school to learn and the school wants to work with the parent to resolve the conflict.

Team intervention is a process that requires communication among all staff members. The team needs to plan the strategies for intervention, establish a process for evaluating the facts once the conference begins, and develop a method for handling each phase of the conference. When a teacher or parent becomes unprofessional or irrational during a conference, it is the responsibility of the members of the team to either bring

everyone back on task or draw the meeting to a close.

When training staff members to use the team approach to conferences, first discuss issues that have led to previous conflicts between various groups on campus: parent/teacher, teacher/teacher and teacher/student. Divide the staff into groups and ask them to write a general description for each of the types of conflicts listed, offering suggestions why the various groups may have responded the way they did.

Ask the staff to then list intervention strategies that could have been used to diffuse or change the conflict. Through this process, staff members will begin to develop a comfort level with each other and learn to work together to help resolve problems. This process will take time and effort from everyone.

Advice to school administrators
Always attempt to keep any parent meeting hassle-free. If the parent is angry, meet in the school office, on your turf. Set the tone for the conference by stating the purpose, reminding everyone of the need to work together to help the student succeed at school.

When parents come to complain about a teacher or about a problem that their child is having with a teacher, ask the parent to discuss the problem with the teacher first. Make it a policy not to intercede or become involved in a problem until after the parent and teacher have talked.

When a parent is not satisfied with the teacher's response, then step in to set up a meeting with the teacher, parent or counselor, depending on the nature of the problem. Many minor problems can be resolved by encouraging open lines of communication between the teacher and each child's family.

We are very fortunate to have counselors in the elementary schools in our district. In my school, the counselor plays a key role in the conferencing team. She has been instrumental in helping teachers handle difficult situations with parents and students. She does not take

sides, but rather acts as a mediator.

When the counselor is working with me to help diffuse a hostile situation, we will jointly decide on the points that we want to stress with the parent and what outcomes we expect. When a parent is in denial about the disruptive behavior of the child, the counselor and I will play roles of the "good guy vs. bad guy," depending on which one of us has developed the most positive bond with the hostile parent. The 'bad guy" will deliberately say things to cause the parent's hostility to be brought out into the open. The "good guy" must keep the parent in check and try to calm him or her down and continue to act as the mediator to bring the conflict to the resolution point.

My response
What did I say to the potentially violent mother described earlier when she asked me: "What would you have done if I had come across this desk at you?"

My response was, "Do you see how my hands have been placed during this conference?" Both of my hands were placed within fingers' reach of a telephone or a heavy book end. "If I ever thought that you were going to come across this desk, I would have to try to hurt you. My mama didn't raise a complete fool!"

The woman laughed and said, "I like that. You're okay, Mrs. Bonner." From that point on this parent cooperated with us to help her child. After I let her ventilate her frustrations, she was able to see that I was trying to work with her to help her son.

Dealing with aggressive parents in the 1990s is a different ballgame than when many administrators and teachers first came into the educational arena. We, as educators, cannot assume that we have all of the answers and skills to make every student be successful.

Many children now come from nontraditional families and from backgrounds that may be culturally unfamiliar to us. We must be willing to listen and accept *all* parents and work with them to help their children become successful at school.

BY M. FURLONG, R. MORRISON AND D. CLONTZ

Eight essential principles of school safety planning apply to all school environments. From these principles, site-specific plans can be developed to help create secure, peaceful campuses.

Planning principles for safe schools

School personnel have the special relationship of *in loco parentis* with the children they serve. As such, they are legally and morally bound to provide care that reflects parental standards of protection and nurturance.[1] Enough has been written about school safety to know that schools' efforts to foster the safety and security of students demand careful thought and planning.[2]

This need cannot be expressed more clearly than by the response of students to youth-related shootings that occurred in Los Angeles during the winter of 1993. One student expressed a particularly chilling commentary in reaction to the shooting of a fellow classmate: "I think about how I want to die. I don't want to get shot, but if I do, I want to get shot in the head right here (pointing to forehead), so I die instantly."[3]

In addressing the pressing need to create safer and better schools, the quest for a school safety "magic wand" may be a quixotic one. An illustrative example is what has happened in the Los Angeles Unified School District during the 1992-

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93 school year. In widely publicized incidents, two LAUSD students were shot and killed: one in a classroom and the other in a hallway. In reaction to these tragic events, the school board implemented a gun screening program using metal detectors, a practice used by one-fourth of the major school districts in the United States.[4]

Metal detectors are helpful because they provide increased security on the school campus and they provide a promise to create safer schools. Metal detectors and other focused programs, however, are not school safety magic wands. In the effort toward creating safe schools, there is little alternative to old-fashioned hard work as each school must examine its unique campus conditions and devise a plan to maximize its safety and hospitality.

This is not to say that schools cannot learn from one another's efforts to develop comprehensive school safety plans. During the past five years, the Ventura County (California) Superintendent of School's Office has facilitated efforts to evaluate school safety needs and to implement site-specific plans to decrease safety risks and to increase effectiveness at a number of school sites.

A result of these planning efforts is the identification of principles of school safety planning that apply to all types of schools, from rural to urban communities. These eight essential principles of

comprehensive planning for safe, secure and peaceful schools are outlined on page 25.

School safety: a personal experience
When dealing with the topic of school safety, there is a tendency to become preoccupied with constitutional guarantees, legal mandates, crime statistics and required planning processes. It is easy to overlook the fact that school safety begins at the individual level — that it is a personal experience, not just an objective reality. Although crime statistics and legal mandates have a very important part in safe school planning, it is important to keep in mind that safe schools fundamentally are places in which the needs of each individual — student, staff, parents — are being met.

Safe schools *do* have conflicts and disagreements, but they also have developed procedures to handle adversity by respecting each person's rights. For this reason, it is reasonable to assume that school safety actually begins with each person's subjective feelings of physical safety in the school environment and extends to include social acceptance, a supportive environment and opportunities for growth and development.

Day in and day out we all live with certain levels of risk. An important first step in developing a school safety plan is to acknowledge that regardless of the objective safety of the school, individual

perceptions of the school environment will differ. School safety is not just a campus condition, it depends heavily on hopes, expectations, dreams and personal experience, particularly victimization.

Multiple causes

What comes to mind when people think of the word "safety?" A place, situation or person is usually thought to be "safe" if no harm is expected to come from contact with that place, situation, or person. At the core of the "safety" construct is the notion of avoiding harm.

Harm in schools can vary by type and source. There are three common types of harm in a school setting. First, physical harm includes bodily injury or health threats, such as injury from falling from playground equipment, victimization by a drive-by shooting or exposure to environment pollutants.

Second, personal harm is the damage done to a person's self-concept or self-esteem as a result of personal failure, social rejection or isolation, such as being ridiculed by peers or embarrassed by the failure to answer a question in the classroom.

Third, developmental harm refers to events or conditions that prevent or inhibit children from achieving their maximum physical, social or academic potential.

Three primary sources of safety threats and risks exist. Accidental sources are unintended and unanticipated events that cause harm. Children tripping on untied shoelaces and scraping their knees are common examples.

Negligent sources of harm refer to damage resulting from acts of omission, that is, failure to correct potential hazards or conditions on the school campus. Examples of negligent harm are injuries resulting from stepping into holes in the schoolyard, unpruned trees falling down and injuring someone or poor maintenance of campus electrical wiring that results in fire or an explosion.

Purposeful sources of harm are those that result from deliberate actions. Gang activity, being beaten by a bully, and be-

ing teased and taunted by peers are examples of purposeful harm. When school safety is perceived as the avoidance of harm, it is readily seen that it has multiple sources and is much more than crime and violence prevention.

A continuum of threats and risks

If school safety does not stop where the threat to personal and physical harm ends, then it is important to develop an expanded view of school safety. This perspective led to the conceptualization of school safety as a continuum with a number of different levels.[5] At one end of the continuum are physical threats, and at the other end are threats to personal growth and self-determination, including the following major levels of risks:
• life endangering threats;
• physical harm;
• personal-social intimidation and menace;
• individual isolation and rejection;
• opportunities and support;
• school success and productivity; and
• personal and social self-determination.

School safety involves being vigilant about what happens in the school environment and being sensitive to how campus conditions might cause harm. However, just as physicians today emphasize the importance of promoting health in addition to preventing disease, so schools should strive to enhance the effectiveness of their educational programs for the whole child.

The core of school safety focuses on avoidance of harm, but there is a threshold at which concerns about threats of risks of harm merge with efforts to enhance the school environment and make the school more effective — a better, more inviting place to be.

Planning is comprehensive

As the level of risk continuum discussed above shows, each school can identify an appropriate level of planning that addresses the predominant level of risk for harm in the school environment. What is needed to assist this process is a compre-

hensive planning model that is general enough to address various levels of safety threats and risks.

Such a comprehensive planning model for safe schools is presented in *Safe Schools: A Planning Guide for Action*[6] and "Broadening the scope of school safety."[7] These documents describe an integrative, general planning model with these four dimensions: student and staff personal characteristics; school physical environment; school social environment; and school cultural environment.

Planning involves everyone

Given the complex social conditions affecting schools in contemporary society, educators alone cannot shoulder the burden of reducing school crime and implementing comprehensive school safety plans. The development of safe schools requires the collaboration of school and community individuals, including school staff, students, parents, and representatives from health care , law enforcement and other public and private agencies.

Another important aspect of safe school planning is the alignment of safe school plans within and between districts across all grade settings. Elementary and secondary schools need to coordinate their efforts to prevent school crime and to enhance each school's safety. Cost efficient safe school plans are not possible without an alignment of efforts at all levels of education.

The need for safety planning alignment is supported by the most recent California school crime statistics.[8] They show that crimes reported on elementary school campuses account for 23 percent of all reported school crimes in 1989-90. Compared with secondary schools, elementary schools had higher rates of vandalism and burglary. Elementary schools also were the location of at least 30 percent of the crimes in each of these categories: theft from school, sex offenses and arson. As these figures show, crime occurs at all levels of the public school setting.

Although some school crimes, such as substance abuse and weapon possession,

occur primarily at the secondary school level, they begin much earlier. Thus, there is the need to develop school safety programs that cut across all school settings. In fact, safety prevention makes the implementation of comprehensive planning efforts in elementary schools an imperative.

Systematic and ongoing planning
School safety planning assumes that there will be a continuous process of re-evaluation, adjustment, modification, and improvement of conditions in the school environment. This planning process monitors all of the four school climate and safety dimensions discussed above to identify areas of critical need. It is acknowledged that limited resources preclude immediate responses to all safety concerns, but those requiring immediate attention are fully monitored.

School safety planning also is systematic. This systematic approach means that the pressure to immediately evaluate and select a course of action or intervention is avoided. Careful efforts are made to engage in "pre-action" stages of the planning process by building a consensus for the need to integrate safety planning efforts with other school improvement efforts. A "vision," or the development of principles to guide the safety planning process, is also formalized before specific safety concerns or plans of action are discussed. When this strong foundation is developed, the school community then engages in a process that includes assessment activities, selection of actions and evaluation.

A problem-solving process
Safe school planning is primarily a problem-solving activity. Concerns are identified and the safe school committee selects appropriate strategies and actions. Typical problem-solving activities include the following components. (See box on page 26.)

Establishing the committee. The first consideration of the committee is to make certain that representatives of all constituencies affected by the plan par-

ticipate in its development. Because of the urgency to resolve school safety problems, state and district personnel may be tempted to overlook the need for participatory planning at the school site level. Invite representatives from law enforcement, probation, the district attorney's office, fire department and health care

professionals, parents, students and others to join the safe school committee.

Encouraging cooperation. Typically, the safety committee participants will ask themselves: What will be expected of me? Can I contribute to this group? Can we work together? Will the committee's efforts be worthwhile?

Chairpersons can begin by disclosing their own concerns about the committee's purposes and procedures. Another way to begin is to simply ask committee members to share what they need from one another in order to have a successful committee experience. Participants frequently express the following needs:
- courtesy, respect, understanding and support from others;
- acceptance and tolerance of different points of view;
- a sense of working together among all group members;
- freedom to question and ask for explanations; and
- assistance from the chairperson in

structuring tasks.

In effect, the safe school committee's cultural and social organization characteristics are given shape and substance through the sharing of perspectives and formation of agreements about how the committee will proceed.

Eight Principles of Safe School Planning

School safety is a personal experience.
School safety threats and risks have multiple causes.
School safety threats and risks fall on a continuum.
School safety planning is comprehensive.
School safety planning involves everyone.
School safety planning is ongoing.
School safety planning is a problem-solving process.
Strive for the ideal — do what is possible.

Identifying the mission. Building a safe school plan formally begins when the committee determines its mission. If everyone wants to achieve the same outcome, there is a strong desire for the group to stick together. The group's ability to imagine what the ideal safe school would look like, feel like and sound like is crucial to creating a successful safe school action plan.

Creating the vision. The advantage of viewing safety concerns as discrepancies between the way things are and the way one would like them to be is that this approach enables a group to share a common vision — a clear sense of the importance of a safety plan successfully implemented.

The mission identification process can begin by simply asking group members to share their hopes, wishes and desires about making their school better and safer. Where should attention be focused? What would really make a difference at this school? What is the most im-

portant thing to do to improve our school? What should students remember most about our school? After brainstorming, the group leader should help the group identify major themes and commonly held hopes and wishes for the school.

Collecting and interpreting data. Once the safe schools committee has refined a shared vision of a safe school, it is important to reach out to the school community and seek the opinions of teachers, staff, students, parents and other community individuals. Procedures to collect and interpret data are established to create a sense of order out of the numerous sources of information available, gather information in an efficient manner, and take a fresh and objective look at the school environment.

The act of seeking opinions sends the message that there is concern for the school community and a commitment to do something positive about school safety. Existing records, questionnaires, interviews and observations are ways to gather data about school safety concerns.[8] It is neither necessary nor desirable to collect all types of data, but it is essential that multiple sources of data be used to increase the validity of the safe schools plan.

Designing the plan. Formalizing an action plan to address safe schools concerns is a key to the planning process. It is the point at which the safe school committee engages in a decision-making dialogue to determine what will actually happen to make the school better and safer. Sound judgment is crucial at this stage of the problem-solving process. If the most pressing safety concerns go unrecognized, the potential impact of the plan will be diminished.

Although the specific process each safe schools committee uses to make decisions will vary, there are three steps that are commonly used by effective planning groups. The first step is to determine which dimensions and factors are of concern. The safe school committee reviews and discusses areas of concern that were previously identified. Once the specific

aspects of the school environment that need attention are identified, the safety concerns are placed in order of priority. The goal is to rank the identified safety concerns from most to least critical. The committee should use an advocacy and consensus process to develop a prioritized list of concerns.

The second step is to examine possible causes of safety concerns. This is a key step in making a plan that affects the ultimate selection of specific strategies and actions. The perceived cause of the safety concerns on campus has a significant influence over what is done and how a potential solution or action is implemented.

The third step is to develop possible strategies and actions. Once the top priority safety concerns have been identified and an awareness of their causes has been formed, the committee begins to examine and speculate about the steps that can be taken to overcome these concerns.

A major consideration at this stage of planning is the identification of strategies and actions that are likely to have the greatest overall effect. For each concern the committee needs to ask specific questions: What actions will yield the greatest payoff? Which actions are likely to receive the most support? Which actions complement other improvement activities that are underway at the school? Are there one or two key actions that could prove to be a catalyst for solving many safety concerns?

Strive for the ideal

Some committees may want to evaluate how each strategy or action can be effectively implemented. This can be accomplished by answering two basic questions. What is the priority rating given to each safety concern addressed by the action plan (high vs. low priority)? Do we have the resources to carry out this action (strong vs. weak belief)?

Answers to these questions create four natural groups of concerns and associated actions. (See model on page 27.) Once a tentative list of strategies and ac-

Steps for Safe School Planning

Establish the Committee
Notify school community of intent to form a committee.
Solicit participation.
Integrate committee with other school planning groups.

Encourage Cooperation
Discuss concerns about participation.
Share mutual needs and expectations.
Explain committee purposes and procedures.

Identify the Mission
Brainstorm hopes, wishes, desires for the school.
Determine major themes and commonalties.
Achieve group consensus.

Collect and Interpreting Data
Identify areas of pride/strength.
Identify areas of concern/need.

Design the Plan
List high priority needs and concerns.
Explore possible causes.
Describe desired condition/goal.
Select possible strategies and actions for achieving goal.
Predict barriers to achieving goal.

Implement the Plan
Select strategies and actions.
Determine date to be completed.
Assign person(s) responsible.

Evaluate the Plan
Discuss why will/did plan succeed.
Discuss why will/did plan fail.
Discuss how can plan be strengthened.
Discuss impact of plan.

tions is formed, eight to 10 actions that are felt to have the potential to be effective should be identified. It is at this point that the planning committee draws upon available resources such as those provided through the National School Safety Center and other organizations.

The final step of making the plan involves a discussion about what might prevent the committee from successfully carrying out the action plan. This discussion will strengthen implementation efforts because it will lead to subtle changes in the design of the action plan. This customization of the action plan is critical to the success of the school's action plan.[10]

Implementing the plan. Strategies and actions are finally selected and communicated to the school community. A sequence of events to be carried out as part of the action plan is established. Completion dates are established, responsibilities are designated, and resources are gathered. The role of the safe school committee at this stage is to show persistence by encouraging action, monitoring programs, supporting all key personnel and disseminating information about the safe school action plan throughout the school community. Members of the school community should accept the action plan as *their* plan.

Evaluating the plan. Evaluation is the process of determining the value or effectiveness of an activity for the purpose of decision making. When evaluating the safety plan, the group facilitator should ask the committee to answer the following three questions: Why will/did the plan succeed? Why will/did the plan fail? How can the plan be strengthened?

When the group finishes brainstorming ideas, it needs to engage in a discussion to reach agreement on the three or four most important reasons for the success or failure of the plan. In addition, consensus should be reached on ways the plan can be strengthened.

Site-specific plans
There is no specific school safety planning template that can be cloned from

	High Success Expectancy	Low Success Expectancy
High Priority Concern	High priority concern and strong belief that actions can be implemented. These are the safety problems that should be tackled first.	High priority concern and weak belief that actions can be successfully implemented. These are the safety problems that cause frustration and occasionally a sense of hopelessness. Long-term solutions to these safety problems, such as coping with the impact of gangs on campus, require interagency collaboration.
Low Priority Concern	Low priority concern and a strong belief that actions can be implemented. These are less critical safety problems that can be used by the committee to have some initial success in creating a better and safer campus.	Low priority concern and a weak belief that actions can be successfully implemented. These are safety concerns that are not a major priority. Therefore, the fact that there are no readily available actions should not interfere with effort to improve the school environment.

one district to another. Experience has shown that effective safe school plans result from careful, systematic planning that leads to the creation of site-specific plans.

However, experience also shows that there is commonality among these various planning efforts. The principles for safe school planning discussed in this article represent these essential planning components.

The authors have worked with schools, using these principles of safe school planning to create site-specific safety plans. Readers interested in learning more about the safety plans these schools have developed are invited to contact Richard Morrison at 805/ 652-7337.

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BY LOREN A. EVENRUD

When victims and witnesses fail to report gang-related crime due to subtle or overt gang intimidation, the criminal justice system is inherently handicapped.

Crime victims and the gang subculture

The behavior associated with the growing gang subculture presents a sobering challenge for schools and communities. "Gang-connected," survival-oriented persons who are not bonded to a family or the local community are increasingly engaged in unacceptable, anti-social behavior and violent criminal activity.

Male gang members commit six times more crimes than persons with similar backgrounds who do not participate in gang activity.[1] Collectively or individually, gang-connected individuals typically exhibit a pattern of behavior that is designed to lay claim to neighborhoods as well as intimidate the larger community. When victims and witnesses fail to report gang-related crime due to subtle or overt gang intimidation, the criminal justice system is inherently handicapped, if not totally ineffectual.

Unreported crime
Trends in overall crime reporting have remained relatively constant since 1973 when Uniform Crime Report data was first correlated with National Crime Victimization Survey statistics. The NCVS is based on annual interviews conducted with persons age 12 or older living in

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American households. This survey provides a reasonably accurate measure of victimizations reported to police as well as victimizations not reported to police or any other official authority.

U.S. Department of Justice surveys have consistently shown that two-thirds of all crime is not reported to law enforcement authorities. From 1973 to the present, this low overall rate of reporting has remained relatively constant. Between 1990 and 1991, less than one-half of all violent crimes were reported to police. Overall, motor vehicle theft is the crime most likely to be reported, while larceny is least likely to be reported.

The so-called "dark figure" of unreported crime[2] has significantly hampered the effectiveness of the criminal justice system, which theoretically exists to preserve order and hold law violators accountable. Crime in all categories is either under-reported or unreported for a variety of reasons: fear of retaliation; distrust of the criminal justice system; lack of proof or witnesses; loss is recovered; the offender is unsuccessful; or the victimization is viewed as a private or personal matter. When an incident is associated with gang activity, the rate of non-reporting appears to soar.

In the gang subculture, noncompliance with authority and the distortion of truth is inculcated at a very early age. A rigid code of silence is introduced through a violent rite of passage — the gang initia-

tion — and forced allegiance is maintained through the enforcement of gang bylaws and rules. [3] Not by accident, the internal gang structure is designed to meet both the physiological and psychological needs of outcast adolescent and adult males. The anti-social and destructive gang lifestyle has penetrated all levels of society. As many communities have discovered, the hidden and silent victims of gang crime abound while the perpetrators are not held accountable. All citizens are victimized by gang crime.

Gang crime victims
While the physical and emotional damage associated with domestic abuse and child neglect is well-documented, the injury to persons affected by the gang subculture is often overlooked and poorly understood. The stark reality is that gangs attract young men and women who enjoy crime and violence.[4] A by-product of this lifestyle is the gang crime victim.

Overall, teen-agers are much more likely than adults to be crime victims. In many communities, teen-agers are also the frequent victims of violent, gang-related crime. It is important to recognize that the measurement of gang victimization is imprecise, since gang-related offenses are defined differently across police jurisdictions.

It is, however, clear from the annual

victimization data that teen-agers and young adults continue to experience the highest levels of violent crime. Increasingly, these victimizations appear gang-connected.

Between 1990 and 1991, approximately one-fourth of all crimes of violence occurred on the streets away from the victim's home. Schools and parks are providing the backdrop for much of the anti-social behavior and criminal activity associated with the gang subculture. While it is generally assumed that these places are safe and secure, teen-age victims stand about a one in 20 chance of becoming a victim of a violent crime in or near a school or park.

While research has not examined the overall reporting rates of violent crime in parks, it is known that only one-third of all violent crime against students and teachers is reported to police. Additionally, the NCVS results point to slightly better crime reporting in the school building as compared to the surrounding school property.[5]

Historically, it is important to note that the National Institute of Education's 1978 *Violent Schools — Safe Schools: The Safe School Study Report to Congress* first established that two-thirds of all school crime is not officially reported to authorities. It has been shown in subsequent studies that this low rate of crime reporting continues in the 1990s and closely parallels community reporting rates.

The extent to which gang intimidation and harassment is responsible for this nonreporting phenomenon can only be based on speculation. No research has specifically examined the complex issues associated with gang victimization and crime reporting. While it is generally accepted that the gang subculture is philosophically opposed to law and order, it is also important to understand that "gang-connected" individuals are adept at manipulating legitimate authority. Gangs also impede the efforts of agency professionals who attempt to reach and assist gang crime victims.

A clear-cut example of this manipulation and deflection is found in the frequent gang practice of using juveniles, or "shorties," to commit crime, since youths are treated less harshly under current juvenile law. This is a deliberate attempt to circumvent the justice system's effort to operate in the best interests of juveniles.

Today's ethnic and Anglo street gangs continue to enforce rigid codes which foster violence in the form of gang initiations and violations, not to mention the violence associated with gang predatory crime. Interethnic and intra-ethnic violence has become normalized in more and more communities, causing untold numbers of "silent" and powerless victims.

Crime reporting is imperative
Reporting of gang-related crime occurring in or near the school is crucial to a safe educational environment. The best academic, social or parent/community-based programming delivered during the school day cannot in itself overcome the environment of fear in a surrounding community controlled by street gangs. Successful gang prevention and intervention efforts depend on improved crime reporting.

Students must be encouraged to report crimes. Improved reporting can produce such positive results in the school and community as appropriate allocation of resources, swifter application of legal sanctions, a greater empowerment of individuals and communities, and more accurate and systematic collection of school-related crime data.

All citizens must be encouraged to report crime victimizations. It is imperative that agency professionals support the victims and witnesses who report criminal activity in spite of the cycle of violence fostered by the gang subculture. Improved crime reporting can empower victims and restore order in schools and communities.

Endnotes
1. Reiner, Ira. *Gangs, Crime, and Violence in Los Angeles: Findings and Proposals from the District Attorney's Office*, County of Los Angeles, 1992.
2. Skogan, Wesley G., "Dimensions of the Dark Figure of Unreported Crime," *Crime and Delinquency*, XXIII, No.1 (January 1977), 41-50.
3. Jankowsky, M.S. *Islands in the Street: Gangs and American Urban Society.* Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1991.
4. Reiner, 1992.
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ONLY ONE-THIRD OF ALL CRIME IS REPORTED TO POLICE
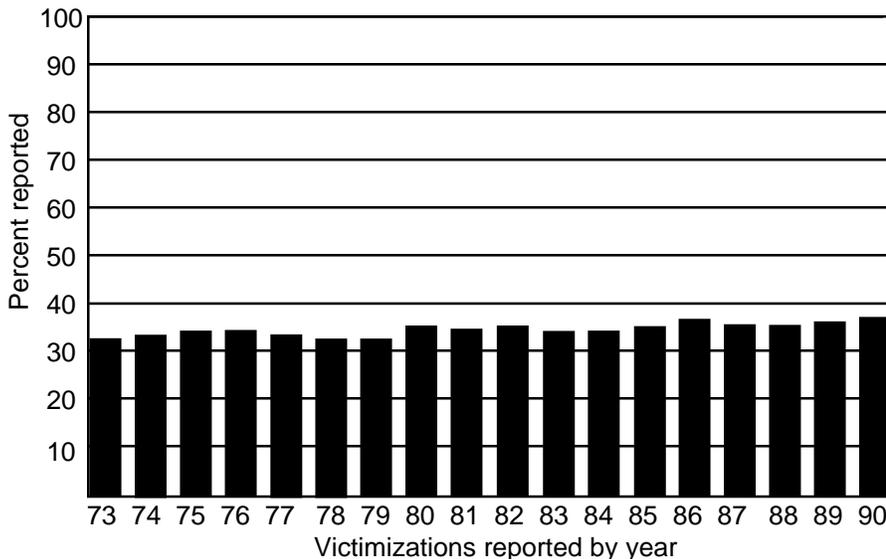
Source: **U.S. Department of Justice**

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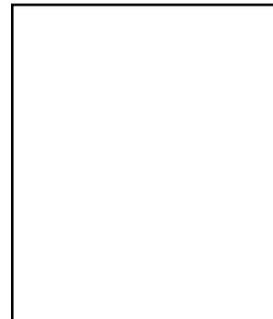
"Feeling good about yourself can't be bought on a street corner. It must be built from within. But there are dangers you should know about. Those pressures we call '*risk factors....*'"

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

Name _____

Title _____

Affiliation _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Mail to: NSSC, 4165 Thousand Oaks Blvd., Ste. 290, Westlake Village, CA 91362

"High-Risk Youth/At the Crossroads"
($50 VHS) _____ copies

"What's Wrong With This Picture?"
($40 VHS) _____ copies
($150 16mm) _____ copies

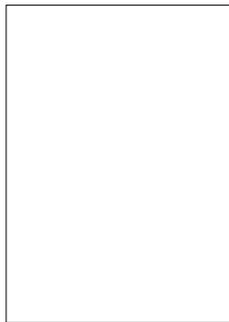"Set Straight on Bullies"
($50 VHS) _____ copies

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

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

How do youths occupy free time?

Adolescence is one of the most significant periods of life — the body grows to adult maturity, the search for autonomy leads children to increasingly value peers rather than family, and junior and senior high schools often place increased challenges upon students in an atmosphere of heightened impersonality.

Youth-serving organizations, whether national programs or local, community-based ones, provide a variety of support services that can significantly affect healthy development. Only schools reach more young people than these organizations, yet few studies had been conducted concerning the people served, the programs used and the effectiveness of such programs.

A Matter of Time: Risk and Opportunity in the Nonschool Hours, a two-year study from the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, examines the contributions of youth organizations to young adolescents' healthy development. The study sought to discover:
• What adolescents do during nonschool time;
• What influences operate upon them during that time;
• What needs are not fulfilled at home or school; and
• What facilities address these unmet needs.

Discretionary time (not scheduled for jobs, school, meals, homework and chores) represents 40 percent of an adolescent's waking hours, and the majority of this time is spent outside the sphere of parental influence. Early ado-

lescence is frequently the time chosen for experimentation with substance use and sexual activity. In communities that offer few alternatives, choices for leisure time activity will, by default, be dictated by boredom and peer associations.

Low income is the factor most consistently associated with such risk; it is not, however, to be considered a predictor of "trouble." The combination of inadequate schools, daily physical danger and larger amounts of unsupervised time in low-income neighborhoods does increase the likelihood of risk and decrease the likelihood that accessible support programs will be available.

Free time is not judged as "bad." Young persons need to think and dream. Nonschool time can be filled with numerous opportunities for adolescents to explore both creative and constructive uses of such time, but community resource agencies must be available to properly direct adolescents' efforts.

Five kinds of enterprises deliver programs and services to adolescents: private, nonprofit national youth organizations; grassroots youth development organizations without national affiliations; religious youth organizations; service clubs, sports organizations, senior citizens groups and museums that offer youth programs; and public institutions, such as libraries and parks. The work of all these organizations is largely ignored in the public policy arena.

Evidence at both national and local levels confirms inequities in the availability, quality and effectiveness of adolescent-serving programs. Notable is the

"wide disparity in services between upper- and lower- income communities." Additionally, a complete lack of coordination and support for these services leaves each organization completely isolated. Thus, cooperative funding efforts and assessment of future needs are effectively prevented.

Recommendations for reaching and serving young adolescents include:
• "Tailor" programs to their needs and interests;
• Recognize diversity — race, culture, ethnicity, gender;
• Increase programs for low-income, under-served youth;
• Compete for their time and attention;
• Expand quality and diversity of youth-serving staff;
• Establish working partnerships with community agencies;
• Provide for youth to participate in community service;
• Serve as strong youth advocates;
• Evaluate results of community programs; and
• Stabilize youth-serving groups' structure and funding.

Much of the governmental focus on youth deals with the punitive or rehabilitative aspects of the juvenile justice system. Focusing on healthy adolescent development requires the promotion of desirable behavior, not just the remediation of undesirable behaviors.

The media can expand opportunities for young people by covering youth activities and adolescent-support legislation; involving young people in all areas of publication and broadcast; and publicizing youth-serving programs.

This country can do more to promote healthy adolescent development. America's 20 million young people need a network of support services, both short- and long-term national policy strategies, ongoing program evaluations and leadership, and a secure financial base for continued program delivery.

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

Metal detectors vs. student rights
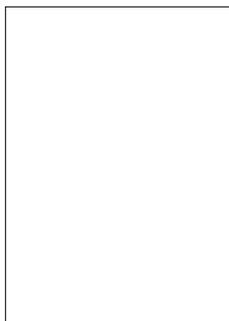
A growing number of policymakers, law enforcement officials and parents are joining their voices in favor of taking additional steps to prevent guns and other weapons from appearing on school campuses across the country. Some of the legislation being proposed would have been difficult to support just a few years ago. The approach that is now gaining wider acceptance calls for the increasing use of metal detectors in schools.

School districts with a history of weapons incidents have led the wave of reform seeking to guarantee a higher level of safety on campus. But in this tide also are school officials who simply do not wish to become part of the database of campus violence. The fear of having just one crisis event has become such a public relations nightmare that proactivity in the extreme is becoming the norm.

These events have had the effect of disjoining the ordinary relationship between law and educational policy. Rather than law influencing policy, law appears to be lagging behind policy on the subject of metal detectors and may give way.

The matter being revisited in the metal detection debate is whether students take any constitutional rights to school that limit the ability of school officials to control campuses. The law has always answered the question affirmatively, and case law thus focuses on when and how the need for campus safety outweighs the rights of the student. Terms such as reasonable suspicion, plain view, scope of the search, custodial interest and curricular requirements have played a major role in providing the various tests for school law cases.

Curiously, on the reactive side of school safety planning, the law is in synchronization with policymakers. After *T.L.O.*, the landmark reasonable suspicion case, the nature of the violation justifies the inception of a student search. Reactive cases should raise only one issue: Was the search reasonable in scope?

This issue is sufficiently influenced by the nature of the violation that triggers the initial investigation that often the two will be treated as part of one analysis. The reasonable scope issue is really just another way of categorizing the level of seriousness of the initial conduct violation: the more serious the violation, the wider the scope of the resulting investigation and search.

An incident involving students and guns on campus should create an environment of exigency sufficient to justify warrantless actions by even law enforcement officers as an exception to the much stricter probable cause standard. Therefore, as the seriousness of the lawlessness increases, so too increases the flexibility of the school administrator in bringing to bear various enforcement solutions.

But *T.L.O.* is an indirect aid, at best, when school officials adapt its rules to support *proactive* campus safety policies, such as metal detectors. Its major premise — that school officials balance the student's reasonable expectation of privacy against the need for restoring order — focuses on individualized suspicion and specific students. It does not readily convert into a useful tool when the suspicion is generic and the disruption or the violation has not yet occurred.

Complicating matters further is the duty of school officials to respect the privacy rights of students on campus. This interest is largely absent in the reactive case, particularly for serious campus conduct violations involving weapons, drugs and the like. But in a proactive setting, generic suspicions that some students are engaging in undesirable behavior is not only difficult to quantify, it is difficult to balance against student expectations of privacy. The Supreme Court in *T.L.O.* observed that

> Students at a minimum must bring to school not only the supplies needed for their studies, but also keys, money, and the necessaries of personal hygiene and grooming. ... In short, schoolchildren may find it necessary to carry with them a variety of legitimate, noncontraband items, and there is no reason to conclude that they have necessarily waived all rights to privacy in such items merely by bringing them onto school grounds.

But the courts lag far behind the legislatures, many of which have already announced guidelines to encourage such searches. Tennessee law simply announces that "[t]o facilitate a search which is found to be necessary, metal detectors and other devices designed to indicate the presence of dangerous weapons, drug paraphernalia or drugs may be used in searches." Louisiana law authorizes school officials to search "for weapons, illegal drugs, alcohol, stolen goods, or other materials or objects the possession of which is a violation of such parish or city school board's policy, either by conducting a random search with a metal detector or when [there is] a reasonable belief that the items sought will be found [by a direct search of the particular student's person]."

Because searches reflect a sense of desperation about campus security, schools must be careful before implementing general searches using metal detectors.

Prepared by Bernard James, special counsel for NSSC.

No policy may be the worst policy

As issues of school safety continue to appear before the court, concern focuses on the nature of the duty of school officials to protect students from harm while on campus. It is an easy matter in the abstract to say that school officials are responsible. In practice, the precise scope of this duty emphasizes the role of teacher training.

A safe school provides teachers with both a standard of conduct reflected in the general policy and specific training. Without this focus, teachers and other staff members are likely to find themselves improvising in response to problems. Such was the case in *Board of Education v. Chaddock*.

In *Chaddock*, a sixth-grade teacher was fired for failing to respond properly to a student who brought a gun to class. The student kept the gun hidden from his teachers but showed the weapon to approximately 20 students. None of the students reported the presence of the weapon to any school personnel. When Mr. Chaddock learned of the gun's presence, he asked the student to give him the gun, opened his desk drawer and asked the juvenile to place the gun inside. The student refused. Chaddock then continued to teach the class, ignoring the student. At the end of class, an administrator confronted the student and attempted to take the gun. The student aimed the loaded weapon at her and ordered her to stay away. After a few tense moments, the student turned and ran.

In the dismissal hearing, Chaddock defended his decision to conduct the class in a normal manner. Based on his experience with the student, Chaddock

thought that the student would not intentionally harm his classmates — violence would occur only if the student felt threatened.

Without agreeing with his decision, the court ruled that the Board's dismissal of Chaddock for willful neglect of duty was inappropriate. The rationale is worth noting: "... the lack of a clear policy [covering the incident], the isolated nature of the appellant's offense, his otherwise [good] record, [convince us that] the Board of Education acted arbitrarily and capriciously. ..."
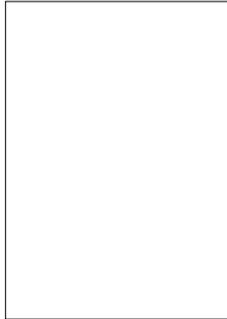
It is hard to miss the role of the school district's failure to have rules in the outcome of the Chaddock case. It is also easy to see how teachers and staff members may be reluctant to intervene in situations that create a risk of harm to themselves and others without a standard or procedure. More to the point, it is clear that courts are reluctant to impose a duty on teachers to provide a safe school environment in the absence of a comprehensive policy by the district.

This places school policymakers at a crossroads in their thinking about safe school planning. The failure to properly train teachers to respond to known and reasonably likely disruptions may result in liability for the school district.

The cases on this subject are well-known to government liability lawyers. A summary of the rules suggests a logical extension to classroom injuries:

- Even when the policy itself is not unconstitutional, a municipality is often held liable when its failure to train its employees or inadequate training of its employees results in injury.
- Liability may be imposed "only where the failure to train amounts to deliberate indifference to the rights of persons with whom the employees come into contact."
- Since liability can be imposed only where the municipality's policies are the moving force behind the injury, only a "deliberate indifference" standard applied to a failure to train will elevate the municipality's shortcoming to "policy or custom." The municipality must have made a deliberate or conscious choice to follow a particular alternative in order to be held liable.
- While it may seem unlikely a municipality would have a policy of not taking reasonable steps to train its employees, it may happen that, in light of the duties assigned to specific officers or employees, the need for more or different training is so obvious, and the inadequacy so likely to result in injury, that the policymakers can reasonably be said to have been deliberately indifferent to the need.

When these laws are applied to schools, the failure to provide adequate training in classroom safety may be said to represent a policy for which the municipality is responsible and may be held liable if it causes injury. Whether the teacher is reprimanded, suspended or discharged is beside the point; the school must explain the employee's classroom crisis response. This will be easy for school districts facing only isolated incidents of violence. But for school districts with serious, habitual campus disruptions, the failure to train will be inexplicable.

Planning for occurrences that are no longer remote — guns, drugs and other evil — is now essential. It avoids placing the staff in a mode of improvisation, permits administrators to evaluate performance and helps courts to support the decision of school officials to punish those who, after being trained, fail to satisfy the standard of conduct.

Prepared by Bernard James, special counsel for NSSC.

Resolving conflict and violence

Creative Conflict Resolution: More Than 200 Activities for Keeping Peace in the Classroom *by William J. Kreidler, Scott, Foresman and Company, 1984, 216 pages.*

Conflict in the classroom, or anywhere else that people share space, is inevitable. Learning to handle that conflict appropriately is the subject of teacher training courses in schools of education throughout the country. The 1984 publication date might cause some readers to bypass *Creative Conflict Resolution*, but it offers classroom-tested practices from an experienced teacher. For those who find theoretical knowledge lacking when dealing with day-to-day schoolroom reality, it is a gold mine of practical information.

The premise places the teacher in the role of peacemaker. Although few choose education from a desire to assume such a role, the fact that conflict will occur does make the assumption valid. Keeping and restoring order cause the peacemaking responsibility to rest squarely upon the teacher. The book is directed toward kindergarten through sixth-grade teachers, but the theory and techniques are applicable to a much broader age range.

The concept of the peaceable classroom does not refer to individual teaching styles learning styles or student-to-teacher ratio. It regards those who share the room as a community in which five qualities exist: cooperation, communication, tolerance, positive emotional expression and conflict resolution.

Such environments must often be "built from scratch." Accordingly, there is information covering student conflicts, student-teacher differences, and problems with other teachers, administrators and parents. Suggested lesson plans and group exercises cover the many skills necessary to resolve conflicts. There are helpful hints about integrating all these lessons into the curriculum on a year-long time line.

Nothing will make conflict disappear, but constructive conflict management will teach students skills for lifelong use and create a climate in which learning can flourish. *Creative Conflict Resolution* delivers a range of activities explained in sufficient detail to make even a novice teacher willing to give the classroom exercises a try.

Prepared by Sue Ann Meador, associate editor of School Safety

Indirect victims of violence

"Secret Wounds: Working with Child Observers of Family Violence," *a 32-minute videotape produced by Banerjee Associates,* Skillman, NJ, 1992.

Domestic violence has become a daily occurrence in our society, with its effects reaching across all boundaries and ethnic backgrounds. Established shelters and programs help victims deal with and escape from this form of abuse. But what about the observers of domestic violence?

What about the children who often witness the violence that occurs between their parents?

Secret Wounds: Working with Child Observers of Family Violence is a video curriculum for professionals who assist children who have witnessed family violence. Part one covers an overview of research, the effects of violence on children and the family dynamics involved in domestic violence. The viewer is presented with insight from a panel of various professionals. The information is effective in helping professionals understand the impact of domestic violence on children and how its effects may manifest in various settings, particularly in school.

Children respond differently to what they have witnessed. Witnessing violence has psychological, social and sometimes physical effects on children as well as on society in general. Violence begets violence. Children who observe family violence may learn that violence is a way of communicating — it becomes a way of relating to others. Children may also become fearful of leaving home because of what may happen while they are away. They can develop a need to protect their parents.

Part two of the video consists of a series of animated vignettes based on drawings from child observers. The vignettes can be used to help children deal with issues such as self-esteem, self-concept, isolation and a wide range of feelings associated with the violence that they have seen in their homes.

This curriculum is a beneficial tool to help professionals understand an aspect of domestic violence that has received little attention. Children are often forgotten when it comes to domestic violence because, in most cases, they are not the primary victims. There is a growing number of children in America today who witness violence between their parents. They become secondary victims of domestic violence, and ultimately of society as well.

Prepared by Julienne Clowney, office communications coordinator for NSSC.