NATIONAL SCHOOL SAFETY CENTER

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National alert on school safety ushers in reassessment

By Ronald D. Stephens

NSSC wants to go on record emphasizing that much that is right is being accomplished in schools across the nation. Most schools carry out their educational mandates, strive to meet the academic needs of students and promote good citizenship and school safety on a daily basis. Despite the recent spate of school shootings, school continues to be the safest place for young people to be.

The National School Safety Center has enjoyed working in close partnership with Pepperdine University, the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the U.S. Department of Education's Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program for 14 years, since NSSC's creation by presidential mandate in 1984.

Throughout that time, NSSC has conducted more than 1,000 training programs and offered training and technical assistance to more than 125,000 youth-serving professionals nationwide. NSSC had been instrumental in the establishment of 12 state school safety centers.

From the largest urban centers to some of the most remote towns and villages of this nation, the Center has worked with a diverse array of clients, all of whom are committed to making their schools and communities safer places for children.

• Students from grade school through graduate school have contacted the Center regularly for assistance in researching topics on school safety issues.

• Parents concerned about bullying have called for information about strategies to use in helping their children and effective programs to recommend to schools.

• Police officers have requested information about setting up School Resource Officer programs and names of other agencies that might offer collegial assistance.

• Local, state and national representatives of newspaper and television news media have turned to NSSC during times of school crises to check on the latest statistics regarding NSSC's School-Associated Deaths Count and for names of agencies and experts such as psychologists, key experts on school safety issues, truancy, dropouts and school uniforms.

• School districts have contacted NSSC for legal and legislative advice and backing, school site safety assessments, leadership training seminars, publications and sample safe school plans, crisis plans, and school safety surveys.

• National, state and local agencies specializing in risk management, industrial security, adjudicated youth and juvenile and family courts have sought out NSSC for professional contacts and presentations.

• Government agencies have turned to NSSC when they needed quality work in a limited amount of time for articles, manuals and initiatives on such topics as school uniforms, truancy, bullying and youth out of the education mainstream.

NSSC has consistently been at the forefront of an ever developing and emerging program to promote safe and welcoming schools and communities. Notable accomplishments have included:

• Developing national standards for creating safe schools.

• Serving as a catalyst for creating a national dialogue on safe schools.

• Developing the first national anti-bullying campaign.

• Creating comprehensive guidelines for the development and implementation of school crisis prevention and management plans.

• Developing criteria for conducting school site safety assessments.

• Creating the nation's first and most comprehensive school safety resource center.

• Creating the nation's top "School Safety Leadership Training" program.

• Initiating the first in a series of national conferences on school safety.

• Publishing America's leading school crime prevention newsjournal.

The Center wishes to specifically acknowledge the leadership and support of Shay Bilchik, Administrator of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and William Modzeleski, Director of the U.S. Department of Education's Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program. Special acknowledgment is also given to Alfred Regnery, Robert Sweet, Vern Spears and John Wilson, all former administrators of OJJDP. Without their unfailing support, NSSC could not have enjoyed the level of success that it has achieved. For all of these key players, the Center wishes to express gratitude.

NSSC congratulates the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory of Portland, Oregon, on recenlty winning the nationally competitive federal grant award for administering a new School Safety Training and Technical Assistance program.

The work of keeping schools safe is still in a developing state as new strategies and opportunities are sought to work toward the success and safety of all of America's children. This issue of *School Safety* marks a new era for NSSC. In the months ahead, the Center will be working more closely with corporate America to create a national network of support for safe schools from the business community. The Center is also working with Pepperdine University to establish the nation's first professorship chair in school safety. In 1999, the Center will announce a new set of strategic goals and objectives to complement the national movement toward creating safer and better schools. Look for NSSC's latest news and plans in our publications and on our Internet home page: www.nssc1.org.

School Safety

About the cover:
Graphic artist Steve Teeple's cover illustration reflects the explosive nature of school crises. Educators, students, parents and community members must work cooperatively to eliminate community violence, to explore various ways to solve conflicts peacefully, and to seek help for troubled youth whose anger can pose a threat to themselves and others.

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BY SCOTT POLAND

*A crisis is an opportunity to make needed changes —
and we have recently experienced staggering school crises.
If we fail to respond effectively, then our past will determine our future.*

Challenged by crises, we must seek solutions

- *"If I come to school tomorrow, will I have to go outside? What if the fire alarm rings?*
- *"Why is there still blood on the sidewalk and bullet holes on the side of the building?*
- *"I can't face returning to Mrs. Wright's class. My teacher is dead!"*

The anguished questions and comments above came from students at Westside Middle School in Jonesboro, Ark., on Wednesday, March 25, 1998, the day after two youth, ages 11 and 13, had lain in wait in a field across from the school to shoot students and teachers who exited the building following a fire alarm one of the boys had activated. Four girl classmates and one of the boys' teachers died. Nine additional students and a teacher were wounded.

Immediately following the shooting, local school and community leaders began their initial crisis intervention efforts. The school administration turned for leadership to their own school psychologists,

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who spent a great deal of time helping both students and staff deal with their shock and grief. Administrators had also located and arranged for additional counseling personnel from all parts of Arkansas to assist with crisis intervention efforts.

National crisis team
The community had also asked National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA) to provide assistance, too, as had the community of Paducah, Ky., following the shooting deaths of three teenaged girls and the wounding of five additional students on December 1, 1997, in the lobby of Heath High School. Less than 26 hours after the tragic shooting, the NOVA team arrived in Jonesboro.

The goals of the national crisis teams in the two communities were the following:
- to identify those most affected by the crisis and to provide them assistance;
- to provide guidance, support and training to local caregivers who, in turn, would assist those in need in their community with long-term care;
- to provide an open forum and public meeting for all residents of the community, during which time they could vent emotions and receive immediate assistance and information about long-term assistance.

Typically, initial NOVA teams stay in communities only for three or four days, then leave on-going care in the hands of

local caregivers. In the Jonesboro case, the team met with students, teachers and parents and with the families of the deceased and injured. Team members conducted processing sessions not only at the school, but also at the local hospital, in police stations and in churches.

A day after the shooting, over 500 parents and students crowded into the gymnasium at Westside Middle School. Intensely emotional, angry and in great pain, those assembled wanted to know why there seems to be an increase in youth violence; they wanted to know why the shootings had occurred.

No easy answers
I regularly counsel victims of youth violence and suicide and meet with school personnel to present crisis intervention information. Yet in responding to questions such as those from grieving citizens in Jonesboro, I find that there are no pat or easy answers.

The American Psychological Association (APA) and the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) have outlined the following predictive factors associated with youth violence:
- child abuse
- violence in the home
- ineffective parenting
- media violence
- gun access
- prejudice
- poverty

In addition, I offer the following observations and suggest some steps that school boards can take to confront the challenge presented by school violence and assist in eliminating it.

The finality of death - Most young people do not understand the finality of death. Psychological theorists suggest that by age 13, children are in the advanced stages of intellectual development and should understand the permanence of death, that they should recognize that death is a biological process. However, my 25 years of working with children — and certainly including reading accounts of interviews with students who have committed school shootings within the last year — have taught me that most children, and even many adolescents, do not at all understand the finality of death.

The effect of media violence - Evidence abounds that young people are very influenced by the violence that is portrayed on television, in movies and in video games. Our society glamorizes violence. Many times children who commit violent acts are simply carrying out what they see on television or at the movies. Additionally, many children also see violent acts committed in their homes and neighborhoods and believe that through violence, you can "get your way."

The easy availability of guns - According to a study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the United States has the highest rate of firearm death for children among the 26 industrialized countries surveyed. The study found that children in the U.S. are 12 times more likely to die from firearm injury than are children in all these other nations combined.[1]

National Center for Health Statistics data reported by the Children's Defense Fund reveal that every day in the United States, 14 children aged 19 and under are killed with firearms.[2] Firearm injuries are the second leading cause of death for youth aged 10-24 nationwide.[3] Homicide is the third leading cause of death for youth 5-14 years of age and

the second leading cause of death for older teens and young adults aged 15-24.[4] In 1995, 83 percent of homicides for juvenile victims aged 12 and over involved firearms.[5]

At the very least, adults who own guns — especially parents — must be held accountable for safe storage and monitoring of their firearms and must be subject to appropriate sanctions should their guns be used by children for destructive acts.

The conspiracy of silence - In almost every instance of shootings by students at schools during the 1997-98 school year, fellow students had prior information that the person ultimately responsible for the killings was troubled, angry, prone to making violent threats of harm to others, or had bragged about hurting or killing small animals. Yet the shootings occurred. We must begin to teach our children at an early age to recognize unsafe conditions and persons who could cause harm. We must ensure that every child knows where to get responsible adult help if they feel unsafe, that they do not feel fear or ridicule for getting help or giving information about others who may need help.

The need for social skill building - Parents at home and teachers in school should be equipped to teach children skills such as cooperative problem solving, anger management and impulse control. We must ensure that responsible adults help children develop self esteem and confidence in their own abilities to learn from mistakes and to experience and enjoy many types of success.

School boards' duties
School board members must ensure that school administrators make school safety and crisis planning top priorities by doing the following:
• Determine what violence prevention/intervention procedures and programs are in place in district schools to address the leading causes of death for students, in order of frequency: accidents, homi-

cides and suicides.
• Ensure that school curriculums include training in developing problem-solving skills and anger management.
• Check to determine that individual school safety and crisis plans have been formulated, disseminated, reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

A crisis is an opportunity to make needed changes — and the nation has recently experienced staggering school crises. School safety is an attainable goal, but that goal must be sought cooperatively by students, parents, educators and communities working in partnerships. Citizens must be committed to making needed changes and seeking effective violence prevention and intervention strategies so that schools remain safe places in which all children can learn and teachers can teach. If we fail to respond effectively, then our past will determine our future.

Endnotes
1. Centers for Control and Prevention, "Rates of Homicide, Suicide, and Firearms-Related Death Among Children — 26 Industrialized Countries," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, Vol. 46, No. 5 (7 February 1997) : 103, quoted in *Ceasefire Action Network Newsletter*, Vol. 14, (Washington, D.C.: Educational Fund to End Handgun Violence, July 1998): 7.
2. National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) information tabulated in Children's Defense Fund Report, "Child Gun Deaths Drop for First Time in More Than a Decade, CDF Reports, August 1997, quoted in Ibid.: 6.
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, National Survey of Injury Mortality Data, 1987-1994, November 1996, quoted in Ibid.
4. R. Anderson, Ph.D., K.D. Kochanek, M.A., and S.L. Murphy, "Report of Final Mortality Statistics, 1995," *Monthly Vital Statistics Report,* U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, Vol. 45, No. 11, Supplement 2, 12 June 1997, quoted in Ibid.: 7.
5. H. Snyder. "Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1997 Update on Violence (Washington, D.C.: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, August 1997), quoted in Ibid.: 6.

Principles for identifying early warning signs of school violence

Why didn't we see it coming? In the wake of violence, we ask this question not so much to place blame, but to understand better what we can do to prevent such an occurrence from ever happening again. We review over and over the days leading up to a given incident. Did the child say or do anything that would have cued us in to the impending crisis? Did we miss an opportunity to help?

There are early warning signs in most cases of violence to self and others —certain behavioral and emotional signs that, when viewed in context, can signal a troubled child. But early warning signs are just that — indicators that a student may need help.

Such signs may or may not indicate a serious problem. They do not necessarily mean that a child is prone to violence toward self or others. Rather, early warning signs provide us with the impetus to check out our concerns and address the child's needs. Early warning signs allow us to act responsibly by getting help for the child before problems escalate.

Early warning signs can help frame concern for a child. However, it is important to avoid inappropriately labeling or stigmatizing individual students because they appear to fit a specific profile or set of early warning indicators. It is okay to be worried about a child, but it is not okay to overreact and jump to conclusions.

Teachers, administrators and other school support staff are not professionally trained to analyze children's feelings and motives. But they are on the front line when it comes to observing troublesome behavior and making referrals to appropriate professionals, such as school psychologists, social workers, counselors and nurses. They also play a significant role in responding to diagnostic information provided by specialists. Thus, it is no surprise that effective schools take special care in training the entire school community to understand and identify early warning signs.

When staff members seek help for a troubled child, when friends report worries about a peer or friend, when parents raise concerns about their child's thoughts or habits, children can get the help they need. By actively sharing information, a school community can provide quick, effective responses.

Principles for identifying warning signs

Educators and families can increase their abilities to recognize early warning signs by establishing close, caring, and supportive relationships with children and youth — getting to know them well enough to be aware of their needs, feelings, attitudes and behavior patterns. Educators and parents together can review school records for patterns of behavior or sudden changes in behavior.

Unfortunately, there is a real danger that early warning signs will be misinterpreted. Educators and parents — and in some cases, students — can ensure that the early warning signs are not misinterpreted by using several significant principles to better understand them. These principles include:

• **Do no harm.** There are certain risks associated with using early warning signs to identify children who are troubled. First, the intent should be to get help for a child early on. The early warning signs should not to be used as rationale to exclude, isolate or punish a child. Nor should they be used as a checklist for formally identifying, mislabeling or stereotyping children. Formal disability identification under federal law requires individualized evaluation by qualified professionals. In addition, all referrals to outside agencies based on the early warning signs must be kept confidential and must be done with parental consent (except referrals for suspected child abuse or neglect).

• **Understand violence and aggression within a context.** Violence is contextual. Violent and aggressive behavior as an expression of emotion may have many antecedent factors that exist within the school, the home and the larger social environment. In fact, for those children who are at risk for aggression and violence, certain environments or situations can set it off. Some children may act out if stress becomes too great, if they lack positive coping skills and if they have learned to react with aggression.

• **Avoid stereotypes.** Stereotypes can interfere with — and even harm — the school community's ability to identify and help children. It is important to be aware of false cues — including race, socio-economic status, cognitive or academic ability, or physical appearance. In fact, such stereotypes can unfairly harm children, especially when the school community acts upon them.

• **View warning signs within a developmental context.** Children and youth at different levels of development have varying social and emotional capabilities. They may express their needs differently in elementary, middle and high school. The point is to know what is developmentally typical behavior, so that behaviors are not misinterpreted.

• **Understand that children typically exhibit multiple warning signs.** It is common for children who are troubled to exhibit multiple signs. Research confirms that most children who are troubled and at risk for aggression exhibit more than one warning sign, repeatedly, and with increasing intensity over time. Thus, it is important not to overreact to single signs, words or actions.

BY RICHARD LIEBERMAN

School psychologists urge administrators to institute primary violence prevention programs to root out fear, anger, isolation, prejudice and bullying among students and to activate crisis intervention procedures for the health and safety of all.

Schoolyard tragedies: coping with the aftermath

"Ring around the rosy, a pocket full of posies, ashes, ashes, we all fall down."

We all grew up singing and running around in circles to the tune "Ring Around the Rosy." But few of us know that the popular children's nursery rhyme was born of tragedy. Where hundreds of thousands of people died during the bubonic plague in medieval Europe, children found a way to cope by creating a game.

"Ring Around the Rosy" told of the rose-colored ring seen on the skin of those afflicted with the fatal disease. "A pocket full of posies" referred to the flowers thrown on the graves of those who died. "Ashes, ashes" represented the villages and bodies that were burned to prevent the spread of the plague. "We all fall down" is what happened to those who died.

Dealing with catastrophe
Children invent their own ways of dealing with catastrophe: widespread starvation and disease, the horrors of war, and — as seen recently in the United States — the terror of schoolyard shootings and other

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such tragedies. Even the child victims among the children in the school bus in Chowchilla, Calif., who were kidnapped in 1976 later coped with the trauma by playing "kidnap" on the school playground. It would not be unusual for students at some of the campuses involved in the rash of shootings across the country during school year 1997-98 to be playing gun-related games as coping mechanisms for venting emotions resulting from the tragedies.

Crisis response team
On March 24, 1998, two elementary school students ages 11 and 13 shot and killed four students and a teacher and injured 10 others at Westside Middle School in Jonesboro, Ark. The pair had set off a fire alarm, then from a forested area across the playground from the school, shot persons as they exited the buildings.

The school psychologists, victim advocates, police officers and religious leaders who comprised the seven-member National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA) Community Crisis Response Team sent to the school got a firsthand look at the students' reactions to the horrific tragedy.

Many students suffered from post-traumatic stress symptoms. Children reported intrusive thoughts, recollections and nightmares. Parents observed regressive behaviors, eating and sleeping irregularities and myriad complaints of aches and pains.

Responses varied from child to child; one

child cowered on the arm of a friend, another cried for her lost friends and a recently deceased grandmother, while other children appeared to be angry, and some simply relieved their tensions in silliness. Their initial responses of fear and anger evolved across a complex range of emotions that often resulted in expressions of guilt, shame or grief.

All such reactions are natural when persons are faced with this type of extraordinary tragedy. The children found that the safety and security of the schoolyard had been shattered when bullets began to fly. And that is when the work pioneered by the NOVA team began to pay off.

NOVA/NEAT
NOVA has collaborated with the National Association of School Psychologists' National Emergency Assistance Team (NEAT) on post-crisis responses to schools across the country. This emergency response team meets with local caregivers and instructs them on how to deal with crises of great magnitude.

Since the formation of the NOVA/NEAT team in August 1997, NOVA has partnered with NEAT 11 times, including responding to such tragedies as those in Jonesboro, Paducah, Ky., Edinboro, Pa., and most recently in Springfield, Ore., where a student walked into the school cafeteria and started shooting, killing two students and wounding 22, after having killed his parents at home the previous evening.

A city besieged

The three school psychologists working in the Westside School District in Jonesboro immediately called on NOVA/NEAT for help in coping with the result of the shootings. School personnel moved quickly to remove evidence of the shooting; the media were moved to a hill within sight of the school grounds, but not within shouting distance. By the time students were to return to school a day later, the only evidence of the horror was the bullet holes in the gymnasium walls.

With the start of this new school year in Jonesboro and other towns and cities suddenly spotlighted last year due to school violence, teachers, students, parents, emergency personnel and, indeed, citizens generally are seeking renewed equilibrium for their lives. This is a positive step that will help assure the renewal and health of the communities involved. Getting back into routines will be an attempt at regaining whatever passes for "control" of individuals' lives.

Suggested support for crisis victims

The National Association of School Psychologists suggests that schools and communities provide the following support to victims of tragedies:

- *Provide responsible adult "listeners."* Let students know of available, trained adults who can provide immediate and long-term listening and counseling help.
- *Offer class discussion opportunities.* Provide guidance to teachers in ways to conduct both small and large group class discussions that will give individuals chances to vent feelings and exchange perceptions and emotions.
- *Discuss crises in various contexts.* For example, a junior high health class might offer an appropriate forum for discussing suicide prevention; an elementary school science or social studies class could be the context for teaching about weather-related disasters and safety strategies.
- *Provide facts to help allay fears.* For example, if a classmate has a particular condition or dies of a disease, provide students with background information about prevalence, treatments and cures.
- *Anticipate delayed effects.* Be aware that similar incidents in another locale may trigger renewed feelings. Plan a special remembrance for the one-year anniversary of the crisis, thereby helping to moderate feelings that the date might be forgotten or ignored.
- *Respond to long-term reactions.* Be alert to signs that there may be a continuing need to discuss the crisis, such as a shooting or hurricane.
- *Watch for pathological long-term reactions.* Pathological long-term reactions are more severe than those experienced by most children. Some children may persistently reexperience the traumatic event through intense recollections, dreams, flashbacks or hallucinations; persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma; numbing of responsiveness, such as shutdown emotions or diminished interest in usual activities; or signs of increased arousal, such as sleep difficulties, irritability, disturbances in concentration, or exaggerated startle response.
- *Emphasize a return to stability.* As effects of the crisis diminish, return to previous schedules and maintain these for a time—even if some change in routine had been previously planned—in order to provide a sense of security and comfort.

A violence prevention curriculum

Kevin Dwyer, president-elect of the National Association of School Psychologists, has announced that the new guide to safe schools, titled "Early Warning, Timely Response," is now available. Produced at the request of President Clinton and prepared by NASP, the guide can be accessed on web sites operated by NASP, the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Justice, and the Center for Effective Collaborative Practice. The document, which has been reviewed by a number of governmental, educational and nonprofit agencies, defines safe schools, outlines the creation of effective crisis response plans, offers strategies for responding to crises and provides a list of warning signs characteristic of students who may be at-risk for violent behavior. Dwyer states that NASP hopes that school principals — whether working in rural towns or urban inner city schools — will see the need for violence prevention programs as an effective means of reducing campus confrontations.

Many violence prevention programs and curriculums are currently in use around the country. The California Association of School Psychologists is developing a national model to help alleviate the threat of schoolyard tragedies and to cope with those that are nevertheless bound to occur despite careful planning.

Second Step, a violence prevention curriculum developed by the Seattle-based Committee for Children, is used in schools throughout the nation. The curriculum teaches skills to reduce impulsive and aggressive behavior in children and ways to increase their levels of social competence.

A recent one-year study showed that the second- and third-grade students who were taught the *Second Step* curriculum became less physically and verbally aggressive after participation. Those in the same age groups not involved in the program became more physically and verbally aggressive. *Second Step* and other such programs teach children to praise others, avoid insults, resolve conflicts peacefully, manage their anger and speak about hurt feelings. Many such programs also offer parenting training classes for families at-risk of violence.

A range of perceptions

Even now, after an unprecedented year of violent incidents in schools across the country in 1997-98, school administrators exhibit a range of perceptions regarding violence in schools. Some do not believe there is violence on their campuses. Others feel that metal detectors, drug testing and assorted punitive actions will keep violence out of their schools.

School psychologists urge administrators to institute primary violence prevention programs to root out fear, anger, isolation, prejudice and bullying from among children and youth within schools and to protect all youth and those who teach and serve them by creating and activating safe school plans and crisis intervention procedures tailored to school and community needs.

BY MARY SCHOENFELDT

*The concepts and strategies of Critical Incident Stress Management
should be an integral part of any safe school crisis intervention plan to provide
support for trauma among students and staff in the wake of a crisis.*

Support students, staff in crisis recovery

When a school community experiences a traumatic event, many forms of intervention are needed. Most such mediation falls under a broad category called Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM). Specific activities range from informal contacts and expressions of support through a more structured defusing process to a formal critical incident stress debriefing. These interventions may be accomplished informally by individuals who care about one another or by highly skilled trauma specialists. As the intensity of the intervention increases, so does the need for specialized training of the interveners.

Critical incident stress management activities do not have to be performed by mental health professionals exclusively. In fact, some of the most effective such activities are carried out by peers who have had specialized training. To protect both the interveners and the participants, it is recom- mended that more than one person facilitate group activities. Such shared leadership encourages objective interaction and provides a reality check. That is, when one facilitator is interacting, the other is watching, assessing the interaction and noting the reactions of other group members. Thus the facilitators' shared responsibilities can also provide

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reciprocal support under conditions that are often emotionally intense. In the school system, perhaps a teacher, a school bus driver or a counselor will be the one who has received specialized training in understanding the dynamics of trauma and the structured process of debriefing and other stress management activities.

Although CISM activities are appropriate for all groups in a school community — students, staff, parents — the activities should be conducted in homogeneous rather than mixed groups. Services provided in peer groups ensure provision of an accepting, confidential forum in which peers feel comfortable discussing their reactions to a given incident. Specialized training for Critical Incident Stress Management is available through many organizations, such as the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation. [Contact author Schoenfeldt for more information.]

Staff debriefings
The very nature of traumatic incidents causes those involved to become secondary victims, if not direct victims. The magnitude of an event that requires CISM can quickly overwhelm the resources available at a particular school site and can introduce an element of chaos. Therefore it is imperative that schools have intervention resources available that are outside their own system. In times of crisis, it is very difficult for support personnel to maintain the detachment and objectivity necessary

for effective debriefing of crisis victims at their own school. Therefore, neighboring school districts should formulate emergency response plans to exchange their corps of trained personnel to provide critical stress management services for their partner districts in times of crisis.

Staff meetings provide a natural forum for critical incident stress management activities. Such settings offer opportunities to give information, dispel rumors, answer questions and exchange information on students, parents or school staff members who may need additional support. A staff meeting is also the place to provide debriefing or defusing activities. If formalized defusing or debriefing is in order, breaking into groups of 15 to 20 is more effective than conducting large group sessions. The smaller groups provide greater opportunity for each person to participate and to express needs for information, help or follow-up. Group leaders can thus more effectively facilitate the debriefing process.

Student debriefings
Classroom debriefing has proven to be a successful form of group crisis intervention in traumatic incidents. Such activities provide a break from the usual classroom routine and give students a chance to vent feelings and reactions to the crisis and explore implications of the event in a safe, familiar, supportive environment structured by trained, caring adults.

Ground rules for such sessions are basic

support group rules:
- Group facilitators guide.
- Each participant has the right to pass, or remain silent when given a turn to speak.
- Interaction among group members must be respectful; and, most importantly,
- Information shared is confidential, unless the facilitators have reason to believe that someone is in danger of hurting himself or others. In such a case, appropriate help would be sought and/or referrals would be made.

As with most support groups, the initial structure and tone of the debriefing are set by the facilitators. As the group begins to coalesce, it is less the facilitator's task to set guidelines and more the task to serve as moderator, ensuring each person's chance to speak and guiding discussion through appropriate phases. The following suggested debriefing structure is one that has been found to be effective in school settings.

Introductory phase
In this stage, the climate should be established, the process explained and the guidelines created for group interaction. Having members introduce themselves around the circle as soon as possible helps to set an interactive tone and suggests that each person will get a chance to talk.

Facilitators can guide students in setting ground rules by simply asking, "What do you need to be comfortable here?" and charting students' responses. It is the facilitator's task to ensure that confidentiality, the right to pass and mutual respect are on the list of responses. If students do not suggest one or more of these requisites, one of the facilitators might state, "I know I'm more comfortable if I don't think I'm going to be forced to talk. How about you? Do we need that up on our list?" Once the list is complete, it becomes the set of ground rules for the debriefing without the word "rules" ever having been used.

The introductory phase is critical to help group members understand that feelings are acceptable, that no one will be disrespectful and that there is a structure to follow in the debriefing process.

Facts phase
When a crisis hits a school, students may react in a couple of ways. They may talk among themselves and try to make sense of what appears to be a senseless event. Such exchanges can feed a rumor mill and create false information. Youngsters may not talk about the event at all, thus increasing their sense of isolation. In either case, the fact phase of the debriefing helps inject reality into the situation and provides each student an opportunity to share his/her experience of the event

Facilitators must bring as much objectivity as possible to the discussion. One way to encourage group members to talk is to suggest that they speak in the order of their involvement in the event. Those who arrived first speak first and describe the scene. Such structure helps recreate the incident as it unfolded and encourages each member to be involved. During this phase, students explore and work toward agreement on the sequence of events and the role each played in the incident.

Finally, students can be asked what they did during the incident. By the time each student has had several opportunities to describe the major phases of the incident from his/her perspective, the events will become clearer for each student. Youngsters will realize that they were not alone and that others were similarly affected. In this way begins the process of normalizing individual reactions, a critical element in recovery from stress.

Reactions phase
Feelings experienced during and after a crisis can be very intense. This phase of the debriefing encourages students to talk about their feelings and also allows them to learn that their feelings are part of a natural emotional response to a crisis event. All students should be encouraged to participate in this phase, but none should be forced. Coercing students to share their feelings is a form of re-victimization.

Also important to emphasize is that feelings, regardless of how intense, need to be expressed, but not categorized as right or wrong. For example, if a student expresses guilt over some part of the event, the facilitator might say, "I'm not surprised you wish you could have done something differently. People who care often feel deeply after this kind of event. But given the situation, tell me what you really could have done differently." Any feeling a student may share should be acknowledged and validated. Trauma reactions are different for each person and include a vast range of feelings.

This debriefing stage should also include dealing with feelings that may arise after the crisis has ended. Nightmares, stomach upsets, agitation, confusion and other such delayed stress reactions should be shared and discussed. Students need to hear that reactions such as these are to be expected and are a normal, residual part of the crisis experience. A facilitator may initiate discussion by asking if students have had trouble sleeping or have experienced upset stomachs since the incident.

Another area to explore during this phase is implications related to the event. Allowing youngsters to talk about the repercussions that the crisis event may have in their lives helps students adjust to present reality. Asking them to describe ways in which the event has affected their families, school, health and friends helps young people continue to vent and to begin to restore their life perspectives.

A common response by parents after a traumatic incident in their child's school or community is to pull back on the reins and tighten the supervision of their child. Such a response, though understandable, may trouble youngsters who may have lost a friend to death, but now have lost some of their own autonomy as well. Young people need an opportunity to talk about this additional loss.

Teaching phase
In the teaching phase of a debriefing, the facilitators must actively summarize the salient facts of the crisis event and clear up any misconceptions about the incident. In addition, facilitators should share information about short- and long-term stress symptoms the group members may experience. They should explain typical trauma reactions — including physical, cognitive,

behavioral and emotional symptoms —and take note of group members' more serious stress symptoms that may require professional attention.

Older students may turn to alcohol or other drugs, sex or other high-risk behaviors as a way of coping with intense emotions. The debriefing facilitators should discourage use of such methods and introduce resources both at school and in the community that offer healthy means of coping. For example, student assistance programs, school counselors and nurses, peer helper programs, school-based support groups and conflict mediation programs offer appropriate help and skill-building for students seeking to cope with the aftermath of a crisis in their lives.

Closure phase: Students
This final phase of the debriefing process should help to affirm to its members group cohesiveness and the value of the group process. Individual experiences of the crisis event can be summarized, emphasizing the commonalities among group members. Affirming that individual reactions are normal, reviewing group members' intense feelings and stressing ways students can help each other are essential steps for providing closure to the debriefing experience. Facilitators must remind students of their strengths and reassure them that healing will take place in time. Thanking students for their willingness to share their perceptions and emotions of the crisis event and commending the youth for their courage, trust, mutual respect and confidentiality is a gentle way of reminding students to leave the shared confidences inside the debriefing room.

Students may feel the need to perform some rite or action to mark their understanding of the crisis event. The discussion and planning for such action can be a meaningful culmination of the debriefing process. However, such an important part of the healing process must be kept within appropriate bounds. Allowing students to brainstorm possible actions that will take into account the sensitivities of those victimized by the event can bring forward a number of appropriate memorial responses:

- writing cards or notes to those who are bereaved;
- drawing pictures or providing photographs that can be bound in an album or scrapbook of remembrance;
- staging a fund raising drive for a commemorative scholarship to honor crisis victims;
- collecting donations to give to an organization or charitable cause that will appropriately memorialize crisis victims.

An important aspect of the students' efforts should be the creation of natural closure for the grieving process. Planting a tree in a school courtyard or placing a memorial stone along a walkway can delay or discourage closure because such a visual reminder confronts school students and staff daily. An unfortunate fact of life is that crises of many sorts can occur, some of which result in the deaths of students or school personnel. The teacher who dies of leukemia, the school athlete who dies accidentally on the playing field, the student who dies of a drug overdose — any death creates a loss in the school community, and all losses must be acknowledged and treated with equal respect. Care should be taken to avoid setting precedents that acknowledge a given person in a way that may not be appropriate for another person in the future. Many of the most effective and lasting memorials in our society commemorate positive values, courage and worthiness that transcend the negative results of crises

As a final activity, facilitators can ask each group participant to make a short summary statement of something they learned in the debriefing process. Before leaving the session, each participant should be aware of persons they can contact if they need further counseling or help. Students should be reminded that parents should be on their list of helping adults.

Closure phase: Facilitators
Debriefing of co-facilitators is crucial to the success of a crisis debriefing team. After students have left, facilitators should discuss the debriefing session. They must share personal reactions, responses and any surprising occurrences or developments

during the session. They can express the most difficult personal aspects of the crisis and debriefing process. They should identify those procedures and activities that were effective and determine changes in procedures to increase effectiveness in the event of another crisis. Such assessment allows facilitators to improve their services; such venting lays the groundwork for planning needed self-nurturing and care during the next 24 hours.

Defusing
Another strategy within the scope of CISM activities is *defusing*. Defusing is the venting of thoughts and feelings following a tragic event. The process is not as structured as debriefing, but it is just as important. Defusing begins the process of letting intense emotions surface in a safe and supportive environment.

Healing can begin from the moment immediately following a traumatic event. This gradual, almost imperceptible recovery may not be apparent either to the victims or to the bystanders, but it can be encouraged by the simple act of talking, crying, questioning or listening to others declare and describe their feelings. When a school community encounters a tragic event, all members of the community — students, staff and parents — need to experience defusing.

The school staff and students exposed to the incident should talk with each other prior to leaving the premises that day. Even if it is only possible to talk for a few minutes, it is critical that a format be created for the exchange of information and the venting of feelings. Such defusing can take place most effectively in groups of 15 to 20, but if another natural grouping occurs on campus, one should not hesitate to use such a ready resource. The format is not nearly as important as the defusing process itself. These group discussions can be facilitated by classroom teachers, Crisis Response Team members or others.

Asking questions such as "What was the worst part [of the experience] for you?" or "Where were you when it happened?" will help students begin to express their thoughts and feelings. Prepare students and their parents for possible reactions such as sleepless-

ness, fear and anxiety, nightmares, irritability, lack of concentration, nausea, clinging, crying, withdrawing and anger. Help them understand that their thoughts and feelings are normal. Work with the group to develop coping strategies for the various emotions that group members may experience. Take care to let students know when follow-up will be provided. If parents have come to the school in response to the event, it would be best to provide a separate discussion time and group for them, but if emergency conditions do not allow such scheduling, parents should be included in ongoing group defusing sessions.

Staff should definitely have their own time and place to show emotion and receive support related to the traumatic event. A staff meeting after all students have gone for the day provides not only an opportunity to defuse, but also offers a chance to share information, plan for the next day and identify students who may need extra support. Small groups of 15 to 20 chaired by key staff personnel are preferable to meetings of the entire staff. However, it is important to include all staff in small group sessions — teachers, clerical staff, custodians, playground aides, counselors, administrators. The prevailing tone to strive for is one of support and confidentiality. The purpose of such sessions is to vent feelings, not investigate the incident.

On-going follow-up activities
A formal parent information night is appropriate to schedule within the week following a crisis. School principals should seek support from district administration for this meeting. Format of the meeting should include an overview of information to update and put into perspective all aspects of the crisis event. It should also offer attendees opportunities to express feelings related to the crisis. A team of professionals should be available at the meeting to deal with an assortment of issues. For example, a local mental health counselor can give parents information on possible behaviors to expect from their children, or the local police chief can discuss the crisis from law enforcement's point of view

As days pass, a variety of activities may be appropriate to provide for the various groups of persons affected by the crisis. Classroom activities for students, such as journal writing, role plays, drawing, creative writing or small group discussions, can offer children a number of ways to express fears and lingering anxiety related to the crisis. Writing thank you notes to the various emergency responders or planning an activity to assist the parents of victims are additional ways to help children vent feelings, yet reach out to connect with others who also experienced the crisis.

Providing special "safe rooms" in the school for children and staff to use when they feel unable to cope and in need of a place in which to take a time out is another effective critical incident stress management resource to provide. Such rooms should be supervised by Crisis Response Team members or designees. Light snacks, such as cookies and juice, can be provided, along with writing and drawing supplies for children and information for adults on coping with grief or trauma.

Brief staff meetings held either before or after school for the next several days following a crisis can be a significant source of support and recovery. Such meetings should be for all school staff, not just teachers. It is at such times that staff can draw strength and support from one another so they can continue to comfort and support students.

An important component
The concepts and strategies of Critical Incident Stress Management should be considered an integral part of any safe school crisis management plan. Taking care to acknowledge and provide support for trauma among students and staff in the wake of a crisis helps to ensure and speed resumption of the teaching and learning activities that constitute the school's mandate.

The Association of Traumatic Stress Specialists

Traumatic incidents and their aftermath strike indiscriminately. They take the form of violent victimization, natural disasters and industrial accidents. Alarming statistics measure the impact of trauma and its emotional, financial and long-term effects. The Department of Justice has found that the tangible property, long-term emotional trauma, disability and productivity losses cost the United States $450 billion annually.

The Association of Traumatic Stress Specialists (ATSS) is an international nonprofit membership organization founded in 1989 to provide professional education and certification to those actively involved in crisis intervention, trauma response, management, treatment, healing and recovery of those affected by traumatic stress. Members represent all professions who aid victims and survivors of traumatic stress. They include public safety officers, victim services, clergy, emergency services, business and indus-

try, treatment specialists, health and medical staff, fire services and volunteers who help in the response and treatment of victims.

ATSS offers three distinct certifications to individuals providing support services in the field of traumatic stress. Studies indicate that effective immediate intervention significantly reduces victims' long-term emotional problems related to critical incidents. ATSS prepares emergency responders and caregivers to help in the healing and recovery of individuals and communities.

The Anti-Violence Partnership of Philadelphia and ATSS announce an international training conference on trauma and victimization at the Westin Francis Marion Hotel in Charleston, South Carolina, February 4-7, 1999. For additional information about ATSS and/or the conference, contact ATSS: 803/781-0017; tidwel@netside.com (e-mail); or www.ATSS-HQ.com (Web site).

BY GARRY McGIBONEY

No school district or school should "clone" or copy a school safety checklist or plan. Such aids to improving school security must be tailored to fit the needs of the school and updated regularly.

School safety is more than just student discipline

Following the recent tragic violent incidents in schools in several parts of the country, school boards have understandably renewed their commitment to making schools free of violence, weapons and drugs. Some measures that school administrators are considering include instituting use of school resource officers, metal detectors, peer mediation programs, and other such prevention and intervention strategies widely accepted as being essential for maintaining safe and secure schools for students and school staffs.

However, school administrators must remember that school safety requires comprehensive efforts in such wide-ranging areas as playground safety, school-event traffic control and elimination of environmental hazards as well as school crime and violence.

School safety audit
The extent of school safety issues was never more evident than when the National School Safety Center was asked by the DeKalb County (Ga.) School System to conduct a school safety audit. The primary goal behind the request was a compelling need to make schools safer, but the particular motivating objectives included improving student discipline and supervision of students and eliminating weapons and

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drugs from school campuses.

Ronald D. Stephens, executive director of NSSC, selected at random 15 of the 118 schools and centers to visit. At the conclusion of the audit, he brought the entire school system's focus back to reality: flammable materials stored in a boiler room are just as dangerous as a student with a weapon at school. The results of the NSSC audit provided several examples of how the school system needed to look for and immediately correct potential safety hazards. Of special concern were those places that had been overlooked due to assumptions that they were safe or that were so routinely trouble-free that an unintentional nonchalant attitude had produced potentially dangerous situations.

The NSSC audit included recommended ways to improve discipline policies and procedures, such as developing written policies on student searchers and seizures, expanding the school resource officer program, and other policy and procedural recommendations related to eliminating violence, weapons and drugs from school campuses.

Impact of audit
The principals of those schools in the audit welcomed the report detailing safety concerns and recommendations, and action to address those concerns was swift. The recommendations' positive impact on the school system led to changes that will make DeKalb County schools safer. How-

ever, the real, long-term impact on the school system derived from the realization that school administrators must concern themselves with all aspects of school safety.

Need for a sample checklist
Principals whose schools were not in the audit asked for a checklist that they and their staffs could use as a baseline for conducting self-audits. As one principal stated, "It is virtually impossible for an administrator , his/her administrative staff and faculty to remember to check everything that needs to be checked."

The Department of Student Relations developed a prototype checklist, which has been extremely well received. Beginning the 1998-99 school year, the checklist will be used by all 118 DeKalb County schools as part of their Safe School Plans.

Key: Tailoring, not "cloning"
The adapted components included in the following school safety checklist are reproduced here for others to use as a sample guide. No school district or school should simply "clone" or copy such a checklist. A key element in effective safe school and crisis intervention planning is needs assessment. Such assessment includes close examination of a given school district and its constituency or that of an individual school prior to the design of a tailor-made checklist to improve and maintain school safety. Furthermore, yearly evaluation and updating is required to keep such a checklist valid.

Components of a school safety audit

Environs
- Location
- Perimeter
- Neighborhood interface
- Construction zones

Site Design
- Signage
- Pedestrian routes
- Exterior lighting
- Vehicular parking
- Landscaping
- Recreational areas
- Waste disposal
- Delivery areas
- School bus zone
- Student drop off area

Building Design
- Building organization
- Doors
- Ancillary buildings
- Windows
- Covered external areas
- Interior lighting
- Walls
- Lobbies/reception areas

Interior Spaces
- Corridors
- Auditorium
- Stairs/stairwells
- Gymnasium
- Restrooms
- Locker rooms

- Administrative
- Science labs, shops, offices, computer labs
- Cafeteria
- Music rooms
- Library/media center
- Custodial rooms

Systems/Equipment
- Alarms
- Mechanical
- Surveillance center
- Vending machines
- Fire control
- Water fountains
- HVAC
- Elevators

Environs
1 Fenced areas are clean and free of debris; fences are in good repair.
2 Construction/work areas and surrounding areas are free from debris at the end of the work day; potentially hazardous areas and materials are clearly marked and restricted.
3 Construction work areas are restricted from student use or traffic.

Building Design
Windows
4 Windows are not broken, cracked, missing or unclear.
5 Window-locking hardware is in proper working order.
6 Damaged windows are replaced or repaired immediately.
7 All ground-floor and other accessible windows are secure.

Doors
8 Door-locking hardware is in proper working order.
9 Door frames are strong, and doors fit snugly.
10 Strike plates are strong and securely affixed.
11 Panic bars are operable and in good condition.
12 Doors open and close smoothly and easily, with no impediments.
13 Exposed hinge pins on out-swing doors cannot be easily removed.
14 The center door posts on double doors are secured at both top and bottom.
15 Windows in doors are not covered.

Lighting
16 The perimeter of the school building is protected by adequate lighting.
17 Repairs to lights and replacement of inoperative lights are made immediately.
18 There is sufficient light to provide marginal coverage in case a light burns out.
19 Corridors and stairwells are properly lighted.
20 All restroom lights are working.
21 All stairwell lights are working.

Building maintenance
22 Interior walls (including restrooms) are free from graffiti.
23 Floors are clean; damaged floor covering is replaced promptly.
24 Ceiling tiles are in good repair. Damaged, missing or defaced tiles are replaced promptly.
25 Interior walls and fixtures in unsupervised areas are durable and well-protected.
26 Exterior walls are free from graffiti.
27 School sidewalks and sidewalks leading to the school are in good repair.
28 Exterior walls and fixtures in unsupervised areas are durable and well-protected.

Portable classrooms
29 Portable classrooms have functioning two-way communications.
30 Portable classrooms have level and securely attached exterior steps.
31 Portable classrooms have adequate ventilation.
32 Each classroom has two entrance/exit doors that open and close properly.
33 Classrooms are provided with foundation skirting and sidewalks that lead to the classrooms.

Site Design
Vehicular traffic and parking
34 Access to bus loading areas is restricted during arrival and dismissal times.
35 School personnel have been assigned to student parking areas during arrival and dismissal times.
36 All parking areas are supervised during the school day and/or may be observed from the main school buildings.
37 Vehicle access to play areas is restricted.
38 Automobiles are kept out of fire lanes at all times.
39 Loading dock areas are clean, free of debris; and not blocked by autos.
40 Parking spaces are clearly marked and specifically designated.

Buildings and grounds maintenance
41 Schools grounds are mowed and free of debris.
42 Shrubbery and trees do not block visual surveillance of the campus and parking lots.

Play areas
43 All play areas are fenced.
44 Playground equipment is in good repair with no broken, cracked or exposed sections.

Waste disposal
45 Garbage disposal areas around outdoor dumpsters are clean and free of debris, flammable material and graffiti.
46 Driveways to outdoor dumpsters are clear for safe and unencumbered pickup.

Signage
47 Exit signs are in good repair.
48 Signs concerning visitor policy and trespassing are properly displayed at all entrances.
49 Clearly marked visitor parking is provided as close to the main office as possible.
50 Up-to-date state law signs are in good repair and clearly displayed.
51 All off-limits areas are clearly marked inside and outside of the school.
52 Areas are designated where clubs, activities and sports teams may work and practice after school hours.
53 Stadiums have up-to-date state law posters in plain view, in good repair.

Interior Spaces
Cafeteria
54 Cafeteria is clean, free of debris; health department reports are available.
55 Food storage area is clean, free of debris, adequately ventilated and is not used for non-cafeteria-related storage.
56 Fire extinguisher, First Aid Kit, and Anti-Choking (Heimlich Maneuver) Poster are readily visible in cafeteria.
57 Dining tables are arranged to allow unencumbered student movement.
58 Tables, chairs or other furniture do not block cafeteria entrance and exit doors.

Procedures
Securing the campus
59 Doors and windows in gyms are locked when area is not in use.
60 Portals and hatches are secured with heavy duty hasps and padlocks.
61 Areas accessible to potential intruders are secure.
62 Outbuildings, storage sheds, and portable classrooms are secure and inspected often.
63 Faculty members lock classrooms upon leaving after school hours.
64 At the end of the school day, the following security checks are made:
 • all classrooms are locked.
 • all restrooms and lockers are locked.
 • all exterior doors are locked.
 • alarm system and lighting are checked.
 • portable classrooms are checked.
 • all mechanical/boiler rooms are checked.
65 Mechanical rooms, boiler rooms and hazardous material storage areas are kept locked.
66 Science chemical storage areas are locked.
67 Computers and other high-tech equipment are secured.
68 All gym equipment is secured at the end of the school day and/or after use.

Keys
69 Lock and key control is assigned to one administrator.
70 Keys are maintained and issued with strict supervision.
71 Master keys are kept to a minimum.
72 Keys are always collected from employees who terminate or transfer.
73 All keys are collected and logged at the conclusion of the school year.

Maintenance records
74 Records of all interior maintenance are kept.
75 Records of all maintenance on doors, windows, lockers and other areas are kept.

Campus access
76 Personnel are assigned to duty stations on school grounds when school is in session.
77 Visitors are required to sign in and out.
78 Deliveries are made at one entrance designated for this purpose.
79 Delivery persons are always accompanied by a staff person.
80 Students are issued parking permits for assigned parking areas.
81 Student access to parking areas is restricted to arrival and dismissal times.
82 Students are prohibited from loitering in corridors, hallways and restrooms.
83 Students are prohibited from entering vacant classrooms alone.

Identification badges
84 Employees wear ID badges at all times during work and activity hours.
85 Students are issued ID cards.
86 Visitors are issued ID cards or badges.

Safety procedures
87 Lab safety procedures are posted, reviewed and practiced routinely.
88 Weight room safety procedures and practices are posted.

Communication capability
89 There is two-way communications between the office and all classrooms/portable buildings.
90 The school has emergency telephone capability.
91 Bus drivers can be notified promptly when an emergency evacuation is necessary.
92 Two-way radios are in good repair and are strategically located throughout the school.

Equipment inventory and storage
93 All school equipment has been permanently marked.
94 An up-to-date inventory for all school equipment is maintained.
95 A perpetually updated inventory is maintained for all expendable school supplies.
96 Secured storage area for valuable items is available during and after school.
97 Vault area is clean, free of debris, has controlled access and can be opened from the inside.
98 Computers and other high-tech equipment are routinely inventoried.
99 Classroom and office doors are not blocked by desks or chairs.
100 Stage curtains are open when the stage is not in use.
101 Gym equipment — including bleachers, goals, railing, doors, windows, floors — are in safe working condition.
102 Boiler rooms are clean, free of debris and not used for storage.

School records
103 School files and records are maintained in locked, vandal-proof containers or vaults.
104 File keys and duplicates are kept in a locked steel key cabinet.

School personnel training

105 All faculty and staff members know emergency procedures and roles.

106 Intruder alert procedures are in place and are practiced at least twice per year.

107 New faculty and staff members are apprised of emergency and intruder alert procedures.

108 At least two faculty/staff members are trained in CPR and others in First Aid.

109 Faculty and staff members are aware of lock-down procedures in emergencies.

110 Faculty and staff members arriving early or working late receive permission from the administrative staff and do not work alone in a vacant building or location.

111 Faculty and staff members receive school safety/crime prevention staff development each school year.

112 All faculty and staff members working with after-school and school activities check with administrators before leaving the facility.

113 Evening staff and summer staff take precautions against intruders.

114 Faculty and staff are instructed not to conduct searches of students, lockers or autos.

115 All searches are conducted with at least two administrators (or one administrator and one campus supervisor or other staff).

Student notice

116 Students receive copies of the Code of Student Conduct.

117 Students receive copies of bus safety rules.

Transportation/Field Trips

118 Passenger lists for all bus routes are maintained at the school site.

119 Route descriptions for field trips are filed in the school office before trips begin.

Gangs: Once, and still, the core of youth violence in communities large, small
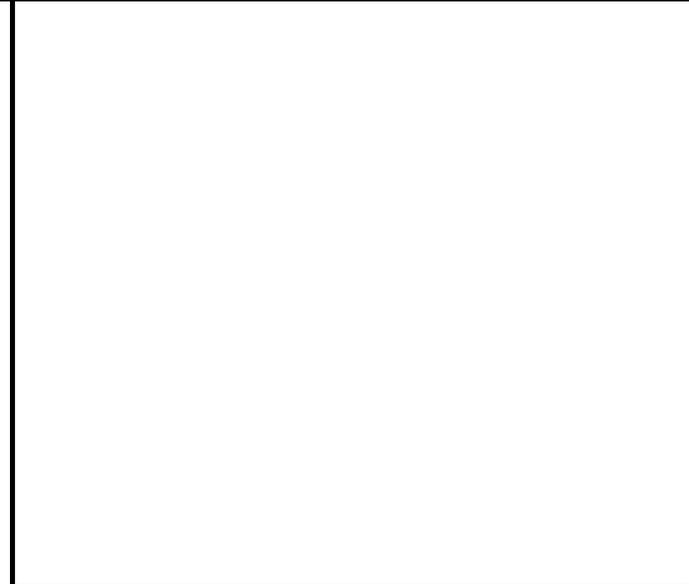
While school shootings have monopolized newspaper headlines and TV soundbites during the last year, the presence of gangs in communities and on the move has continued to relentlessly create shock waves in cities and towns across America. The results? Youthful police officers gunned down in ambush as a gang rite; tourists taking a stroll near the ocean on a balmy summer evening waylaid and killed; youngsters on a visit from their "safe" community visiting their cousin's shop in the big city, shot and killed.

The October, 1998 issue of *Juvenile Justice Bulletin* traces the history of gang presence in the United States from the early years of the 20th century to the present[1] The issue highlights findings from a number of national studies dating back to the 1970s. These reports document the number of cities and smaller communities reporting street gang activity.

"Gang proliferation" — which has occurred significantly since the 1980s — is defined as the increase in communities reporting the existence of gangs and gang problems. "Gang migration" is defined as the movement of gang members from one city to another. W. B. Miller's 1996 research based on national gang surveys reveals that the second most frequently cited motivation for migrating is the gang's desire to expand their drug trafficking role. The prime motivation was that gang members moved with their families.[2]

The dynamics of gang proliferation also include the effect on youth of dramatic exposure to the manifestations of gang culture through youth-oriented television programming and nightly TV news, popular movies and various "scared straight" speeches and books by erstwhile gang members.

Characteristics shared by many of the school shooting perpetrators and by youth who are drawn to gangs include adolescent perceptions of what Joanne Y. Corsica terms "[social] isolation, confusion, disorganization, discontinuity and fragmentation, a need for connection, a search for a world view that makes sense."[3]

Cities must examine their own communities for the sources of gang formation and/or expansion and solutions. Youth lacking the social support of family, kin and society will find it elsewhere.

The need is great. The time is now.

Endnotes

1. Juvenile Justice Bulletin (Washington, D.C.: Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, October 1998.)

2. W.B. Miller, *The growth of youth gang problems in the United States: 1970-1995.* Unpublished. (Tallahassee, FL: National Youth Gang Center, Institute for Intergovernmental Research, 1996) cited in Ibid.: 8.

3. Joanne Y. Corsica, "Employment Training Interventions," in The Gang Intervention Handbook, ed. Arnold P. Goldstein and C. Ronald Huff (Champaign, Il.: Research Press, 1993): 305.

120 Passenger lists are developed and filed in the school office for each vehicle used in field trips.
121 All students and staff on field trips carry identification with them.
122 Students with medical problems have medical identification while on field trips.
123 Students and school personnel are checked in upon return from field trips.

Prescription drugs procedures
124 Students are informed of procedures for taking doctor-prescribed medication.
125 Students show ID before receiving medication.
126 Students sign and date record form when they have taken medication.
127 Students do not take medication outside of the office area.
128 Student medications are stored in a locked cabinet or locked refrigerator.
129 Student medications are listed by name, by student, by doctor, by dispensing instructions and by date.
130 Student medication storage is inventoried at the end of each week.
131 Parents are contacted to remove unused medication at the end of the prescription period and/or at the end of the school year.

Supervision
132 Stairwells are checked after the bell rings to make sure students have not been detained.
133 Restrooms are checked after the bell rings to make sure students have not been detained.
134 Playground is supervised during student activities.
135 School cafeteria and student activity receipts are transported to the front office vault by at least two people accompanied by a campus supervisor.

Emergency procedures/equipment
136 A copy of the Emergency Response Procedures flip chart is readily available.
137 A copy of the Crisis Intervention Handbook is readily available.
138 A copy of the Safe School Plan is readily available.
139 The Emergency Preparedness Kit is well-stocked and readily available.
140 Phone numbers for utility companies and for school district detectives, night emergency and transportation departments are readily available.
141 Latex gloves are available to faculty and staff members for emergencies.
142 Locations of fire extinguishers are clearly marked, and extinguishers are accessible.

Incident reporting
143 Incident reporting form developed and standardized.
144 Incident reports are filed and reviewed for safety planning.

Inspections
145 Stadium safety inspections are routinely conducted by Athletic Director's staff.
146 Graffiti is reported, photographed, and removed immediately.
147 Surveillance cameras are in good repair; monitors are placed in offices for full-time observation.
148 Hand-held metal detectors are secured and periodically tested.
149 Classrooms are routinely checked for safety hazards such as broken desks, cracked ceiling tiles, etc.
150 Restrooms are inspected on a regular basis for cleanliness and graffiti removal.
151 Water from water fountains and swimming pools is tested regularly.

Planning
152 The Safe School Plan is updated each year and distributed among staff and faculty.
153 After-school activities, such as PTA meetings and academic or sports events, are planned to facilitate traffic and parking, supervision of the building and grounds and event closure.

Two resources available to reduce fear, disorder, violence

The Police Executive Research Forum has announced publication of *Crime in the School: Reducing Fear and Disorder with Student Problem Solving*, a 236-page book. The authors contend that metal detectors, security officers, and other "target-hardening" approaches to school safety when used alone fail to make schools safer. They describe a curriculum, based on the police problem-solving approach, that aims to teach students how to make use of school and police resources to combat the fear and disorder problems they face in school. For further information, contact PERF Publications, 200 Newfield Avenue, Edison, NJ 08837.

❖

Working with a team of nationally recognized prevention experts, Drug Strategies has prepared a comprehensive assessment of the most widely used school violence prevention programs in the country. *Safe Schools, Safe Students: A Guide to Violence Prevention Strategies* provides practical assistance in developing strategies to prevent youth violence, which is often related to substance abuse.

This 56-page guide to school violence prevention will help school officials choose the strategies that best meet the needs of their students. Funded by the William T. Grant Foundation, the two year study assessed 84 leading violence prevention programs. Just 10 programs received a grade of "A," while 49 received grades of "C" or "D."
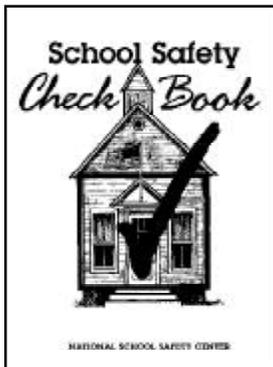
Available for $12.95 plus shipping and handling, the guide can be ordered from Drug Strategies, 2445 M St., NW, Suite 480, Washington DC 20037, 202/663-6090.

NSSC Publications

The National School Safety Center (NSSC) serves as a national clear-inghouse 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 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 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. ($20.00)

Gangs In Schools: Breaking Up Is Hard to Do (1992) offers an introduction to understanding 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 in schools. Already in its seventh printing, the book contains valuable suggestions from law enforcers, school principals, prosecutors and other experts on gangs. The concluding chapter describes more than 20 school- and community-based programs throughout the country that have been successful in combating gangs. 48 pages. ($8.00)

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 such rights have been dealt with in U.S. laws and courts, and explains the resulting effects 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 addresses the significance of these legal aspects for schools. The concluding chapter includes a "Checklist for Providing Safe Schools." 127 pages. ($15.00)

Set Straight on Bullies (1989) examines the myths and realities about schoolyard bullying. Changing attitudes about the seriousness of the problem are stressed. It studies the characteristics of bullies and bullying victims, and, most importantly, it provides strategies for educators, parents and students to better prevent and respond to schoolyard bullying. Sample student and adult surveys are included. 89 pages. ($15.00)

Educated Public Relations: School Safety 101 (1993) offers a quick course in public relations for school district public relations directors, administrators and others working to achieve safe, effective schools. This 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 strategies to achieve this goal. 72 pages. ($10.00)
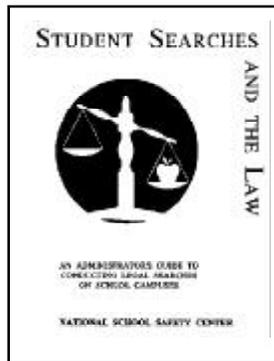
Student Searches and the Law (1995) takes a close look at the legality of conducting searches on school campuses, including a discussion of the U. S. Supreme Court case of *New Jersey v. T.L.O.*, which set the standard for conducting student searches. Court decisions have helped to further define what constitutes an appropriate search on school campuses. This book examines court cases concerning student searches, including locker searches and strip searches. Other sections discuss searches conducted on school grounds by law enforcement and probation officers and school security personnel; the use of drug testing and surveillance equipment on campus; and searches using metal detectors or drug-sniffing dogs. Practical matters such as sample school board policies and procedures for conducting legal searches at school are also included. 80 pages.

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. Suggestions are offered for the many practical tasks required of educators, including preparing discipline codes and defining and tracking infractions. 53 pages. ($8.00)

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 curriculums 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)

School Safety Work Book (1994) highlights prevention/intervention models that show promise in stemming the rising tide of school crime and violence. The loose-leaf notebook showcases more than 100 school- and community-based programs. Contact information provides a resource for those who may seek to replicate these successful programs. Contents target conflict resolution, gang prevention, social responsibility, substance abuse prevention, truancy reduction, violence prevention and weapons prevention. 125 pages. ($20.00)
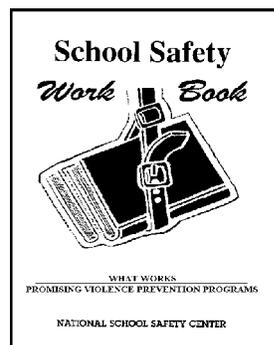
Developing Personal and Social Responsibility (1992) is designed to serve as a framework on which to build successful school/community programs aimed at training young people to be responsible citizens. 130 pages. ($10.00)

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

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

Student and Staff Victimization, first outlines schools' responsibility to provide a safe educational environment, then covers strategies for dealing with victimization.

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.

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"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.

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BY CHARLOTTE MURROW TAYLOR AND LYNN C. GRAVES

*It is important to have both a crisis response plan
and a plan to ensure a healthy emotional recovery
for students and staff after a crisis.*

Trainees endorse crisis response, recovery training

A great deal has been written about the importance of schools having both a plan to respond to crisis situations and a plan to ensure a healthy emotional recovery for students and staff after a crisis. Likewise, authors have addressed the form which effective crisis response and recovery should take and even how crisis plans should be developed. However, very little has been written on how to train school staff members to systematically implement a crisis response and recovery plan.

Crisis response, recovery training
This article is based on actual crisis response and recovery training developed for districtwide use in Berkeley County, South Carolina. Berkeley County School District (BCSD) had long recognized the necessity for response and recovery planning and training, but with many much-needed programs receiving priority emphasis, the project had receded into the background.

Then in 1989, Hurricane Hugo struck the South Carolina coast. This largely rural county was forced to deal with crisis situations beyond its wildest nightmares. Suddenly, crisis response and recovery became front-burner issues, and thus provided the impetus for the development of a

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districtwide crisis response plan. The plan, in turn, generated a need for staff training throughout the school system on how to implement both the (immediate, logistical) crisis response and the (long-term, affective) crisis recovery plans.

The BCSD crisis response plan was developed over two years. Representatives from the district's administration, school principals and counselors, the county's emergency preparedness staff, emergency medical services (EMS), law enforcement and other relevant agencies collaborated to produce a comprehensive plan.

Planners acknowledge and thank the following sources for information and models that guided them: Charles County School District, Charles County Md.; Los Angeles Unified School District, Los Angeles, Calif.; the National Organization for Victim Assistance, Washington, D.C.; South Carolina School Boards Association, Columbia, S.C., and Watson Consulting, Anderson, S.C.

The BCSD crisis response plan has since become the prototype for plans in many other school districts, such as Oconee County, S.C. It has been encapsulated in an easy-to-use ready reference format in which specific crises are easily accessed and preferred action plans are delineated for each crisis situation.

Crises of varying scope
The plan addresses crises of varying scope as well. A crisis could involve a number of members of a school staff or student body,

a whole school, a cluster of schools, or the entire district. Consequently, a collaborative approach was adopted in which district-level staff, staff members from adjacent schools and community agency personnel could be mobilized to deal with crisis situations of varying scales. Crisis response and recovery teams were identified for each school, and team members were assigned specific roles on the teams. Actual crisis chain-of-command charts were formulated.

Training phase
Once the plan had been developed and adopted by the school district's superintendency team, the training phase of the program began. Staff members from schools whose teams would be called to collaborate in actual crises were trained together along with other community personnel who would be involved in any emergency situation. Emergency preparedness personnel provided a variety of simulation exercises, which were conducted as table-top activities during the initial training and then as simulated crisis scenarios in an actual school setting.

In the comprehensive BCSD plan, crisis response and crisis recovery were envisioned as two separate but interrelated processes. Crisis response was viewed as the first-line reaction to an emergency situation. Crisis recovery was regarded as the longer therapeutic process designed to help those affected by the crisis to deal with affective reactions and trauma.

Since different skills may be required to

deal with these two aspects of crisis, each school had separate (but at times, overlapping) response and recovery teams. The training was divided into two separate day-long sessions, with designated key players from each school attending both trainings. A third day was devoted to an actual crisis simulation during which both teams were given an opportunity to test the skills developed during their training and to process the event.

Crisis response training
Trainers for crisis response were recruited from the community entities which would normally respond in emergency situations (e.g., fire department, law enforcement, emergency medical services). Crisis response teams from several schools devoted one workday to attending the training. Major areas of discussion included:
A. Introduction
   • Rationale for response training
   • Discussion of importance of both response and recovery components
B. Familiarization with school plans
   • Background of BCSD crisis plan
   • Levels of crises and scope of various crises
   • Telephone procedures
   • Physical plant layout/intra-school communication procedures
   • Flow charts and chain of command
C. Immediate response strategies prior to arrival of authorities
   • Notifying response and recovery coordinators
   • Defusing volatile situations
   • Sequencing of events/actions
   • Formulating chain of command and designating substitutes
   • Securing the area
   • Rendering first aid and triage
   • Re-scheduling after-school or off-campus events
D. Common emergency issues
   • Accident/injury
   • Fire
   • Hazardous materials
   • Documentation
   • Notification of authorities
   • Violent disturbances
   • Utilities emergency

   • Bombs
   • Communicable diseases/illnesses
   • Crises involving large-scale transport issues
   • Natural disasters
E. Table-top simulation
F. Evaluation of training

First responders were identified at each school and assigned emergency jobs such as securing the building, directing media, parents and traffic, and coordinating communications and evacuations. Some staff members at each school received additional first-aid and CPR training.

Crisis recovery training
Teams of affective care providers from contiguous schools, the school district's central office, and outside agencies attended this day-long training session. The authors provided the training. Discussions centered around the following crisis scenario adapted from John Dudley's *When Grief Visits School:*

Your crisis response team receives a call at 4:00 pm. One of your school buses made a left turn in an intersection and collided with a motorcycle. The male driver of the motorcycle, a high school senior, was killed instantly. A female passenger on the motorcycle, also a high school senior, was critically injured. Several elementary school students were on the bus, including the sixth-grade sister of the girl who was riding on the motorcycle. A few seconds after the accident, the driver of the school bus yelled at the children on the bus, "This never would have happened if you had been sitting in your seats."

Major areas of discussion in the training session included:
A. Introduction
   • Participants discussed the rationale for recovery training and the importance of both response and recovery components.
B. Crisis Scenario
   • Participants brainstormed action steps to take in the given scenario.
   • Participants prioritized the order of action steps developed.

Crisis "TO DO" List

Participants in the Berkeley County School District crisis recovery training received a list of action steps to take in situations like the crisis scenario processed during the workshop.

Before the crisis:
• Establish crisis response and recovery teams.
• Establish a calling tree.
• Implement a crisis response and recovery plan; familiarize school staff with plan.
• Acquaint community with plan and school teams.
• Formulate a policy for memorials.
• Train staff regarding effective interventions for possible student reactions in crisis situations.

After the crisis:
• Verify crisis information.
• Activate calling tree.
• School administrator meets with crisis team.
• Arrange for substitute teachers.
• Conduct before-school meeting.
• Answer media questions.
• Set up crisis center.
• Update staff training on dealing with students affected by crisis.
• Make announcements to students.
• Follow deceased students' schedules to deal with special issues in each of the students' classes.
• Counsel distressed students and staff members.
• Compose letters to send home with students (approved and signed by school administrator).
• Meet with families to express sympathy and discuss funeral arrangements.
• Collect students' possessions to give to families.
• Meet with families again to give them students' possessions, notes of sympathy from other students.
• Conduct an after-school meeting.
• Debrief crisis team.

C. Crisis "To Do" list
- Participants received a prioritized list of action steps for dealing with crisis recovery in the given scenario. (See box on previous page.)

D. Affective materials
- Participants received a packet of counseling materials and ideas to use for crisis processing/affective resolution with various age groups.
- Participants shared ideas.

E. Evaluation of training

Crisis simulation exercise

In addition to these two days of classroom instruction, crisis response and recovery teams were given the opportunity to test their skills dealing with a simulated crisis situation in an actual school setting. The simulation was undertaken with the assistance of community agencies. None of the participants knew in advance what the crisis situation would be.

On one day a simulation was conducted at an elementary school. Staff at that school responded to the emergency while a sister school's staff who attended the same training served as observers monitoring the exercise. The next day a simulation was conducted at a middle school. While the middle school staff responded to the crisis situation, the high school staff who had been trained with them served as observers and monitors. After the simulations, all of the participants were given an opportunity to share their observations and to process the experience — including mistakes.

In the elementary school simulation, a person portraying a janitor inadvertently mixed two cleaning chemicals and produced a cloud of "toxic gas." The gas was actually a harmless sugar-tasting smoke used to train firefighters. The "janitor" passed out. Staff discovering him had to resuscitate him, evacuate students safely,

and notify the proper authorities. (Staff monitoring this exercise from a sister elementary school substituted as children; no children were in the wing of the school

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Crisis response roles

Immediate Emergency Response Coordinator: responsible for overall management and control of operations of the primary mission.

Communications: Responsible for notifying emergency service personnel and notifying the district office. Coordinates necessary personnel to handle incoming and outgoing communications.

Information: Responsible for collecting pertinent information relating to the event and the victims; providing background information on the school; updating the district public information director; and facilitating additional requests for information as needed.

Liaison: Responsible for establishing strategic point of contact with responding agencies in order to direct personnel to where they are needed. Establishes and monitors staging area for media representatives.

First Aid Response: Responsible for providing first aid and triage to victims.

Security: Responsible for the immediate security of the scene and the protection of victims, witnesses and emergency responders.

Facilities/Maintenance Response: Responsible for the fire extinguisher use, power/gas shut off, emergency facility operations, and assists with building searches.

Logistics: Responsible for procurement of necessary equipment/supplies and other support resources as required for response and recovery efforts.

Staging Area Supervisor: Responsible for the establishment and supervision of an area for responding to parents/guardians and other concerned citizens.

Damage/School Assessment: Responsible for facility damage assessment and coordinating necessary immediate repairs; specifically unsafe or unsecure conditions.

Facility Recovery: Responsible for clean up and restoring physical facility operations.

Crisis Recovery Coordinator: Responsible for coordinating services to provide for the emotional and psychological needs of victims, witnesses and emergency responders.

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where the simulation was conducted.)

In the middle school simulation, a person portraying the estranged husband of a

cafeteria worker entered the school and shot the worker while the cafeteria was "filled with children." (High school staff monitoring the simulation portrayed the children; no children were actually subjected to this scenario.)

In both drills, participants found that crisis "book-learning" helped them react quickly and efficiently in an emergency situation. However, in the simulation process, the participants also made errors and discovered deficiencies in the crisis response plan. For example, at the elementary school, no one thought to close the door of the closet from which the "toxic gas" was being emitted. In an actual crisis, up to 70 children would have become casualties because of this error. Also discovered during the drill was that some of the classrooms could not be locked. During the middle school simulation, the building's public address system failed. It took nine minutes for the school nurse to arrive and begin administering CPR to the shooting victim. Emergency medial technicians also inadvertently kicked the play gun across the floor during the drill.

Participants in the two simulation exercises expressed dismay at the mistakes, but overwhelmingly endorsed the value of the crisis response and recovery training they had received. All agreed that without having a plan in place and without having received crisis training, they would not have dealt with the emergencies in as competent or confident a manner.

Naturally, it is not easy to simulate the recovery portion of crisis intervention. Crisis recovery teams went through the motions of setting up procedures to deal with trauma. However, since there can be no justification for actually traumatizing children in a simulated crisis, the

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Two imprisoned young men share their stories — and their regrets —
for having taken the life of another. Both urge young people everywhere to
think before getting caught up in violence — before it is too late.

I never thought...

The National School Safety Center has tracked school-associated deaths since July of 1992. At that time, NSSC assisted in gathering data for a nationwide investigation of violent deaths associated with schools in the United States.[1]

The National Center for Injury Prevention and Control and the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, both affiliated with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Ga., spearheaded the research, supported by the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program of the U.S. Department of Education and the National Institute of Justice of the U.S. Department of Justice. The purpose of the study was to quantify the risk of school-associated violent death and to identify epidemiological features of the deaths.

Selected results from study
In a two-year period — from July 1, 1992 through June 30, 1994 —105 school-associated violent deaths were identified by study collaborators and through searches of two on-line news databases. Police reports, medical examiners' records and interviews with police and school officials provided detailed information about each case.
- The 105 deaths occurred in 101 schools in communities of all sizes in 25 different states.
- A majority of the deaths, 63, occurred in urban communities or were associated with secondary schools, 74.
- Homicide was the cause of death in 85

of the 105 cases.
- Use of firearms accounted for 81 deaths.
- Most victims, 76, were students.
- Both victims and offenders tended to be young and male (median ages 16 and 17).
- The most commonly cited motives for the deaths in this study were:
  - interpersonal disputes unrelated to a romantic relationship or to possession of personal property, 35;
  - gang related activities, 33;
  - random victim events in which the person killed was not a party to the initial altercation, 19;
  - suicides, 19.

First-person background of one case
Classes had just begun at Dartmouth High School in Dartmouth, Mass., on Monday, April 12, 1993 when three teen-aged boys armed with a baseball bat, a billy club and a hunting knife burst into a social studies classroom. In a matter of minutes, one of the boys, Karter Reed, 16, had stabbed 16-year-old freshman Jason Robinson to death.

Reed, his cousin Gator Collet, also 16, and Nigel Thomas, 15, were friends, bound together by their love of skateboarding and perhaps by their individual experiences with family troubles.

Thomas' mother died when he was nine, his biological father lived in Denmark, and after trouble with his stepfather, Thomas had moved in with Collet's family. Collet's family had moved in January to Dartmouth from nearby New Bedford, where Collet

had attended the same school as Reed, the Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational Technical High School. Because of Collet's various disciplinary infractions, he had been asked to withdraw from the school. Reed's father had been imprisoned for trafficking in cocaine, and his mother was at the time not regularly employed.

The words of Reed and Collet (quoted in the following articles reprinted here with permission from *A Message to Teens and Kids from the Massachusetts Correctional Institution at Norfolk's "Project Youth,"*) provide details of the crime. Karter Reed, now 22 years old, is serving a life sentence for second degree murder. Gator Collet received a 21- to 25-year sentence for his role in the killing.

Karter Reed speaks
from behind prison walls
Sitting in here and looking back on my wasted life, it's hard to imagine how I ended up buried so deeply in this hole. Believe me, it doesn't get much worse than this. I am about to start my sixth year of my life sentence. But, up until the time I was arrested, I was just like most of you.

When I was growing up, I was a smart kid. I was an honors student in school. My parents pushed me in all the right directions. They taught me that education was the key to my future. I saw my own potential and I knew that I had the whole world in my hands. But, like most kids, I sought attention. I would often clown around in school.

I did silly things to get people to laugh. That made me popular. I thought that I knew it all and soon my education took a back seat to my social life.

My father's arrest

When I was 15 years old, my father was arrested for trafficking in cocaine. He was sent to prison for 18 to 20 years. I never messed with drugs. I didn't even smoke. Emotionally, my father's arrest and imprisonment devastated me. His absence drew me even closer to my friends, which would eventually blind me to reality.

The events leading up to my conviction

One day when I was 16, my best friend Gator pulled up in front of my house. Our friend Nigel was with him. Nigel wanted to fight this kid, and he asked us if we would go along to make sure that it would be a fair fight. So, I went. What a mistake! As it turned out, the other kid didn't want to fight. So, we left. The next morning Gator and Nigel called me and said that they were worried that the kids from the day before would possibly jump them in school. They both went to Dartmouth High School. I did not.

So, we went to Dartmouth High and walked into the school. We saw the kids from the night before, but they did not see us. We thought everything was okay, and we went upstairs. As Gator and I were talking to some other kids, we heard yelling, and we had a bad feeling. We ran towards Nigel, but it was too late. He was in the corner in a ball with blood on his face. There was a group of kids running down the back stairs. Gator grabbed Nigel and we left the school.

During the ride in the car, Nigel sat next to me. He was crying. I felt it was my fault. I had let him down. Nigel told us that some of the kids who had jumped him were in his class. We decided we would get this over with once and for all. We went back to Dartmouth High. When we got there, Gator took a baseball bat out of the car. We were going to make sure the odds were in our favor.

Outside Nigel's classroom we paused. We didn't have a clue as to what we were about to do. We saw teachers coming, and Gator ran into the classroom. He was looking for the kid who had started it all. He wasn't there. One of the kids in the class stood up and said something. Gator started to chase him around with the bat. Nigel, who up until then had been right behind us, took off and ran down the hall. A couple of teachers grabbed Gator and pushed him down to the floor. The kid whom Gator had been chasing around was just standing there. I went up to him and stabbed him once in the stomach. I honestly don't know why I did that, but I did. Everyone started screaming, and some other teachers grabbed me. By the time they had gotten us down to the principal's office, the police were already there.

Gator and I were laughing. We thought we had done the right thing by standing up for our friend. We thought we were the good guys. We never thought we would go to jail. We were good kids.

I had never been arrested before. They brought me to the police station. I expected I was just going to wait until my mother came to get me. I waited and waited in a small cell. About eight hours went by. Finally someone came, but it was not my mother. It was a police officer who told me that he had real bad news. The victim had died and I was now charged with first degree murder.

I couldn't believe it. This couldn't be happening. It wasn't funny anymore. The police said my mother was upstairs, but I couldn't face her. How could I ever tell her what I had done? I didn't want to look her in the face and tell her I was a murderer. They took me into a room; my mother was sitting at a table. Her head was down; she was crying. She looked up and said; "Why Karter, why? Please tell me why you did something like this." Even now, some five years later, I don't have an answer. I ruined my life and hers. Even worse, I took the life of another 16-year-old kid.

Don't feel sorry for me

Sometimes when I walk around in here, new guys stop me and comment on my young age. They ask me how much time I am serving. When I tell them "Life," they say they feel sorry for me. I don't want anyone to feel sorry for me. ...I am not the victim. He is a 16-year-old boy who is lying in his grave because of me. Victims, too, are his mother, his family and the kids who were at Dartmouth High that day.

I can't change the past. I wish I could. Maybe by telling you my story I can help prevent other kids from making the same stupid choices I made. I hope that there is something you can learn from this. Nothing, absolutely nothing, is ever settled by fighting and violence.

Gator Collet urges kids to make right choices

Since Karter Reed has already described the tragic events that took place at Dartmouth High School on April 12, 1993, Gator Collet has chosen to share some of his own feelings about his past and about how kids who learn of his experience can create better futures for themselves by stopping the clowning around and by making the right choices.

Each week we speak to students from high schools from all over the state and other states as well. They come to the prison to listen to the members of Project Youth. So many of these kids ask me this question: "If you had it to do all over again, would you repeat the same mistakes you made?"

The answer I give to that question never changes: ABSOLUTELY NOT!!

Karter Reed and Gator Collet

Photo courtesy of Tom Landers (The Boston Globe).

When I was in school, all I wanted was attention. To get it, I did all the wrong things. I could have made better choices, but I thought I knew everything there was to know.

As I sit here in my cell, I think about the past and the reality of it all hits me very hard. I just wish I could be back in school and have it to do over. I wouldn't care if everyone called me the school "geek" or if I didn't have any friends. At least I would be free.

I honestly can't explain what I was think-ing back in 1993 to make me do something as stupid as I did. I only wish that somehow I could turn the clock back to April 1993 so I could have the chance to make a different choice. Believe me, this never would have happened.

Of course, I know the harsh reality is that none of us can ever turn clocks backwards. That's why I think it is so important that you listen to the guys in Project Youth. We know all about the wrong choices we made, and we can't do it over again. You guys have it all in front of you. We can never undo the past. You can make a big differ-ence in the future.

Whatever you do in life, just remember this: There will always be very serious consequences for making the wrong choices. Please just take a minute to think before you do something stupid.

Endnote
1. S. Patrick Kachur, et al. "School-Associated Violent Deaths in the United States, 1992 to 1994," *Journal of the American Medical Association,* Vol. 275, No. 22 (Washington, DC: American Medical Associa-tion, 12 June 1996).

Duty to protect: High school student is murdered in social studies class - School has minimal security

Brum v. Town of Dartmouth, Appeals court of Massachusetts, No. 96-P-687 (1998)

The following article has been reprinted from the May 1998 issue of the School Law Bulletin*, Volume 25, Number 5, pages 4-5 with permission from Quinlan Publishing Group, 23 Drydock Ave, Boston, Mass. 02210-2387, 800/-229-2084.*

Robinson was a student at Dartmouth (Mass.) High School. One of his friends, Pina, was part of a group that feuded with another group. The feud, which had esca-lated for several days, resulted in a violent confrontation on the school grounds. School officials stopped Pina and another student, but the other group escaped. At least one member of this other group did not attend the high school.

Pina told the principal the other group had said they would return for revenge against Pina and his friends, which in-cluded Robinson. Soon after, the principal and other school officials saw the group return through the school's front door. They were carrying knives, a billy club, a bat, and a pipe. The school officials appar-ently did nothing to stop the group, which walked up to a second-floor classroom where Robinson was having social studies.

Upon entering the classroom, the group looked for Pina. Not finding him, they instead attacked and killed Robinson.

Robinson's mother sued the town, school officials, and town officials. She claimed the officials had negligently failed to create any security measures to protect the high school. She pointed out that the school had only a "No Trespassing" sign at the front door, and the door was unlocked and unsecured. She said the school in-creased security only after her son's death. She also argued the principal was negli-gent by not responding to the foreseeable threat posed by Robinson's killers.

The court dismissed the claim against the town, finding it was immune from suit. It said the adoption of security measures was a discretionary function and that the officials' failure to do anything came under the state public-duty rule. The rule gave officials im-munity for an act or failure to act to prevent or diminish the harmful consequences of a condition or situation (which included a third party's violent conduct not originally caused by a public employer.)

The court refused to dismiss the claim against the principal for not reacting to the specific threats Pina warned him about.

Robinson's mother appealed. She ar-gued the failure to institute security at the high school was not a discretionary act. She pointed to a state law requiring schools to maintain policies that included "stan-dards and procedures to assure school build-ing security and safety of students and school personnel."

DECISION: Reversed and returned to the trial court.

The court should not have dismissed the claims against the town. The failure to institute security measures at the school was not a discretionary function. In addi-tion, the public-duty rule did not protect the town against the lawsuit**.**

State law required the town and school to adopt procedures to protect its students and employees. Therefore, the adoption of such procedures was not a discretionary function; the town was not entitled to immunity.

The public-duty rule also did not protect the town. The rule protected against claims alleging failure to prevent or lessen harms not caused by the public employer. Here, the lawsuit claimed the town *originally* caused the harms it failed to prevent. The failure to institute security measures at the school left the school totally unsecured. This insecurity was an original cause of Robinson's death.

Furthermore, school officials made things worse by not intervening once they were warned of the threats and once they saw the attackers return to the school.

See also: Harry Stoller & Co. v. Lowell, 587 N.E.2d 780 (1992); Carleton v. Framingham, 640 N.E.2d 452 (1994).

Case Notes:

In a strongly worded dissent, one judge said the appellate court's decision was a "regrettable ex-ercise in judicial nullification of a legislative act" and represented "Convoluted reasoning." The judge said the school officials did not stab Robinson and that state law specifically pro-tected their failure to prevent his killing. In particular, the judge pointed to the statute's ref-erence to third-party violence.

BY JEFFREY T. GROGGER

If local violence affects youths' human capital acquisition, then it affects their lifetime earnings potential as well. Thus violence in and around schools may be a particularly costly form of crime.

Education attainment limited by local violence

Violence in and around schools has drawn increasing attention lately from both the public and policymakers. Despite the importance of the problem, however, research on this topic has been limited. In this study, I have analyzed ways in which local violence affects students' high school graduation and college attendance.

Most of the existing work dealing with the effects of school violence has focused on determining simply how many students are victimized.[18,8,1,5,14,19,20,21] A smaller literature has analyzed the antecedents of school violence.[8,15] The principal finding with regard to the consequences of school violence is that students who fear attack at school, or who have been attacked, are

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more likely to stay at home for reasons other than illness. [19,20,14]

It would be valuable to know more about how school violence affects student performance. School violence could easily have more far-reaching consequences than school absences. Students concerned for their safety may find it difficult to concentrate. As a result, their achievement and advancement in school may suffer. Moreover, students who stay at home due to fear of violence may fall behind in schoolwork, and students who fall behind are at increased risk of dropping out of school.[4,9]

Issues related to school violence effects

Estimating the effects of school violence raises several important identification issues, however, some of which are common to all studies of educational production functions, but some of which are unique to the study of school violence.

First, a negative association across schools between the level of violence and the graduation rate may indicate merely that violent students are less likely to complete high school. Such a finding would not be particularly interesting. By far the more interesting question involves the peer group effect: how violence on the part of one student affects the educational attainment of another.

If the violence proneness, or type, of each student could be observed, then it would be straightforward to estimate the peer group effect. Although the violence prone-

ness of students cannot be observed explicitly, the survey analyzed in this study provides a number of indicators of behavior problems which collectively may provide an adequate proxy.

A second issue concerns the objectivity of the school violence measures. The violence data in this study come from reports of school principals. One might well fear that personal bias could taint such reports. On the one hand, principals might tend to answer survey questions strategically, providing answers that rationalize their students' poor performance. Such strategic responses would cause regression estimates of the effects of school violence to be overstated. On the other hand, principals might not want to reveal the true level of violence in their schools. If so, then reliance on principal reports could lead to regression estimates that understate the effect of violence.

A third concern is that the level of violence in a school may be correlated with the overall level of disorder, or with a "bad school" effect more generally. Without controlling for the factors that contribute to the bad-school effect, a regression model would attribute to school violence part of the effect actually due to those other factors, thus overstating the effects of school violence per se. This study avoids that contingency by controlling explicitly for a number of factors that contribute to a bad-school effect.

Finally, there is the question of whether the effects of violence in the school can be

distinguished from the effects of violence in the neighborhood. In a system of neighborhood schools, this distinction is essentially impossible to make. Students usually live near their schools, so violence in their schools in part may reflect violence in their neighborhoods. Without experimental data measuring how children from violent neighborhoods perform when sent to nonviolent schools, it is hard to imagine how the two effects could be disentangled.

Nevertheless, it still may be possible to estimate approximately how school violence and neighborhood violence together affect student performance. Moreover, depending on the types of remedial policies one envisions, their joint effect may be of substantive interest. For example, finding that local violence adversely affects educational attainment would bolster arguments in favor of school choice policies, which may permit students both to attend a nonviolent school and to escape a violent neighborhood, at least for part of the day.

The results from this study contribute to two branches of research, the first of which is the substantial literature on the effects of school quality. For example, Betts' 1996 survey [2] includes several papers that have analyzed the effects of various school inputs, including peer groups, on students' educational attainment. In general, he finds little relationship between school inputs and student performance. None of the studies in his survey include estimates of the effects of school violence, however, possibly because school violence is a relatively recent phenomenon.

This study can be viewed as an extension of the growing literature on the economic consequences of crime. Much of this research has attempted to determine how involvement with the criminal justice system affects the labor market opportunities of criminals.[3,6,7,10,11,13,22] This study, in contrast, seeks to estimate the consequences of local violence on students. If local violence affects youths' human capital acquisition, then it affects their lifetime earnings potential as well. Viewed

Public Schools	Total	White	Black	Hispanic
A. Principal reports of violence				
1. Students fight with each other (%)				
Serious	0.4	0.3	0.9	0.5
Moderate	9.1	7.2	15.1	12.8
Minor	75.8	75.8	77.1	75.6
None	14.7	16.8	6.9	11.1
2. Students/teacher conflicts (%)				
Serious	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Moderate	6.7	5.3	13.9	7.5
Minor	73.9	73.7	73.3	74.7
None	19.4	21.0	12.8	17.9
3. Weapons (%)				
Serious	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.2
Moderate	1.1	0.4	3.8	2.1
Minor	39.7	33.8	66.5	44.5
None	59.2	65.8	29.7	53.4
B. Index constructed from principal reports				
1. Level of violence (%)				
Serious	1.1	0.4	3.8	
Moderate	8.8	7.1	13.8	2.1
Minor	62.8	63.2	61.4	12.0
Minimal	27.3	29.3	21.1	62.8
				23.0
Sample sizes	**10,787**	**6,379**	**1,421**	
				2,363

Note: Based on weighted data. The "Total" column includes a number of students categorized as "other race."

Table 1: The Distribution of School Violence

this way, violence in and around schools may be a particularly costly form of crime.

The data

The High School and Beyond (HSB) study provides data on students' educational attainment and principals' reports of school violence. The HSB group of sophomores who constituted the study population includes roughly 15,000 students who were tenth-graders in 1980, drawn from 1,000 schools nationwide. It is a stratified sample, with a particularly large representation of Hispanic students.

Measuring educational attainment

In the HSB's 1984 and 1986 follow-up surveys, survey respondents answered questions about higher education and employment. From their responses I constructed two measures of educational attainment: a dummy variable equal to one if the student graduated from high school, and another dummy variable equal to one if the student attended a four-year college.

The graduation dummy variable ex-

cludes GED recipients. Although it might be useful to analyze GED receipt as well as traditional graduation, in this sample such a measure would be incomplete: nearly 40 percent of GED recipients obtain the credential after age 24,[16] whereas the 1986 HSB follow-up was conducted when the survey respondents were 22 years of age.

The college dummy variable equals one for students who matriculated at a four-year college at any time within the first four years after completing high school. Although 74 percent started "on time," that is, by the end of 1982, extending the matriculation window to 1986 accomplished two objectives. First, it captured students who began college at two-year institutions, but ultimately transferred to a four-year school. Second, it captures students who interrupted their schooling with a break after high school. To the extent that students interrupt their schooling as a result of violence in their high school, omitting these students by imposing a short matricu-

	No Weapons-Related Violence in 1982	Any Weapons-Related Violence in 1982	Total
No weapons-related violence in 1980	332	136	468
Any weapons-related violence in 1980	95	250	345
Total	427	386	813

Note: Unit of observation is the school.

Table 2: Persistence of Weapons-Related Violence in Public Schools

lation window could lead to exaggerated estimates of the effects of school violence on eventual college attendance.

Measuring school violence
The school violence data came from the 1980 HSB School File. This file contains responses from principals of both private schools (including Catholic and nonsectarian private schools) and public schools.

Although the descriptive comparisons between public and private schools reveal some interesting facts about the distribution of school violence, in this article I am focusing attention on public schools for three reasons. First, the vast majority of American children attend public schools. Second, private schools may be able to take measures to exclude violent children from school that are unavailable to public schools. Finally, the number of students in the private school subsample of the HSB is too small for meaningful analyses.

In the HSB School File, principals responded to many questions about school conditions, covering such typical items as enrollment, attendance, class sizes, and curriculum emphases. This file also contains three valuable measures of school violence. Principals were asked to indicate the extent to which their school suffered from (1) fights among students, (2) conflicts between students and teachers, and (3) students bringing weapons to school. Thus the survey responses provide measures of school violence that may reflect different levels of severity.

Principals' reports of school violence
Table 1 on page 27 provides estimates of the prevalence of violence in U.S. public schools and its distribution by race. (Although this information was obtained from school principals, I have merged the principal responses on the student records, so the unit of observation here is the student. I have also used the sampling weights in these calculations, so the figures can be interpreted as nationally representative student-weighted means.) The principals indicated whether, in their schools, each type of violence was serious, moderate, minor, or nonexistent. Panel A presents the dis-

tribution of violence based on the principals' reports.

The first column provides an estimate for the total population of students in public schools. Almost one in ten public school students attends a school in which fights among students present a moderate to serious problem. Minor fighting problems are so prevalent as to be commonplace in public schools, affecting three-fourths of all public school students.

Moderate to serious conflicts between students and teachers are fairly rare in public schools, although minor conflicts between students and teachers are nearly as common as fighting among students.

Moderate to serious weapons problems are more unusual, affecting only 1.1 percent of all public school students. Nevertheless, because there were roughly 13 million students enrolled in public high schools in 1982[17] this figure indicates that about 143,000 students attended public school where weapons constituted a substantial problem. Minor weapons problems are surprisingly prevalent, affecting 39.7 percent of all public school students.

The remainder of the analysis is based on a violence index constructed by aggregating the principals' responses to the three questionnaire items. Moderate to serious weapons problems were categorized as serious violence; schools with substantial fighting among students were classified as having a moderate level of violence; minor violence indicates a school with minor fighting problems, and all other schools were classified as having minimal violence.

In Panel B of Table 1, it can be seen that, based on the violence index, relatively few

public schools have serious violence problems. However, large numbers of schools experience either moderate or minor levels of violence. The data also show that, within public schools, the burden of serious school violence falls disproportionately on racial and ethnic minorities. However, minor violence problems within public schools are nearly invariant to race.

Persistence of weapons-related violence
Table 2 above provides a school-level cross-tabulation that provides some evidence on the persistence of weapons-related violence over the Sophomore Cohort's high school career. (The HSB administered a second school survey in 1982, when the students in the Sophomore Cohort were seniors.) The table shows that, among schools reporting any weapons-related violence in 1980, 72 percent also reported weapons-related violence in 1982. Similarly, among schools reporting no weapons-related violence in 1980, 71 percent reported no such violence in 1982. Thus the weapons component of the violence index, at least, reflects violence that is fairly persistent over the duration of the sample members' time in high school.

The HSB survey
The HSB student survey provides a number of student background characteristics, such as family structure and parental education and income. The survey also contains many valuable proxies for each student's own proneness to violence. Students reported on whether they had ever been suspended from school; whether and to what extent their peers viewed them as troublemakers; whether they had been in

trouble with the law; and whether they had discipline problems in school.

These are admittedly imperfect controls, because students may have disciplinary problems or run afoul of the law for reasons unrelated to violence. Nevertheless, since fighting and weapons possession are often causes for strong disciplinary (or legal) action, these indicators of student behavior problems may provide reasonably good controls for the violence-proneness of the student.

The HSB School File contains data on many school characteristics, including class size, school enrollment, expenditures per pupil, and the level of racial segregation. It also includes measures of the extent of vandalism problems in the student's school. The vandalism data are reported by the principal and coded in the same way as the reports of fighting and weapons. I used this measure in an attempt to distinguish the effects of school violence per se from the more general effect of school disorder. All of these factors may be important determinants of student performance.

Because the HSB includes multiple students per school, I can also control for average characteristics of the student body. For example, in addition to conditioning directly on the student's own family structure, I can condition on the proportion of students in the school who live in single-parent families. In other words, by averaging over all students within the school, this approach allows me to estimate various other types of peer group effects in addition to those related to violence. The specific regressors I include are the proportion of students officially classified as disadvantaged, the proportions of poor and wealthy students, and the fraction of the student body living in fatherless families.

Finally, the HSB permits one to identify the state and urbanicity of each school in the sample. I have interacted a full set of state dummy variables with the three-way urbanicity measure (urban, suburban, rural) and have included these state/urbanicity interactions in the regression. These dummy variables provide controls for any factors that might vary by state and by urbanicity within state, such as the general level of crime.

Results

Using the probit method to estimate regressions, I found that the estimates provide significant evidence that local violence reduces the student's likelihood of graduating high school. Although students in schools reporting minor levels of violence are only one percentage point less likely to complete high school than their counterparts in the least violent schools, students in schools with moderate levels of violence are 5.1 percentage points less likely to graduate. For students in the most violent schools, the likelihood of graduating falls by 5.7 percentage points. These are sizable effects relative to the sample dropout rate of 21 percent. Minor violence raises the dropout rate by 5 percent; moderate levels of violence raise the risk of dropping out by 24 percent; more substantial violence raises the risk by 27 percent.

With regard to estimates of the effect of local violence on the likelihood that students enrolled in a four-year college, serious violence lowers the likelihood of attending college by 15.9 percentage points. Even minor violence, a problem faced by nearly two-thirds of all public school students, has a significant effect, reducing college attendance rates by 3.9 percentage points.

As a proportion of the college attendance rate of 31 percent, the effect of violence on college attendance is somewhat larger than its proportionate effect on dropping out of high school. The effect of minor violence amounts to a 13 percent reduction in the college attendance rate; the effect of moderate violence amounts to a 22 percent reduction; and the effect of substantial violence amounts to a 51 percent reduction.

Discussion

The results of this study provide support

Sample size = 10,787	Received High School Diploma Graduation rate = (79%)	Attended 4-Year College Attendance rate = (31%)
Level of violence	Percentage point effects	Percentage point effects
Serious	-5.7	-15.9
Moderate	-5.1	-6.9
Minor	-1.0	-3.9

Table 3. Percentage Point Effects of Various Levels of Local Violence on High School Graduation and 4-Year College Rates (Relative to Students in School with Minimal Violence)

for the hypotheses that school and neighborhood violence affects the educational attainment of students. Even in models with controls for factors likely to be correlated with both the outcomes and the level of local violence, local violence has significant and substantial effects. Nevertheless, as discussed in the introduction, there still may be unobserved characteristics of schools and students that are correlated with the level of local violence and also with student performance.

Conclusions

Violence in schools, in one form or another, is widespread. Moreover, such violence, combined with violence in the neighborhood, has significant effects on educational attainment. My estimates indicate that if school violence were cut in half, then college attendance rates would rise by 5 percent.

The results also suggest that policies to reduce local violence could have important effects on educational attainment, although caution must be used in drawing specific policy implications from these results. These findings should not be used to rationalize greater use of metal detectors in schools, for example, since my analyses do not distinguish the effects of school violence, which metal detectors may reduce, from neighborhood violence, against which school metal detectors are likely to be ineffective.

Finally, it is important to bear in mind that these estimates are based on conditions that existed in the early 1980s. Although hard data are difficult to obtain,

there is evidence to suggest that school violence may have increased since that time. (See page 31, ETS and NCES reports.) If violence in and around schools has increased, then its effects may prove to be an increased burden that limits the lifetime growth and earnings potential of present and future citizens.

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Trainees endorse crisis response, recovery training

recovery team's portion of the drill was restricted to discussing what they would have done if these crises had been real.

Every child is valuable. Every school district needs to formulate a plan for dealing with crisis situations. Every school staff needs to be trained to implement the plan. Yet not many school districts have a plan in place, and not many have developed systematic plans for crisis response and recovery training. The intent of this article has been to serve children by sharing the crisis training developed for staff of Berkeley County School District.

COPS assists in the fight against school crime

This fall, the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Community-Oriented Policing Services (COPS) made $12 million in grants available for its School-Based Partnership Program to law enforcement agencies and partnering community groups, including schools, to address persistent crime problems in and around primary and secondary schools.

In addition, last summer COPS kicked off a new effort to urge communities and educators to join together in applying for School Resource Officer grants under the COPS Universal Hiring Program (UHP).

Thousands of local law enforcement agencies have hired officers through COPS grants. However, many do not realize that resources available from COPS can be used to hire school resource officers. The U.S. Department of Justice, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Education, will be spreading the word about the availability of these grants for the hiring of school resource officers to schools nationwide.

Many communities are discovering that the presence of a sworn law enforcement officer provides schools with much more than just a sense of security. School resource officers typically perform a variety of functions within the school. From teaching crime and substance abuse prevention to mentoring troubled students to teaching in the classroom, school resource officers combine law enforcement with education.

For more information on how COPS can help keep the schools in your community safe, or to obtain a copy of an application for a COPS UHP grant, call the U.S. Department of Justice Response Center at 1-800-421-6670 or visit the COPS web site at: http://www.usdoj.gov/cops/.

Youth at risk due to poor discipline, security, angry peers

School discipline problems not only affect students' safety and security, they also have a clear and substantial negative impact on their academic achievement, a new study from **Educational Testing Service (ETS)** of Princeton, N. J. reveals. "Order in the Classroom: Violence, Discipline and Student Achievement" sought to measure the relationships among school disciplinary policies, school disorder and academic achievement. Based on the analysis of more than 13,000 students nationwide, the study classified student behaviors into three types: drug and alcohol abuse, nonserious offenses such as cutting class, and serious offenses such as bringing a weapon to school.

Findings revealed that:
- Delinquency was negatively related to gains in achievement. Serious and nonserious offenses were negatively related to gains in achievement in all four subjects — mathematics, reading, social science and science. Drug and alcohol use were negatively related to gains in mathematics and science only.
- Delinquent behavior could be reduced through strict disciplinary policies. The severity of the punishments meted out by schools was negatively related to levels of all types of delinquency. The strictness of security arrangements in all the schools was negatively related to the levels of nonserious offenses. However, the existence of policies on school uniforms or gang colors proved unrelated to levels of delinquency.

The study also found that nonserious offenses were common and serious ones more rare. Student attitudes about those two categories of offenses mirrored that observation. For example, 29 percent of 10th-graders in the study said that it was okay to be late to class or to copy homework; 16 percent said it was okay to talk back to a teacher and more than 10 percent said it was okay to disobey rules, skip a day of class and cheat on a test. But only 3 percent said it was okay to bring a weapon to school, only 2 percent said it was okay to destroy school property and just 1 percent said it was okay use drugs in school.

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The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) released a report in March of 1998, *Violence and Discipline Problems in U.S. Public Schools: 1996-97*, the first of five reports on school safety and violence prevention efforts to be released in 1998 and 1999. The report is based on a survey — the Principal/School Disciplinarian Survey on School Violence, 1996-97 — commissioned by NCES and conducted with a nationally representative sample of 1,234 regular public elementary, middle and secondary school principals in the 50 states and the District of Columbia in the spring and summer of 1997. Special education, alternative and vocational schools, and schools that taught only pre-kindergarten, kindergarten or adult education were not represented in the sample.

Public school principals were given a list of crimes and asked to report the number of unduplicated incidents of each type of crime at the school level that had occurred at their schools during the 1996-97 school year. The crimes about which principals were asked were murder, suicide, rape or other types of sexual battery; physical attacks or fights with a weapon; robbery; physical attacks or fights without a weapon; theft or larceny, and vandalism. Respondents were provided with definitions for each of these types of crime. Under the assumption that crimes or offenses reported to police would be more accurately recalled, principals were asked to report only those incidents for which the police or other law enforcement representatives had been contacted. It was also assumed that requiring a benchmark of law enforcement contact would minimize subjective judgment about which incidents to include. Only crimes occurring at the school, including those that took place in school buildings, on school grounds, on school buses, and at school-sponsored events or activities, were to be reported.

This sample size was not large enough to produce reliable estimates for very rare events — such as murder and suicide — so the survey was not able to serve as a basis for estimating the percentage of schools experiencing one or more incidents of murder or suicide or reliable national estimates of the total number of these crimes that occurred at public schools during the 1996-97 school year. Nevertheless, principals in the survey reported other crimes with great enough frequency that the following estimates could be generalized to include the following estimates of crimes in public schools during 1996-97:
- Approximately 190,000 fights or physical attacks not involving weapons occurred at schools, along with about 115,000 thefts and 98,000 incidents of vandalism.
- About 11,000 incidents of physical attacks or fights in which weapons were used and 7,000 robberies occurred in schools.
- An estimated 4,000 incidents of rape or other types of sexual battery were reported in public schools.
- While 43 percent of public school principals were estimated to have reported no incidents of crime in their schools in 1996-97, about 37 percent were estimated to have reported from one to five crimes, and about 20 percent were estimated to have reported six crimes or more.

Among the key findings reported in the

executive summary of the NCES report were the following:

- More than half of U.S. public schools were estimated to have reported at least one crime incident in school year 1996-97, and one in 10 schools to have reported at least one serious violent crime during the same year.
- Principals of middle and high schools were more likely than were principals of elementary schools to have reported that they had experienced one or more incidents of any crime and one or more incidents of serious violent crime.
- Schools reported as having serious discipline problems were more likely to have experienced one or more incidents of crime or violence and were more likely to have experienced serious violent crime than schools reported as having less serious discipline problems.
- While most schools (from 79 to 94 percent) were estimated as having zero tolerance policies towards serious student offenses such as violence, use of tobacco, alcohol, drugs and possession/use of firearms and other weapons, and most schools (78 percent) were estimated as having formal school violence prevention/reduction programs in place, most schools (84 percent) were estimated to have reported that they employed low levels of security measures to prevent campus violence.

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Recently the **U.S. General Accounting Office** developed seven characteristics of the most promising interventions for effective school violence prevention planning. The characteristics were compiled after an extensive review of school-based violence prevention programs.

- **Comprehensive approach** — These programs recognize violence as a complex problem that requires a multifaceted response. Consequently, they address more than one problem area and involve a variety of services that link schools to the community.
- **Early start and long-term commitment** — There is a focus on (1) reaching young children to shape attitudes, knowledge, and behavior while they are still open to positive influences, and (2) sustaining the intervention over multiple years (for example, from kindergarten through 12th grade.)
- **Strong leadership and disciplinary policies** — Leadership is strong at the school level. Principals and school administrators need to sustain stable funding, staff, and program components, and, most important, they must collaborate with others to reach program goals. In addition, student disciplinary policies must be clear and consistently applied.
- **Staff development** — Key school administrators, teachers, and staff are trained to handle disruptive students, and mediate conflict as well as understand and incorporate prevention strategies into their school activities.
- **Parental involvement** — The school seeks to increase parental involvement in reducing violence by providing training in violence prevention skills, making home visits and enlisting parents as volunteers.
- **Interagency partnerships and community linkages** — The school seeks community support in making school antiviolence policies and programs work. To accomplish this, they develop collaborative agreements in which school personnel, local businesses, law enforcement officers, social service agencies and private groups work together to address the multiple causes of violence.
- **Culturally sensitive and developmentally appropriate materials and activities** — Program materials and activities are designed to be compatible with (1) students' cultural values and norms by using bilingual materials and culturally appropriate program activities, role models, and leaders, and (2) participants' age and level of development.

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The University of Maryland's Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice has published a report entitled *Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising?* The report is based on 500 published studies that reveal ways in which individuals changed after participating in crime prevention programs funded by the U.S. Department of Justice.

Some of the report's conclusions conflict with popular perceptions and political realities. Samples of such conclusions follow.

- There is little relationship between program effectiveness and program popularity.
- The school-based programs that work best are usually interactive instead of conveyed in lecture format.
- Clarifying and communicating norms about behavior through rules, reinforcement of positive behavior and schoolwide initiatives (such as anti-bullying campaigns) reduces crime and delinquency.
- Life Skills training and similar long-term programs that teach young people to develop self-control, manage anger and stress, solve problems and make responsible decisions also appear to be effective in helping to prevent crime, delinquency and substance abuse.
- Training or coaching in thinking skills for high-risk youth using behavior modification techniques or rewards and punishments reduces substance abuse and may reduce delinquency.
- Individual counseling and peer counseling of students fail to reduce substance abuse or delinquency and can increase delinquency.
- Instructional programs focusing on information dissemination, fear arousal (such as using "scared straight" tactics), moral appeal, self-esteem and affective education fail to reduce substance abuse.
- School based leisure-time enrichment programs, including supervised homework and self-esteem exercises, fail to reduce delinquency risk factors or drug abuse.
- "Schools within schools" programs that group students into smaller units for more supportive interaction or flexibility in instruction have reduced drug abuse and delinquency.

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Several recent high-profile fatal shootings by students at their schools have focused national attention on the joint issues of youth violence and school safety. **The Harvard-MetLife Survey on Youth Violence** was conducted to determine the extent of underlying anger and violence surrounding public junior and senior high schools nation-

wide. The survey asked students about their knowledge of violence and conflict among young people, their own experiences (as participants or observers) with fighting and avoiding fights, their experiences with weapons, and their conflict resolution skills.

The survey, conducted by the **Center for Health Communication at the Harvard School of Public Health**'s "Squash It!" Campaign to Prevent Youth Violence, questioned 1558 junior and senior high school students in the United States from April to June, 1997.

Concerning their experiences in the 12 months immediately preceding the survey:

- 66 percent of the students (63 percent of boys; 69 percent of girls) said they had been exposed to one or more physical fights. This includes 32 percent of the students (43 percent of boys; 21 percent of girls) who had personally participated in physical fights, and an additional 34 percent of the students (20 percent of boys; 48 percent of girls) who had not personally participated in physical fights, but had witnessed fights among other young people.
- When asked about their lifetime experiences with physical fights, 94 percent of the students reported having been personally exposed to physical fights: 56 percent had been personally involved in fights, and an additional 38 percent had observed fights among other young people. The problem is similar and serious in all settings (urban, suburban, and rural), all regions of the country, and among youth of all races and ages.

Students were asked for more detailed descriptions of the most recently occurring fight, including precipitating factors, locations and outcomes. Three important characteristics of the fights were:

- 68 percent of the fights resulted in injury, including 12 percent in which the injury was serious, and 1 percent in which someone was killed.
- 73 percent of the fights occurred on or around school property or on a school bus.
- 33 percent resulted in someone being suspended or expelled from school.

When asked to specify the reason(s) why the most recent fight began, students gave the following reasons:

- Someone insulted someone else or treated them disrespectfully (54 percent);
- There was an ongoing feud or disagreement (44 percent);
- Someone was hit, pushed, shoved, or bumped (42 percent);
- There were rumors or things people were saying (40 percent);
- Someone could not control his or her anger (39 percent);
- Other people were watching or encouraging the fight (34 percent);
- Someone who likes to fight a lot was involved (26 percent);
- Someone did not want to look like a loser (21 percent);
- There was an argument over a boyfriend or girlfriend (19 percent); and
- Someone wanted to keep a reputation or get a name (17 percent).

Illegal drugs and alcohol were not among the most frequently stated contributing factors for these most recent fights. Only 5 percent of the students included someone's use of illegal drugs or alcohol, and only 3 percent included an argument about these substances among the reasons for the most recent fight.

In addition, 14 percent (18 percent of boys; 9 percent of girls) stated that they had been threatened with a weapon in the past 12 months. Six percent (9 percent of boys; 2 percent of girls) said that they had actually been attacked with a weapon in the past 12 months.

In addition to documenting the prevalence and consequences of violence among high school students, the survey revealed students' self-reported risk of provoking violence or responding with violence to conflict or angry situations. Students' responses to the following two statements illustrate the problems that some students experience controlling their anger:

- 33 percent (39 percent of boys; 26 percent of girls) agreed with the statement that "When I am really angry, there is no way I can control myself."
- 24 percent (28 percent of boys; 20 per-

cent of girls) disagreed with the statement that "I can stay out of a fight because I have other ways of dealing with anger."

Additionally, the students' responses to the following statements reflected some of their underlying attitudes about conflict resolution and fighting:

- 41 percent (52 percent of boys; 30 percent of girls) agreed with the statement that "If I am challenged, I am going to fight;"
- 21 percent (29 percent of boys; 13 percent of girls) agreed with the statement that "Avoiding fights is a sign of weakness;" and
- 19 percent (27 percent of boys; 11 percent of girls) agreed that "I like to fight."

These self-reported risks of violence are, in fact, associated with fighting behavior. Students who have trouble controlling their anger or are predisposed toward fighting are at least 50 percent more likely to engage in fights. For example, of the students who agreed that "When I am really angry, there is no way I can control myself," 78 percent reported having participated in physical fights. Of those students who disagreed with that same statement, 46 percent reported fighting, while of those who strongly disagreed with that statement, 38 percent reported fighting.

The six high-profile fatal school shootings which occurred last school year are among the most visible signs of youth violence. These research findings document a more general climate of anger and violence than currently exists among many junior and senior high school students. The findings additionally suggest the importance of focusing increased attention on identifying and implementing effective anger management and conflict resolution programs for students; creating "safe passages" and "peaceable" environments in and around our nation's schools; and implementing effective policies and practices to curb teenagers' access to guns.

Prepared by June Lane Arnette and Marjorie Creswell Walsleben.

States alert to end school violence; it's about time.

Has the number of violent assaults, threats and shooting incidents that occurred during the 1997-98 school year in schools across the nation — shocking in their intensity, senselessness and replicability — finally provided the long-referred to "wake-up call" needed to galvanize educators, politicians, police, the courts and citizens in general into action that will end school violence?

NSSC has surveyed news clippings from communities across the United States to report some steps being taken to preserve schools and communities as safe places in which to learn, teach and live.

• **Kansas City -** Northeast High School history teacher Ron Scarbrough appealed to a school board crowd to remove violent students permanently from schools. Scarbrough's cheek had to be rebuilt, and his eyesight will never be the same after the teacher was struck twice in the face May 21, 1998, by an allegedly intoxicated student wearing a sharp ring.[1]

• **Cheshire, Conn.** - A Cheshire High School teenager who allegedly made death threats against teachers in an underground newspaper was suspended from school and charged in court with harassment and breach of the peace.[2]

• **Florida** - Florida's Commissioner of Education, Frank T. Brogan, suggested that the best way to deal with issues such as crisis planning is at the local level. He pointed out that with the state's guidance, schools can develop localized programs designed for "individual kids in individual districts."[3]

• **Indiana** - A national school safety expert reported that Indiana school districts used the summer break to train school personnel, assess campus security, and form crisis response teams.[4]

• **West Virginia** - Teachers in several counties received training from a security agency this summer, learning how to unload a gun and disarm a student. Other counties are strengthening counseling services.[5]

• **Pennsylvania** - The Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU) is developing a Strategies for Safe Schools Initiative designed to provide school officials with information about local and national efforts for improving school safety. AIU plans to serve as a regional clearinghouse for such information, to research and recommend successful models and promising approaches on safety, and to educate school officials through meetings, seminars and services.[6]

• **San Bernardino County, Calif.** - Starting in September 1998, students who commit any one of seven offenses in some San Bernardino County high schools may find themselves in traffic court paying a fine of up to $400 under an anti-bad-behavior program run by the San Bernardino County Sheriff's department.[7]

• **Jefferson County, Ky.** - Public school officials are recommending that schools practice "drop-and-hold" drills to protect students in the event that a gun-wielding attacker opens fire on campus. Site-based councils at each school will decide whether to institute the drills.[8]

• **New York and Los Angeles** - The New York City Board of Education voted August 19, 1998, to join several boards of education in prohibiting students from using handheld laser pointers, the high-tech replacement for the wooden and metal pointers commonly used by college instructors and corporate presenters. The little red laser dots resemble those produced by laser gun sights. Kids have begun using the now inexpensive battery-powered pointers as trendy toys for "dotting" — startling and mystifying friends and strangers alike by focusing the pointers on people's clothing, movie screens and sometimes bouncing the beams off school bus rear view mirrors into drivers' eyes. Doctors say a laser trained directly on the eye for several seconds could damage the retina.[9]

In Los Angeles, a case in which the red beams were shone on a security guard's eyes and in another instance were focused on the uniform of a Los Angeles police officer making a routine traffic stop both resulted in criminal charges filed by the city attorney's office under a 1992 state law that prohibits the use of a laser scope with the intention of instilling fear of physical harm in a person.[10]

• **DeKalb County, Ga.** - Two teachers from every DeKalb school this summer were trained in nonviolent techniques of defusing or restraining unruly students. By Christmas, the teachers are expected to have trained their school colleagues to use the strategies.[11]

• Finally, in a state and city that shall remain unidentified, school board members approved a revised discipline code for students. It replaces a previous version drafted 18 years ago. It's about time.

Endnotes
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3. Anu Manchikanti. "Educators go to school on recent violence." 4 July 1998. *Washington D.C. Times.*
4. Susanna Ray. "State implements new school security measures." 20 August 1998. *Associated Press.*
5. "West Virginia." 27 August 1998. USA Today.
6. "AIU tackles school safety." 11 August 1998. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.*
7. Joanna Frazier. "Misbehaviors could warrant stiff fines." 15 August 1998. *Riverside Press Enterprise.*
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Checklist of common traits of violent youth

As a result of tracking school-associated violent deaths in the United States from July 1992 to the present, the National School Safety Center has examined the common characteristics of youngsters who have caused such deaths. NSSC has identified the following behaviors, which could indicate a youth's potential for harming him/herself or others.

Accounts of these tragic incidents repeatedly indicate that in most cases, a troubled youth has demonstrated or has talked to others about problems with bullying and feelings of isolation, anger, depression and frustration. While there is no foolproof system for identifying potentially dangerous students who may harm themselves and/or others, this checklist provides a starting point.

These characteristics should serve to alert school administrators, teachers and support staff to address needs of troubled students through meetings with parents, provision of school counseling, guidance and mentoring services, as well as referrals to appropriate community health/social services and law enforcement personnel. Further, such behavior should also provide an early warning signal that safe school plans and crisis prevention/ intervention procedures must be in place to protect the health and safety of all school students and staff members so that schools remain safe havens for learning.

1. _____ Has a history of tantrums and uncontrollable angry outbursts.
2. _____ Characteristically resorts to name calling, cursing or abusive language.
3. _____ Habitually makes violent threats when angry.
4. _____ Has previously brought a weapon to school.
5. _____ Has a background of serious disciplinary problems at school and in the community.
6. _____ Has a background of drug, alcohol or other substance abuse or dependency.
7. _____ Is on the fringe of his/her peer group with few or no close friends.
8. _____ Is preoccupied with weapons, explosives or other incendiary devices
9. _____ Has previously been truant, suspended or expelled from school.
10. _____ Displays cruelty to animals.
11. _____ Has little or no supervision and support from parents or a caring adult.
12. _____ Has witnessed or been a victim of abuse or neglect in the home.
13. _____ Has been bullied and/or bullies or intimidates peers or younger children.
14. _____ Tends to blame others for difficulties and problems s/he causes her/himself.
15. _____ Consistently prefers TV shows, movies or music expressing violent themes and acts.
16. _____ Prefers reading materials dealing with violent themes, rituals and abuse.
17. _____ Reflects anger, frustration and the dark side of life in school essays or writing projects.
18. _____ Is involved with a gang or an antisocial group on the fringe of peer acceptance.
19. _____ Is often depressed and/or has significant mood swings.
20. _____ Has threatened or attempted suicide.