

Alternative schools: inclusive, community-based settings that promote children's strengths, academic achievement and social responsiveness.

School Safety

UPDATE

Alternative schools: intensive care for troubled youth

At 14, Jessie was a Crip. He fought other gang members, carried a gun and tagged his community daily with graffiti. One night, three rival gang members found Jessie alone and drew their weapons on him. Realizing that he was outnumbered, Jessie knelt on the ground, his enemy's guns pointed at the back of his neck. "I think I can reach back and grab my gun, but by the time I do, they're going to get me," Jessie thought. "I could get up and run, but then I might get shot in the back. So my final option is to sit right where I am, do what I'm doing, be good and not get shot in the neck," Jessie reasoned. Jessie survived this experience. He's no longer a Crip. His self-reflection saved him. And he learned those reasoning skills at his local alternative school.

The need for alternative schools

By the year 2010, America's population will include more teen-agers like Jessie than ever before in our nation's history. This steady growth of the adolescent population over the next decade will bring both problem and promise to the adults responsible for these young people. A January 1996 report from the bipartisan Council on Crime in America, headed by former U.S. Attorney General Griffin Bell and former Secretary of Education William Bennett, cites the rise in youth crime and violence. The report also notes that "America is a ticking crime bomb, and there is little time remaining to prepare for the blast." One solution to rising crime may be to provide effective alternative schooling to youth such as Jessie and his peers. Such schooling for disruptive youth may offer a

way to avoid an "explosion" of violence and victimization perpetrated by disaffected, poorly educated youth.

Adults, for their part, can participate in defusing youth crime by building and supporting alternative education schools as permanent, inclusive, community-based settings that validate children's strengths while developing their academic achievement and social responsiveness.

Educators share responsibility for ensuring that Jessie's disruptive past does not interfere with his future. Many educators support alternative schools because today's disruptive student behaviors often challenge traditional classroom teachers' abilities to maintain safety in dynamically diverse learning environments. Evidence supporting growing teacher frustration over managing disruptive students can be found in recent legislation.

In Florida, the *Orlando Sentinel* reports that Governor Lawton Chiles has given teachers power to remove disruptive students from class under a zero-tolerance policy. This emergency rule allows teachers to send students to alternative programs without administrative approval. Lawmakers in other states such as Indiana and Texas have passed legislation giving teachers more control over sending disruptive students to alternative placement programs. In New York state, Governor George Pataki proposed legislation in March 1996 that would allow teachers to remove disruptive students from their classrooms to alternative placement programs for 10 days. Missouri Governor Mel Carnahan announced in January 1996 that a new initiative to provide alternative schools will keep "violent and disruptive students from interfering with efforts of teachers and students who are serious about education," adding that nevertheless, alternative schools will "not be a dumping ground for troubled youth."

As public intolerance for student misbehavior increases, alternative schooling programs for disruptive youth are increasing in number and quality. State legislatures, courts and elected officials are expanding the role of alternative schools to improve student attendance, intervene in violent behaviors, enhance interagency intervention efforts and increase educational opportunity. Modern education providers now understand that alternative schooling is a viable

option that provides for the unique needs of students who commit disruptive or violent acts in the school or community. Some of these alternative education options are prompted by legislation or court decisions. However, the majority of alternative placement programs are offered voluntarily by local school districts, community participants and youth-serving professionals who recognize the need for an alternative education process to achieve safe learning and community environments.

Types of alternative schools

Mary Anne Raywid, writing in a special edition of *Educational Leadership*, makes three distinctions in listing the types of alternative schools:

- *Popular Innovations* seek to make school challenging for all students and differ from traditional schools, notably in their restructuring innovations. These alternative schools are schools of choice and are usually very popular. They resemble magnet schools and reflect program themes.
- *Last-Chance Programs* are programs to which students are “sentenced.” They include in-school suspension, time-out rooms and disruptive student programs. They have been described as “soft jails” and have little to do with choice. Typically these schools focus on behavior modification and “the basics,” including rote skills and drill.
- *Remedial Focus* alternative programs are for students who need remediation or rehabilitation — academic, social or both. These alternatives focus on remedial work and on providing students social and emotional groups, emphasizing the school as a community.

Raywid also suggests that hybrids of her three types of alternative schools can and do exist, depending on staff and changing program needs.

Alternative schooling: pros and cons

During the 1960s and 1970s, public alternative schools in America experienced a renaissance by satisfying unmet needs in areas of vocational training, exceptional education and the fine arts. The Parkway Program in Philadelphia was the first modern example of an autonomous public alternative school. Other programs — including the Metro School in Chicago, Illinois, and the St. Paul Open School in St. Paul, Minnesota — offered alternative models that form the basis for many successful programs for at-risk youth. Other historical alternative schooling programs included the Downtown Senior High in San Francisco and the Hope School in Inglewood, California.

Johns Hopkins University professor Gary Gottfredson

reported important data for alternative schools in “Evaluation of Programs for Delinquency Prevention Through Alternative Education,” a 1985 research project for the Center for Social Organization in Schools. Gottfredson reported that in the alternative schools participating in his study, students and teachers felt safe, teacher victimization decreased, attendance improved and teacher commitment increased.

However, there is debate among professionals on the issue of alternative school placement for disruptive students. W.L. McKinney, writing in a 1978 article for *Qualitative Evaluation*, noted that alternative schools have not evolved as a natural outgrowth of their own positive philosophy, but from a reaction to what were viewed as negative features of conventional schools. As a result, alternative schools often do not meet the expectations of the students and communities they serve, gaining the unfair reputation in some cases as hangouts for disruptive or criminal youth. Some argue that these schools are little more than youth prisons that encourage class distinction and alienation. Other critics point to a relaxation of standards, short class periods, expense, diversion of resources from regular classes and a lack of objective evaluation data as reasons to question continued support for alternative programs.

Nevertheless, enthusiasts of alternative schooling — including many students — emphasize the quality of education and individualized attention practiced in many alternative schools. Energetic and dedicated staff often provide the support necessary to modify poor behavior. As one student of the Alternative Learning Center in Vancouver, Washington, states, “When you choose to be here, you will work hard ... get involved in the school’s activities and within the community.”

Criteria for successful alternative schools

Among the strategies shared by successful alternative school programs for disruptive youth are the following:

- assignment (to the school) by choice from several options provided by the school district, law enforcement, human services and/or probation;
- smaller class size;
- democratic climates of inclusion, participation and tolerance;
- daily attendance and progress reports;
- direct supervision of all activities;
- full days of study and rigorous workloads, with minimal time off;
- curricula that address cultural and individual learning style differences;
- high standards and expectations for performance;
- mandatory student, parent and family counseling;
- motivated, empathetic and culturally diverse staff;

COVER STORY

- clear and consistent goals for students, teachers and parents;
- continual monitoring, evaluation and formalized passage from one step or program to another; and
- administrative commitment to the program and financial support.

Professor Stephen Hamilton of Cornell University reports four additional criteria for successful alternative schools: pupils must be placed accurately and appropriately; barriers between regular and alternative schools should be blurred; parents and students must understand the selection process; and the program must demonstrate that the end result is favorable for students, staff and the community.

The importance of choice, meeting unmet needs

Psychiatrist William Glasser has said, "Children who attend a school in which they are asked to take some responsibility for the curriculum and rules discover democracy." Choice makes democracy possible and alternative schooling stronger. In *Alternatives in Education* (1976), researchers in alternative placement Vernon Smith, Robert Barr and Daniel Burke identified three criteria for a model of alternative education:

- Students must attend by choice;
- The school or program must be responsive to unmet needs; and
- The student body must reflect the social mix of the community.

While the above criteria offer some direction, a clear definition of what ideally constitutes an alternative school continues to defy educational experts although education practitioners are getting closer as they experiment with new ideas.

Selected programs

The following programs represent examples of the estimated 7,500 alternative schools/programs functioning in the United States today.

Carver Learning Center (CLC) is a separate campus within the San Angelo (Texas) Independent School District. Disruptive students are placed into a structured, self-paced program featuring individualized mastery learning. Each student's prescriptive learning plan allows choices to be made that take into account individual needs and learning styles. To place a student at CLC, principals must document the student's scholastic history, including discipline record and all test and screening evaluations, and must also include a signed parent notification of the rec-

ommendation to admit the student. A placement committee of five director-level administrators evaluates each student for placement. An assigned probation officer supplements the one administrator and seven teachers responsible for students.

The Chicago School Reform Board of Trustees has contracted with 41 social agencies and community groups to provide alternative schools for the most disruptive and truant students in the Chicago Public Schools. Twenty-nine agencies work with 558 disruptive students in grades six through 12. Twelve more agencies work with 1,034 drop-outs and chronic truants between the ages of 14 and 21.

Horizons Alternative School and Mid-level Learning Center in Fort Worth, Texas, features a Parent University as a primary support and education opportunity for parents of students enrolled in the center's alternative programs. Parents plan meetings, invite guest speakers and share concerns about their children with teachers. The core curriculum at the school emphasizes development of critical thinking skills and also takes into account individual needs and learning styles. The student/teacher ratio is 9-to-1.

Sudbury Valley School located in Framingham, Massachusetts, is a private alternative school boasting no classes, no teachers and no grades. Sudbury has been a model since 1968 for other public and private schools because most of its graduates go on to top colleges and successful careers. The school's 200 students ages 4 to 19 face almost no restrictions other than rules regarding safety, use of equipment, respect for others and attendance. School founder Daniel Greenberg states, "Our basic assumption is that human beings never goof off — certainly not children. They're figuring out how to become adults."

A positive step

Alternative schooling is not a panacea for all that is wrong with youth or the institutions that serve their needs. Nevertheless, history, research and current experience indicate that alternative placement for disruptive students goes a long way toward maximizing opportunities for safe and effective education to take place in both traditional and alternative school settings. Students, parents, educators and citizens alike must take a positive step toward promoting and preserving safe and effective learning environments. Helping at-risk youth return to the education mainstream increases the long-term safety and well-being of all students and the society at large.

Prepared by Ronald W. Garrison of Garrison Associates, an education, justice and security consulting firm located in Benicia, California. For information, call 707/746-5880.

Florida schools and police give encore performances

ACT supports schools and police

The Alternative Center for Truancy (ACT) was established in 1994 in Orange County, Florida, to get truants off the streets and under supervision, improve the county's school attendance and graduation rates, reduce the number of daylight burglaries committed by juveniles, and to make parents aware of and responsible for the actions of their truant children.

Cooperative efforts among county agencies — family services, police, juvenile court, public schools and the sheriff's office — ensure support of a quality program. The Orlando Police Department and Orange County Sheriff's Office help staff ACT with one officer and one deputy. All local law enforcement agencies are involved and bring truant students to the ACT facility.

ACT is open every scheduled school day and receives young people from 7:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The criteria for a truant to be taken to the center are based on Florida state law and Orange County Public Schools policy relating to student attendance. Accordingly, youth taken to the center must be school age (under the age of 16 by Florida law) and not enrolled in private schools or public schools outside of the county. They also cannot be under suspension from an Orange County public school.

The ACT program is designed to accept a truant by referral. Once brought to the facility, the student is logged in and interviewed. His or her community control status is checked, and the school is contacted. The student is either released to a parent/guardian or taken to Great Oaks Village, a nonsecure facility for juveniles. In order for the student to return to school, s/he must be accompanied to the school by a parent or guardian. If the family situation dictates, a social worker is called for follow-up work.

Prior to the ACT program, truants were generally ignored because law enforcement officers' workloads were considered too large to handle such low-priority offenses. Often, handling a truancy case meant tying up an officer for extended periods of time. Officers were frequently required to cross the county to return truants to their respective schools, call the parents or guardians, and sometimes

arrest the juvenile on a juvenile pick-up order (warrant) or for an offense committed while truant.

Now, with the ACT program in place, when an officer encounters a truant, the officer must make a short inquiry into the juvenile's status. The juvenile is then either released or transported to the ACT facility. There the juvenile is left with capable supervision until s/he is picked up by a parent/guardian, sent to Great Oaks Village or arrested. Police officers and deputy sheriffs are more inclined to apprehend truants knowing that ACT will follow up on such cases and that the time required for the officer to handle the truancy case has been reduced.

While many student absences are legitimate, a large majority are not. Many crimes are committed by juveniles at times when they should be in school. Programs such as ACT get truants off the street, free law enforcers to concentrate on more serious crimes and help to make parents more accountable for the actions of their children.

Information about the ACT program was submitted by Officer Steven T. McDaniel, Winter Park Police Department, 410 Park Avenue South, Winter Park, FL 32789, 407/623-3284.

School Leavers: accurate data is the key

The personal, social and economic consequences for students who do not complete high school place enormous burdens on the state and local community as well. Accurate dropout statistics are a necessary tool to use in the evaluation of dropout prevention program effectiveness, in the measurement of district goals achievement, and in comparing local dropout rates with the dropout rates of other districts in the state.

School Leavers is a program designed to track public school students in grades seven through 12 who leave school prior to graduation. School leavers are categorized as one of the following:

- *transfer*: a student who, prior to graduation, withdraws from school with the intent of transferring to another public or private school or other educational institution.
- *DNE*: a student who, prior to graduation, *Did Not Enter* an assigned school within the first 20-day period of the school year and did not transfer to another public or private school or other educational institution.
- *habitual truant*: a student under the age of 16 who leaves school during the school year prior to graduation without transferring to another public or private school or other educational institution
- *dropout*: a student over the age of compulsory attendance who leaves school prior to graduation without transferring to another public or private school or other educational institution.

Occupational specialists for placement and follow-up implement annual studies to provide a systematic examination of district dropout information for comparative evaluation. District follow-up reports are submitted to the Florida Department of Education and the School Board of Hillsborough County for local program review and curricular adjustment.

The school district's Dropout Data Collection and Reporting Committee is responsible for: the coordination and implementation of personnel inservices that ensure consistent information data coding; withdrawal code classifications; status updating; student tracking; the exit interviewing process used with dropouts; and dropout reporting. Individual schools receive interim summaries every 20-day period, complete with coding updates to allow for status corrections.

At the beginning of the school year, school-based occupational specialists confirm withdrawal codes before reporting dropouts to the district. All potential school leavers are checked for possible enrollment in home education, adult/GED education, or alternative education. Migrant students are tracked through Migrant Student Record Transfer System. Requests for student records are monitored using the Florida Automated System for Transferring Educational Records. The district also uses Student Dropout/Match Information to further track former students who may have transferred to another district. During the school year, numerous attempts are made to contact students with excessive absences. Exit interviews are conducted with as many students as possible.

Students designated as dropouts or habitual truants are the target population for follow-up studies. Color-coded survey forms are sent by bulk mail to the last available address of each school leaver. An introductory cover letter and postage-paid return envelope are provided to encourage a maximum response rate. Nonrespondents receive telephone calls when telephone numbers are available. These former students are surveyed to ascertain their current educational status, to obtain student comments, and to identify those in need of education and/or employment referrals.

Information on School Leavers was supplied by Dean Amaden, School District of Hillsborough County, Placement and Follow-up, 5410 North 20th St., Tampa, FL 33610, 813/231-1933.

Graduation rates soar at South Area High

South Area High School in Lake Worth, Florida, is an alternative school serving high school students in grades nine through 12 who have been unsuccessful in traditional school settings. Students are referred by seven feeder high schools or by the courts or social service agencies. Most students arrive on campus with low self-esteem, poor motivation and personal histories of physical abuse, crime, sub-

stance abuse, family dysfunction, health problems, truancy and/or academic failure. Some students have also experienced failure in another alternative program.

One of the most beneficial aspects of South Area High School is its size; maximum capacity is 190 students. This low number of students allows the staff to give a great deal of personal attention to each student. The limited student body also allows each student to be "somebody" — somebody who learns to trust adults and be trusted by them in turn.

Academics are augmented with work experience and job placement assistance. Students must remain at South Area High School for a minimum of one year, but most choose to stay until they earn a diploma. During the second and subsequent years of attendance, the majority of students show remarkable improvements. In its first year of operation, the school's dropout rate was 51.7 percent, but that rate has since fallen to 6.7 percent. The graduation rate has steadily risen and since 1992, has ranged between 95 percent and 100 percent.

A "no homework" policy is very effective. Many of the students work full-time jobs, have children of their own, or live in a home environment that is not conducive to studying. Students still have assignments such as research papers and book reports, but time at school is provided for these tasks.

Students trained in conflict resolution/peer mediation assist with any conflicts among the student body. Two students and one adult lead those in conflict through a structured process to resolve their differences. If a student does not choose mediation, s/he can choose to refocus in a "cool down" room.

State-certified teachers are selected based on their experience and their ability and desire to work with at-risk students. Teachers receive regular training on relevant topics: family dysfunction, substance abuse, affective disorders, peer mediation and conflict resolution, and parenting skills, for example. The standard curriculum is used, and teaching strategies focus on students' individual learning styles. Teachers' flexibility is the key to success with students. South Area High School has an in-house psychologist, and district support personnel include a speech/language therapist and a curriculum specialist.

South Area High School is a full-service school that combines education with on-site medical and social services to meet the needs of students and their families. Interagency collaborative efforts include mental health counseling, a referral network for substance abusers, and a link to community health clinics.

For further information, contact principal Edward J. Foley Jr., South Area High School, 716 South K Street, Lake Worth, FL 33460-4998, 407/533-6364.

Mid Del Schools offer a safety net to at-risk students

"...and just what am I supposed to do with my boy if you put him out of school for the rest of the year, Ms. Davis?"

A question with no good answer

Each time an administrator enforces a long-term student suspension, s/he must balance the needs of the serious offender against the needs of the other students in the school who must be assured the opportunity of attending a school with a safe climate. The dilemma is intensified by knowledge that the serious offenders (who may have brought weapons to school, committed assaults or sold drugs on campus) are also young people who desperately need education but whose misbehavior cannot be tolerated in traditional schools. These are youth out of the education mainstream.

In my district near Oklahoma City, we have anguished over the problem of dropouts and long-term suspensions, ever seeking new ways to intervene with at-risk students instead of losing them. Fortunately, the state legislature in 1994 passed a Juvenile Justice Act, which offered grant money to districts for innovative educational programs that provided intervention for the very population we wanted to help. After several months of creative and collaborative labor, our staff developed three programs that were approved for funding by the state: Accelerated Academic Academy (AAA), Students Working in Alternative Settings (SWAPS) and Community School.

AAA is a day program for students in grades 6-8 who have been identified as high risk for dropping out or who exhibit disruptive behavior. The students are removed from their home schools for a period of nine weeks of intense academic help and daily counseling. The parent/guardian is encouraged to be involved with the child in family counseling. The home schools maintain contact with the students during their absences, in part to dispel the perception that these students have been exiled to a punitive setting. The idea is to intervene before students drop out or become serious offenders, then to return students better equipped for success to traditional schools. If students need more than nine weeks in the program, a decision made by the AAA staff, the parent and

child, and the home school staff can effect that option.

SWAPS is a program offered through the district Vo-Tech School and is set up purely for dropout prevention for students ages 16, 17 and 18. Classes meet Monday through Thursday from 3:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. in two three-hour blocks of instruction. Students can complete one credit every 20 days in each three-hour instructional block. The academic component is coupled with vocational training. Most students work a minimum of 15 hours per week in a paid position with the guidance of a vocational counselor.

Community School is an evening alternative for serious offenders in grades 9-12, most of whom are on long-term suspension. In addition to suspended youth, the school also enrolls students whose disruptive behavior in their home schools has prompted referral to this alternative setting. Classes meet four evenings a week from 3:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. While in Community School, students are afforded academic instruction and daily counseling in small groups. The older students in the school generally complete the courses required for graduation and terminate their formal secondary education in the alternative setting. The younger students, however, are encouraged to return to the traditional school after an appropriate period in Community School or whenever their long-term suspensions end.

In addition to the three newly funded programs, two existing successful alternative placements are housed at the Vo-Tech School: New Beginnings, an option for pregnant girls in grades 10-12; and Students Taking Action to Return to School (STARS), a dropout recovery plan. In New Beginnings, a prospective mother enrolls for the semester of the expected birth or the semester following the birth of her child. During that semester, students spend a half-day in individualized academic instruction and a half-day working with babies in the Vo-Tech School Day Care. When new mothers return to school, their babies receive free child care at Vo-Tech Day Care until the mothers graduate. STARS is also offered for one semester for dropouts and potential dropouts to receive help with academic work and to be given appropriate counseling to ready the students to return to traditional school settings.

All these alternatives work together in our district to provide a safety net for youth out of the education mainstream. Serious offenders and dropouts and also students who function well within the traditional school are better served because of that safety net. The serious offenders can be redeemed in an alternative educational setting tailored to their needs; the other students are safer inside the traditional educational setting when disruptive and violent behavior is mitigated.

Submitted by Marie Davis, director of Secondary Instruction for Mid Del Schools in Midwest City, Oklahoma.

Prevention and intervention: ideas and opportunities

Conflict resolution for youth

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is committed to a comprehensive strategy focused on the prevention of juvenile delinquency. Sharing that goal, the Department of Justice and the Department of Education have collaborated in the development of a guide to selecting and implementing conflict resolution programming that is directed at schools, youth-serving organizations, and community and juvenile justice settings. The work of these two agencies will be highlighted in a national satellite teleconference scheduled for broadcast on May 29, 1996, from 1:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. (EDT).

The teleconference will combine theoretical knowledge with the practical experience of experts, educators and youth to assist in building effective programs in schools, juvenile justice facilities and other educational settings. Existing programs with proven results will be showcased to demonstrate the various methods presented by the teleconference panelists. Opportunities for interaction by telephone between the viewing audience and the panelists will be available several times throughout the presentation.

For more information on this teleconference or to register, contact Eastern Kentucky University's Juvenile Justice Telecommunications Assistance Project at (606) 622-6270 or via e-mail at njdadeh@aol.com.

Salem-Keizer Schools combat graffiti

The Salem-Keizer (Oregon) School District has an aggressive campaign to stop graffiti and vandalism at all district locations. Efforts include increased lighting and security patrols, placing anti-graffiti lacquer on brick surfaces and film barriers over windows, installing exterior security cameras, and improving intervention and prevention programs.

The most successful program to date is the Cash-for-Information Program, developed by the Risk Management Department. Students anonymously report graffiti and vandalism information to school administrators or the police. Student identities are protected, and a privately donated

cash reward is offered. By participating in this program, students take ownership and responsibility for their schools. Through this program, students create an atmosphere of zero tolerance for graffiti and vandalism.

A good example of this program in action is at North Salem High School. When the program was first introduced, many students came forward with information, and more than a dozen individuals were apprehended. Not one student who came forward with information accepted a cash reward.

Submitted by Harold Burke-Sivers, security coordinator, and Patrick Cody, risk control analyst, of the Salem-Keizer School District. For more information, call 503/399-3070.

Sentenced to Serve Plus

Sentenced to Serve Plus (STS-Plus) represents a unique collaboration between Carver County (Minnesota) Court Services, the Carver-Scott Educational Cooperative, the Minnesota Department of Corrections and the Minnesota Department of Education. The overall goal of the project is to reduce criminal behavior among youth by providing an opportunity to enhance education and self-esteem through service-learning projects that benefit the community. Youth participating in the program are considered high-risk, are under the supervision of the court, exhibit negative behavioral and/or mental health symptoms, and face placement in residential treatment facilities. Instead of receiving jail sentences, young nonviolent offenders are given court-ordered community service work, which they must complete in supervised crews. Along with laboring in a crew, the juveniles must commit to and complete an individualized educational program. This learning component is the "plus" part of STS. Another element of STS-Plus is restorative justice, which requires offenders to pay restitution for the damages they inflicted upon their victims.

A key concept in STS-Plus is incorporating court-ordered service as one component of an individual educational plan for each youth. Through the combined efforts of the STS-Plus coordinator, school counselor and probation officer, a personalized educational plan is written to assist participating youths in completing educational and vocational goals. School credit is given for the youths' experience with community service projects. A portion of the court-ordered community service is waived when the youths cooperate with the personalized educational plan.

For more information, please contact Brent W. Erickson, STS Plus coordinator, Carver County Court Services, Carver County Justice Center, 600 East Fourth Street, Chaska, MN 55318, 612/361-1474.

NSSC REPORT

Rhode Island addresses school violence at the state level

Rhode Island Attorney General Jeffrey B. Pine recently wrote to the National School Safety Center to describe some initiatives taken in his state regarding school violence. The following briefly summarizes these efforts.

In 1993, the attorney general formed the Task Force to Prevent Violence in Schools, comprised of representatives from law enforcement, education, the judiciary and prosecution and other interested parties. The task force developed and issued a model "Zero Tolerance Policy" for Rhode Island schools to follow. The policy was adopted statewide on a voluntary basis by virtually every school district and school committee. According to Mr. Pine, Rhode Island became one of the first states to have a consistent statewide policy regarding zero tolerance for weapons in schools.

With the cooperation of a private advertising firm, two posters that publicize the zero tolerance for weapons policy were created for distribution to schools, police departments and social service agencies that serve teen-agers. The message of the posters is direct but necessary, in order to communicate to young people in a visual way that there are

both legal and health consequences for bringing weapons to school. Several hundred copies of these posters have been distributed across the state. Through a partnership with the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority, the posters now appear on more than 200 public transportation buses serving 750,000 Rhode Islanders annually.

In the Rhode Island legislature, the Task Force to Prevent Violence in Schools has drafted and worked toward the passage of several bills. Two significant efforts have resulted in the expansion of the safe zones around schools and a "safe storage" bill that criminalizes the negligent storage of a weapon by a gun owner.

In October 1995, Mr. Pine's office announced the sponsorship of two elementary school peer mediation programs. The project is called PLUS — Peers Listening Understanding Solving. The program targets students at the elementary school level so that young children can acquire the necessary conflict resolution skills that they will need in life. Future plans call for the use of forfeiture monies acquired by the Attorney General's Office to sponsor additional programs at the elementary school level.

Thanks to Mr. Pine for sharing this information. NSSC welcomes news of successful efforts toward safer schools.

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PEPPERDINE
UNIVERSITY

NATIONAL SCHOOL SAFETY CENTER
PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY
24255 PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY
MALIBU, CA 90263

The School Safety Update is published by the National School Safety Center to communicate current trends and effective programs in school safety. As a component of the NSSC School Safety News Service, the newsletter is published six times each school year: the newsletter is published three times a year in the fall, winter and spring. Annual information, apparatus, product or process described herein. Subscription to NSSC School Safety News Service: \$59.00. Correspondence should be addressed to: NSSC, 4165 Thousand Oaks Blvd., Suite 290, Westlake Village, CA 91362. Executive Editor: Ronald D. Stephens
Editor: June Lane Arnette
Associate Editors: Sue Ann Meador and Marjorie Creswell Walsleben
Special Counsel: Bernard James
Business Manager: Jane M. Grady
Contributing Writers: Ronald Garrison, Marie Davis, Steven T. McDaniel
Copyright © 1996 by the National School Safety Center.