ADVANCEMENT
PROJECT

A REAL FIX:

THE GUN-FREE WAY TO SCHOOL SAFETY

MARCH 2013

A SAFE SCHOOLS REPORT AND MODEL SCHOOL SAFETY PLAN

ISSUED BY ADVANCEMENT PROJECT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The young victims of recent shootings loom large in the nation's memory. Policymakers, advocates, youth, and others grapple over how to construct an appropriate response, to protect our schools, and ease national fear. One of the most visible solutions proposed has been to increase the presence of police officers, school resource and security officers, other armed guards, and security equipment in schools such as metal detectors. But, we know all too well that reactionary policy decisions cannot compensate for the tragic loss of young life and can have enormously detrimental consequences on students and learning environments.

In the *Police in Schools Are Not the Answer to the Newtown Shooting* issue brief, Advancement Project, Alliance for Educational Justice, Dignity in Schools Campaign, and NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. strongly opposed the push for more police in schools.[1] Along with other youth advocacy groups we opposed increased police presence in schools because (1) it has not been proven to make schools safer, (2) the resources could be used to support programs and safety alternatives that do work, (3) it will serve to further exacerbate the criminalization of children that is stealthily finding its way into public education today, particularly for students of color, LGBTQ youth, and students with disabilities who are disproportionately disciplined in school by police and arrested or ticketed as a result, (4) increased police presence has been shown to decrease safety and academic outcomes for children in those schools, and (5) although most of the shootings in schools that garner so much attention occur in the suburbs, our urban centers are most likely to see the greatest increase in police in schools. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that "most police officers who interact frequently with juveniles are not benefiting from the wealth of new scientific research available about adolescent brain development. Nor are police provided information on promising and best practices for interacting with teens that stem from our growing understanding of how teenagers' brains differ from those of adults."[2] Police training also "provides no communication or psychological skills for officers working with children and youth,"[3] particularly "youth with mental health, trauma-related and special education-related disorders."[4] All of these are factors that fueled the recent trend, prior to the Newtown tragedy, to limit, decrease, and eliminate the use of police in schools.[5]

---

[1] Advancement Project, Alliance for Educational Justice, Dignity in Schools Campaign, and NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (2013, January). *Police in Schools are Not the Answer to the Newtown Shooting*, 2. Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://safequalityschools.org/resources/entry/police-in-schools-are-not-the-answer-to-the-newtown-shooting; *see also* Students Rally in Protest of Policies that Criminalize Youth of Color. (2013, March 11). *The Louisiana Weekly*. Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://www.louisianaweekly.com/students-rally-in-protest-of-policies-that-criminalize-youth-of-color/.

[2] Strategies for Youth. (2013, February). *If Not Now, When?: A Survey of Juvenile Justice Training in America's Police Academies. p.* 4. Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://strategiesforyouth.org/sfysite/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/SFYReport_02-2013_rev.pdf.

[3] *Id.*

[4] *Id.*

[5] *See*, *e.g.*, *Ending the School-to-Prison Pipeline:* Hearing Before the Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Human Rights of the S. Comm. on the Judiciary, 112th Cong. (2012). (on file with authors).

We all want to protect our children and secure our schools, but police in schools are not the answer. To provide an alternative vision for safety in our schools that protects our children, permits for a nurturing learning environment and reduces violence and disruptive behaviors, Advancement Project has developed a model school safety plan that is student-centered, multi-faceted, and based in solid research and common sense. As we explain in this Safe Schools Report, schools must undertake extensive and ongoing internal safety assessments and devise holistic prevention and security systems to keep children safe.

A school safety plan must be a living document that is **clear and comprehensive** in its goals. **Data and communication** are key and will drive all parts of a school safety plan. A school safety plan must be formulated with **student and family input**. Any school safety plan requires an **integrated approach** to securing the school environment that connects security measures with school culture, academic elements with behavioral elements, school resources with community resources, and educators with families.

The school safety team should develop and implement a comprehensive school safety plan, which must have the following components:

- Focus on prevention of crisis situations through creation of a positive school culture, which can be accomplished through meaningful communication between staff and families; hiring mental health support professionals for students; supporting proven programs that reduce violence, like conflict resolution programs and restorative justice; engaging students with curriculum and instruction; and limiting the use of zero-tolerance and exclusionary student discipline practices.

- Appropriate security measures such as appointment of a safety ombudsman; escorting students who walk to school; securing entrances to the school by locking doors from the outside and monitoring entry to the building; installing a centralized security system linked with the local emergency response team and a centralized communication system within the school building; issuing identification badges to staff and students; guiding visitors through a sign-in process; escorting visitors in the building; and requiring parking permits for all cars parked on school property.

- A school crisis plan, which requires thorough preparation for an emergency; a detailed communications strategy; school and neighborhood site maps; drills and trainings; a response plan to evacuate, reverse evacuate, lockdown, or shelter in place; and a plan for helping students and staff to recover from a crisis.

A REAL FIX:
THE GUN-FREE WAY TO SCHOOL SAFETY

"We basically just want a voice."

-Shamako, 17 years old, high school junior

INTRODUCTION

The young victims of shootings in Newtown, Connecticut;[6] Prince George's County, Maryland;[7] Baltimore, Maryland;[8] Chardon, Ohio,[9] and elsewhere loom large in the nation's memory. Policymakers, advocates, youth, and others grapple over how to construct an appropriate response, to protect our schools, and ease national fear.

One of the most visible solutions proposed has been to increase the presence of police officers, school resource and security officers, other armed guards, and security equipment in schools such as metal detectors (hereinafter collectively referred to as "police in schools"). But, we know all too well that reactionary policy decisions cannot compensate for the tragic loss of young life and can have enormously disruptive consequences on students. After the shootings at Columbine High School in 1999, the main response was zero tolerance in student discipline policies. Zero tolerance included automatic, pre-determined penalties for numerous offenses regardless of the individual circumstances, as well as a general "get tough" approach to youth behavior. Students were suspended and expelled for doing little or nothing wrong.[10] Zero

---

[6] (n.d.). Newtown Ct. Elementary School Shooting. *ABC News*. Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://abcnews.go.com/topics/news/newtown-connecticut-school-shooting.htm.

[7] Gates, S. (2013, February 20). Suitland High School Student Shot Dead; 6th Prince George's County Student Killed in 6 Months. *Huffington Post: Huff Post Crime.* Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/02/20/suitland-high-school-student-shooting-sixth-death_n_2725587.html.

[8] Anderson, J. (2013, February 25). Perry Hall High School Shooter Gladden Gets 35 Years in Prison. *Baltimore Sun*. Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2013-02-25/news/bs-md-gladden-sentencing-20130225_1_robert-w-gladden-daniel-borowy-kathleen-watkins.

[9] Hoffer, S. (2013, March 19). T.J. Lane Life Sentence: Chardon High School Shooter Appears in Court Wearing 'KILLER' T-Shirt. *Huffington Post: HuffPost Crime.* Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/19/tj-lane-sentenced-to-life-chardon_n_2907540.html.

[10] Urbina, I. (2009, October 11). It's a Fork, It's a Spoon, It's a … Weapon?. *New York Times*. Retrieved March 26, 2013, from www.nytimes.com/2009/10/12/education/12discipline.html; Advancement Project & the Civil Rights Project, Harvard University. (2002, July). *Opportunities Suspended: The Devastating Consequences of Zero Tolerance School Discipline,* p. 4-7. Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/school-discipline/opportunities-suspended-the-devastating-consequences-of-zero-tolerance-and-school-discipline-policies/crp-opportunities-suspended-zero-tolerance-2000.pdf.

tolerance policies are a key contributor to racial disparities in school discipline, which have existed for decades, and to what is known as the "school-to-prison pipeline."[11]

And now after Newtown, in the name of safety, news reports are filled with stories about increased police presence and expanded authority for adults to carry weapons in schools. In Dallas, Texas, state senators are debating the expenditure of $10 million for a crisis training program for school system employees authorized to carry handguns to school.[12] The Ohio state legislature stands poised to vote on a bill that would provide funding for schools to hire school resource officers.[13] In Wayne, New Jersey, school district officials are considering putting school resource officers in middle schools.[14] In Mississippi, the legislature is considering a bill that would allocate 7 million new dollars to fund more police in schools.[15]

In *Police in Schools Are Not the Answer to the Newtown Shooting* (hereinafter "Issue Brief"), Advancement Project, Alliance for Educational Justice, Dignity in Schools Campaign, and NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. strongly opposed the push for more police in schools.[16] Like many youth advocacy groups, we opposed increased police presence in schools because (1) it has not been proven to make schools safer, (2) the resources could be used to support programs and safety alternatives that do work, (3) it will serve to further exacerbate the criminalization of children that is stealthily finding its way into public education today, particularly for students of color, LGBTQ youth, and students with disabilities who are disproportionately disciplined in school by police and arrested or ticketed as a result, (4) increased police presence has been shown to decrease safety and academic outcomes for children in those schools, and (5) although most of the shootings in schools that garner so much attention occur in the suburbs, our urban centers are most likely to see the greatest increase in police in schools. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that "most police officers who interact frequently with juveniles are not benefiting from the wealth of new scientific research available about adolescent brain development. Nor are police typically provided information on promising and best practices for interacting with teens that stem from our growing understanding of how teenagers' brains differ from those of adults."[17] Police training also "provides no communication or psychological skills for officers working with children and

---

[11] *Id.* at p. 8-9; Advancement Project, et al. (2013, January), 2.

[12] Stutz, T. (2013, March 19). Senators Debate School Safety Bill. *Dallas Morning News*. Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://trailblazersblog.dallasnews.com/2013/03/senators-debate-school-safety-bill.html/.

[13] Jerde, S. (2013, March 20). Bill Would Allow School Safety Levies. *The Columbus Dispatch*. Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/local/2013/03/19/Bill-would-allow-school-safety-levies.html.

[14] Hubbard, D. (2013, March 19). School Resource Officers May Return to Middle Schools: Reinstating Three Positions Would Cost the District $256,000. *Wayne Patch*. Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://wayne.patch.com/articles/school-resource-officers-may-return-to-middle-schools.

[15] Gates, J.E. (2013, January 29). Senate Education Committee Oks $7.5M Grant for Armed Guards at Mississippi Schools. *Clarion Ledger.* Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://www.clarionledger.com/article/20130129/NEWS010504/130129008/Senate-Education-Committee-OKs-7-5M-grant-armed-guards-Mississippi-schools.

[16] Advancement Project, et al. (2013, January 2013); *see also* Students Rally in Protest of Policies that Criminalize Youth of Color. (2013, March 11).

[17] Strategies for Youth. (2013, February), 4.

youth,"[18] particularly "youth with mental health, trauma-related and special education-related disorders."[19] All of these are factors that fueled the recent policy trend, prior to the Newtown tragedy, to limit, decrease, and eliminate the use of police in schools.[20]

We all have the same goal – to protect our children and secure our schools. In the debate about whether more police in schools is the best way to make our schools safe, few alternative solutions to secure our schools have received attention. The School Safety Plan in this Safe Schools Report includes several recommendations for providing a safe and secure educational environment for all students. Most important among these recommendations is the inclusion of youth voice. Shamako is an eleventh-grade student who we interviewed for this report. He has seen many of his peers punished for things like talking back to teachers and security officers at school, and he has seen students arrested by security officers as well. His school enrolls almost 1,800 students, 92% of whom are black and 8% are Hispanic. Several armed security officers roam the halls of Shamako's school building, purportedly for safety, yet none of the students we interviewed from that school feel safe. In fact, they feel quite the opposite. Their perspectives about what will make a school safe are crucial. They know the communities and neighborhoods best and can anticipate and define the specific crises for which schools should prepare. Students also know best what will make them feel protected and how schools can build relationships with students that are based in trust and communication, supporting academic success, and creating a nurturing, safe, and secure school environment.

SCHOOL SAFETY PLAN[21]

The School Safety Plan contained in this report highlights effective methods of creating safe, high-quality, gun-free schools. The School Safety Plan goes beyond the appearance of security and provides practical information and research-based recommendations for creating and maintaining welcoming, nurturing, safe, and secure learning environments for all of the nation's children while also preserving children's civil rights to equal educational opportunity. This School Safety Plan sketches a balanced approach that connects different segments of the school building and community and provides a sustainable, holistic plan to serve the safety and security needs of the school. This ensures that students are healthy in every sense so that our schools can remain the safest places for children to be.[22]

---

[18] *Id.*

[19] *Id.*

[20] *See*, *e.g.*, *Ending the School-to-Prison Pipeline:* Hearing Before the Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Human Rights of the S. Comm. on the Judiciary, 112th Cong. (2012). (on file with authors).

[21] This school safety plan defines the role of an individual school in ensuring the safety and security of its students. School district leadership can help by devising a district-wide school safety plan that can be tailored by individual schools, coordinating efforts with community service providers, and providing general oversight and technical assistance. Charter schools and private schools should be a part of any coordinated district-wide crisis response effort as they can act as evacuation sites or partners for a larger emergency that impacts the larger community. Additionally, schools must abide by the requirements of state and local laws and regulations.

[22] Advancement Project, et al. (2013, January), 5; *see also* National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.). *Indicators of School Crime and Safety 2011*, Table 2.1: Number of student-reported non-fatal crimes ages 12-18 and rates of crime per 1,000 by location, type of crime, and year, 1992 – 2010. Retrieved March 22, 2013, from

There is precedent for what this School Safety Plan aims to do. Many private schools erect effective, carefully-planned security measures that do not also create a hostile environment for any of their students. Indeed, school security for students in such environments is seamlessly integrated into school operations in such a way that it is nearly invisible to students, occurring in the background and contributing to a deliberately-created sense of safety and security in school culture. The overarching intent of this approach is to protect the student population whom the school and staff have assumed to be worthy of such respect and protection. It is that intent that is too often missing for communities of color, LGBTQ students, and students with disabilities when police officers are placed in their schools.

We interviewed Jeff S., the lead administrator at a private school in the Washington, D.C., area. There are no armed guards or other visible police equipment on his campus, even after Newtown and even though some parents have requested it. When asked why he resisted these requests, Jeff said, "We want to remain who we are." Instead, the school's culture allows for every staff member at the school to be viewed as a member of the school's security force, watching over students, respecting them as people, and shielding them from outside influences – the ones they can see (*e.g.*, unknown visitors to campus) and the ones they cannot (*e.g.*, dangerous social and emotional insecurities that students bring with them, which can contribute to bullying and harassment of other students).

Jeff recognizes that the school's staff will not be able to predict and prevent all of the most depraved things that might occur, but he is resolute in his belief that the school community can prepare to respond in the event of an emergency and, in the meantime, nurture students' development, in part, by making them feel safe and secure. All of this is accomplished without relying on the presence of police.

> This School Safety Plan does not include stationing law
> enforcement officers or armed guards of any sort in our schools.

Given the United States' standing as the most incarcerated nation in the world,[23] it should come as no surprise that the United States is first in the world at locking children away.[24]

---

http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/iscs11.pdf (total rate of self-reported school-based offenses per 1,000 students fell approximately 79% between 1992 and 2010); Cornell, D. (2012) *Our Schools are Safe*. Unpublished raw data and charts. (on file with authors).

[23] Scommegna, P. & Tyjen, T. (2012, August). *U.S. Has World's Highest Incarceration Rate*. In Population Reference Bureau. Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://www.prb.org/Articles/2012/us-incarceration.aspx; Liptak, A. (2008, April 23). U.S. Prison Population Dwarfs That of Other Nations. *New York Times*. Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/23/world/americas/23iht-23prison.12253738.html?pagewanted=all.

[24] Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2013, February). *Reducing Youth Incarceration in the United States: Data Snapshot*. Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://www.aecf.org/~/media/Pubs/Initiatives/KIDS%20COUNT/R/ReducingYouthIncarcerationSnapshot/DataSnapshotYouthIncarceration.pdf ("Although we still lead the industrialized world in the rate at which we lock up young people, the youth confinement rate in the United States is rapidly declining.").

Every year, approximately one million youth under the age of 18 are arrested.[25] There are approximately 2,000,000 children in the juvenile and criminal justice systems in this country,[26] and school-based police are the fastest growing segment of law enforcement.[27] In 2010-2011, in Florida, where Shamako lives, black children are 21% of the school-aged population but were 46% of the law enforcement referrals from schools.[28] Most of those referrals are for minor behaviors.[29] Today, there are an estimated 17,000 school-based officers,[30] contributing to what has come to be called the "school-to-prison pipeline."

Police presence can be oppressive for students, particularly in schools with predominantly students of color. Rather than protecting students, students become the policed. Shamako told us that "when youth and students have a lot of security guards around us, we feel like we're in prison. They walk around and watch you as if they are waiting for you to do something so they can arrest you or suspend you." Another student, Marcel,[31] shared that he recently walked into school with his youth advocate and one of the school security officers approached him in a very condescending, intimidating, and threatening manner to show his power and authority over Marcel.

Marcel's and Shamako's experiences are not outliers – there are stories like theirs from all over the nation. In March 2013, in Illinois, eight-year-old Jmyha Rickman was arrested by police for throwing a temper tantrum at school.[32] In April 2012, in Georgia, a six-year-old Salecia Johnson was also arrested at school by police for throwing a temper tantrum.[33] A thirteen year-old in Albuquerque was arrested for burping too loud.[34] Students in Texas are

---

[25] Boehringer, L.S. (2013, March 13). Urgent Action Needed: Congress Must Protect Children in the Justice System. *Washington Examiner*. Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://www.examiner.com/article/urgent-action-needed-congress-must-protect-children-the-justice-system?cid=db_articles.

[26] Campaign for Youth Justice. (n.d.). *Alliance for Youth Justice Public Service Announcement.* Retrieved March 26, 2013, from *http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/*.

[27] American Civil Liberties Union and Citizens for Juvenile Justice. (2012, Spring). *Futures: The Criminalization of School Discipline in Massachusetts' Three Largest School Districts*, 9. Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://www.aclu.org/files/assets/maarrest_reportweb.pdf.

[28] Florida Department of Juvenile Justice. (2011, November). *Delinquency in Florida's Schools: A Seven-Year Study (FY 2004-05 through FY 2010-11)*, 1. Retrieved March 26, 2013 from http://www.djj.state.fl.us/docs/research2/2010-11-delinquency-in-schools-analysis.pdf.

[29] *Id.*

[30] American Civil Liberties Union and Citizens for Juvenile Justice. (2012, Spring).

[31] Name has been changed to preserve the student's anonymity.

[32] 8-Year-Old Handcuffed, Jailed For 2 Hours For Throwing Tantrum at School. (2013, March 6). *NewsOne*. Retrieved March 26, 2013 from http://newsone.com/2266641/jmyha-rickman-illinois/?omcamp=EMC-CVNL.

[33] Milledgeville Police Handcuff 6-Year-Old Girl for Misbehaving at School. (2012, April 17). Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://www.13wmaz.com/rss/article/178448/153/milledgeville-police-handcuff-6-year-old-girl?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed:+wmaz/local+%2813wmaz.com+local+news%29.

[34] Student Arrested for Burping, Lawsuit Claims (2011, December 1). Retrieved March 27, 2013 from http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-201_162-57334925/student-arrested-for-burping-lawsuit-claims/

arrested by school-based police for spraying perfume, possessing cigarettes, and wearing inappropriate clothes.[35]

Moreover, having guns in schools can put students in jeopardy. In the month following Newtown, a newly assigned armed guard in Michigan left his handgun lying in the school bathroom.[36] On March 5, 2013, a school resource officer patrolling in the Highland School District in New York was surprised when his gun accidentally discharged during the school day.[37]

Finally, a survey conducted by the United States Secret Service and Department of Education of school shootings between 1974 and 2000 shows that police in schools are not the ones who have stopped shootings that take place in schools.[38] For instance, in Baltimore County on the first day of school of the 2012-2013 school year, when a 17-year-old student pulled a weapon and fired on his 15-year-old classmate in the cafeteria, the shooter was subdued by a guidance counselor and school staff before a school resource officer arrived to make the arrest.[39] And, in Kern County, California, in January 2013, a student opened fire in a classroom injuring two people before a school administrator and teacher talked him down.[40]

Police in schools do not exist in a vacuum. Reactionary responses to shootings in schools that simply place police in schools cannot work as a strategy and is not school security.[41] Police in schools do not make students feel safer and can create a hostile environment for students.[42] It is possible, and necessary, to protect the school environment without police in schools.

A school safety report issued by the U.S. Secret Service and the Department of Education after the shootings at Columbine High School found that school climate, not police in

---

[35]The U.S. Schools with Their Own Police (2012, January 9). Retrieved March 27, 2013 from http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-201_162-57334925/student-arrested-for-burping-lawsuit-claims/

[36] 'Firearms Instructor' Hired as School Guard Leaves Handgun in Student Bathroom (2013, January 18). Retrieved March 27, 2013 from http://www.rawstory.com/rs/2013/01/18/newly-hired-school-guard-leaves-unattended-handgun-in-student-bathroom/.

[37] David. (2013, March 7). *District Suspends Police-in-Schools Program After Officer Discharges Gun*. Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://videocafe.crooksandliars.com/david/district-suspends-police-schools-program.

[38] U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education. (2002, May). *The Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States,* p. 27-8. Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://www.secretservice.gov/ntac/ssi_final_report.pdf. (Most school-based attacks are stopped by school administrators, educators, or students, or by the shooter himself.).

[39] Student Shot at Maryland High School on First Day of Class. (2012, August 27). *NBC News*. Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://usnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2012/08/27/13506576-student-shot-at-maryland-high-school-on-first-day-of-class?lite.

[40] Lennard, N. & Halperin, A. (2013, January 10). *Shooting at California High School*. *Salon.com.* Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://www.salon.com/2013/01/10/breaking_shooting_at_california_high_school/.

[41] Advancement Project, et al. (2013, January), 3.

[42] Justice Policy Institute. (2012, December). *Measured Responses: Why Increasing Law Enforcement in Schools is Not an Effective Public Safety Response to the Newtown Tragedy,* 2. Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://www.justicepolicy.org/uploads/justicepolicy/documents/schoolsafetyfactsheet.pdf ("[h]aving a law enforcement presence in school can create a hostile environment, in some cases creating the very sense of fear and violence that they are supposed to prevent.").

schools, is the foremost factor for ensuring safety in school.[43] As humans, our brains are not fully developed until we are in our 20s, and children need strong attachments to adults in order for healthy development to occur.[44] There are ways to protect children in a secure school building without losing focus on the outside world that threatens them. There are also ways to instruct children on how to behave in the same way that we instruct them in arithmetic. Dr. Jonathan Brice is a School Support Network Officer for Baltimore City Schools. He told us that the most effective mechanism for ensuring student safety in school is a comprehensive, integrated plan that makes students and the broader community feel that their schools are safe.

Schools must undertake extensive and ongoing internal safety assessments and devise prevention and security systems to keep children safe. There must be forethought, *i.e.*, strategic planning for a coordinated, multi-disciplinary approach to school safety. A school safety plan will take time to build and implement. There is no panacea or quick fix.[45]

OVERVIEW

A school safety plan must be a written, living document that is **clear and comprehensive** in its goals. Preventing and stopping an active shooter in the school building is only one component of an effective school safety plan. Protecting students from crisis and natural disasters, such as floods, earthquakes, fires, and tornados;[46] ensuring that students respect and protect one another; and generally shielding the sanctity of the school environment are just as important.

Data and communication are key and will drive all parts of a school safety plan.[47] Data about, for instance, students' physical and emotional safety and social and emotional skills can

---

[43] U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education. (2002, May), 27-8. (Most school-based attacks are stopped by school administrators, educators, or students, or by the shooter himself.). *See also* Shah, N. (2013, March 11). Federal Wish List for Improving School Safety Relies on Congress. *Education Week*. Retrieved March 26, 2013, from
http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/rulesforengagement/2013/03/federal_wishlist_for_improving_school_safety_relies_on_congress.html ("If students have a trusting relationship with adults in the school, they are more likely to tell them about something impending.... This notion of school climate and deterrence of violence is a significant one.") (quoting David Esquith, Director, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Healthy Students).

[44] Mate, F.. & Neufeld, G. (2005). *Hold On to Your Kids: Why Parents Need to Matter More Than Peers,* 16-20. New York: Ballantine Books.

[45] Osher, D. Poirier, J.M., Jarjoura, G.R., Brown, R. & Kendziora, K. (2013, January 2). *Avoid Simple Solutions and Quick Fixes*, 1. ("[P]olicymakers and school leaders should look beyond 'quick fixes' for school safety issues, such as zero tolerance policies, armed police in schools, and metal detectors if they want to improve discipline, reduce removal from opportunities to learn, and improve student well-being.").

[46] The Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, U.S. Department of Education. (2007, January). *Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities,* 1-2. Retrieved March 26, 2013, from
http://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/crisisplanning.pdf .

[47] Osher, D. Poirier, J.M., Jarjoura, G.R., Brown, R. & Kendziora, K. (2013, January 2), 8.

be collected to assess the most important factors– overall school climate and conditions for learning – in protecting students in school.[48]

A school safety plan must be formulated with **student and family input**. Mutual respect is paramount to generating trust and for effective communication. We heard from several students that if educators want respect from students, they also must give students the respect they deserve. As Jeff S. reminded us, the failure to regularly affirm children is disrespectful. We have to consider developmentally what disrespect and disregard do to children. Children and their families are well suited to convey their needs and forecast the potential impact of proposed safety policies and procedures on the student population.

Any school safety plan requires an **integrated approach** to securing the school environment that connects security measures with school culture, academic elements with behavioral elements, school resources with community resources, and educators with families. A school safety plan must also contain age-appropriate prevention, response, and recovery strategies, and accommodate students and staff with disabilities and students and families with limited English proficiency.

I.   School Safety Team

The school safety team will develop the school safety plan and the crisis plan (discussed in greater detail below) for their school; design safety-related professional development, training, and drills; coordinate the school's safety efforts; and clearly define safety and security roles for every stakeholder in the building. Stakeholder roles will be assigned based on the anticipated crisis situations that the school safety team has predicted and on the expertise that members of the school staff and contracted personnel bring to bear.

Members of the school safety team should be students; family members; administrators; teachers; school staff such as receptionists responsible for monitoring entry to the building; school staff such as school counselors, social workers, school psychologists, and other school mental health providers responsible for students' mental wellness; representatives from local agencies such as fire department personnel, medical emergency teams, community police (to help coordinate the response during a crisis), other emergency responders, and community mental health service providers (to help coordinate staff professional development and parent training, crisis response activities, and recovery efforts); local media representatives; and community members. Community members are important

---

[48] *Id.* at 21. ("Data on school conditions for learning — challenge, physical and emotional safety, student social and emotional skills, student support — can effectively facilitate continuous improvement, performance management, and accountability. Effective use of data from valid, reliable, and properly administered student surveys … should be infused into the culture of districts and schools. These data should be examined to understand general conditions in districts and schools as well as disaggregated by student demographic subgroups to support data-informed decisions about interventions and strategies to address disparities and identified areas of need.").

members of the school safety team since schools are part of a larger community and must see themselves as such.[49]

The school safety team should meet on a regular basis, perhaps quarterly, to discuss emergency situations that may have occurred and how those incidents could have been better handled, including a discussion of whether the school safety plan and crisis plan were followed. The school safety team should also schedule regular meetings, perhaps at the beginning of every school year, with outside entities, like emergency response teams, who also will be responsible for addressing crises, such as fire.[50]

II.   Prevention

Prevention is more important than emergency planning.[51] Much of preventing school shootings has to do with creating a positive school culture where all students and families, no matter their background or experiences, are welcome; students develop healthy attachments with adults in the school building; and students feel comfortable sharing information with educators. Jonathan Brice shared with us that Baltimore City Schools utilize school climate walks to immerse district administrators in schools so that they can accurately and thoughtfully assess school climate. Some of the things that Baltimore administrators observe during school climate walks are the physical environment of the school, student-staff interactions, classroom instruction, and student discipline practices.[52]

A. Communication

Communication is vital to the creation of a positive school climate. Meaningful communication in the school begets trust and a nurturing, safe, and secure school environment.[53] "With stronger relationships and more engaging instruction, negative interactions might be prevented in the first place."[54]

---

[49] Advancement Project, Alliance for Educational Justice, Dignity in Schools Campaign, and NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (2013, January).

[50] The Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, U.S. Department of Education. (2007, January), 1-10.

[51] U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education. (2002, May), 37. ("The short duration of most incidents of targeted school violence argues for the importance of developing preventive measures in addition to any emergency planning for a school or school district. The preventive measures should include protocols and procedures for responding to and managing threats and other behaviors of concern.").

[52] *See also* Baltimore City Schools School Climate Walk assessment form. Retrieved March 26, 2013 from http://www.baltimorecityschools.org/cms/lib/MD01001351/Centricity/Domain/231/Climate%20Walk%20Tool.pdf

[53] American Association of School Administrators. (AASA). (n.d.). *ABC's of School Safety*. Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://www.aasa.org/content.aspx?id=7354 ("School safety measures should include 'human connection' initiatives such as fostering information sharing, support networks, peer relationship building, counseling and parental involvement. Such efforts can help students feel connected to school, to their teachers and to each other. Benefits may include increased ability to recognize and report security concerns.").

[54] Gregory, A., Allen, J.P., Mikami, A.Y., Hafen, C.A. & Pianta, R.C. (2013, January 10). *The Promise of a Teacher Professional Development Program in Reducing the Racial Disparity in Classroom Exclusionary Discipline*, 7. Center for Civil Rights Remedies National Conference. Closing the School to Research Gap: Research to Remedies Conference. Washington, DC.

Communication among school personnel must function well in order to promote a safe school environment.[55] The school safety team should provide regular safety updates for all staff and contractors during professional development and teacher training days. The school safety team should hold regular safety strategy sessions to invite feedback about safety from students, families, teachers, administrators, and support personnel, including, for instance, building welcome and reception staff, counselors, social workers, special education coordinators, mental health providers, and bus drivers. Through community meetings, schools can also communicate provisions of the school safety plan to community members and seek community input.

Even more important than communication among staff is positive and open communication between schools and families in order to foster a safe and supportive school environment. Students we interviewed said that their schools do not communicate with parents and families unless their child has been suspended from school. There can be no trust between educators and families if the school does not reach out to parents in a meaningful way to communicate more than negativity about children.

Jeff S. said that, at his private school, the child, family, and school are part of a triangle of support for the student's development. All must act in concert with one another to bring about the student's success. Parents and families are welcomed by staff when they drop off and pick up their children, and parents are encouraged to visit at any point during the school day. All adults working in the school, from maintenance to administration, are charged with monitoring school grounds and protecting students. Staff members are familiar with and to parents and families and can recognize the need for and provide wraparound services to students and families. All elements of a child's life and being are "artifacts" of that child – work ethic, behavior, family background, physical condition, study skills, etc. – for staff to study and track in an integrated database. Once per week, a core group of teachers meets to discuss those artifacts and ensure that students are sufficiently supported and the needs of students and families are being met.

Students and families must be empowered to take ownership of the educational process and of the school building and culture. To cultivate a sense of community and comfort among school staff, students, and families, regular opportunities to interact with one another outside of routine school work should be scheduled. For instance, schools can host regular discussions for school staff, students, and families about topics of interest including school culture. There need not be solutions generated at these discussions, but simply an opportunity to dialogue. The discussions should occur at various times of the day and week to reach a diverse array of families and can occur in different locations to meet students and families where they are

---

[55] Steinberg, M., Allensworth, E. & Johnson, D.W. (2013, January 10). *What Conditions Jeopardize and Support Safety in Urban Schools?: The Influence of Community Characteristics, School Composition and School Organizational Practices on Student and Teacher Reports of Safety in Chicago*, 22. Center for Civil Rights Remedies National Conference. Closing the School to Research Gap: Research to Remedies Conference. Washington, DC. ("Both students and teachers feel safest in schools where teachers view parents as partners in children's education. These relationships are so strong that they far overshadow the relationships of neighborhood crime and poverty with safety – and are at least as strong as the relationship of safety with school achievement level.").

located. These regular interactions about topics not necessarily related to the school will build relationships and trust between the school, students, and families, and regular student and parent input about school culture will empower parents and families to feel invested in the school's success. As a result, in a crisis situation, families will know their role in the school safety plan and crisis plan and trust that the school also is following protocol.

It is incumbent on schools to direct sufficient resources to professional development and training for staff on how to, in a culturally competent way, communicate and build trusting relationships with students and families.[56] A school-based parent support team with parent members and school staff members should brainstorm ideas for engaging families. The parent support team would develop and adapt a diverse array of parent engagement methods to keep parents and families informed of safety updates, curriculum benchmarks, and other items that require parent attention.

B. Student Support

In 2002, after the Columbine High School shootings in Littleton, Colorado, the United States Secret Service completed the Safe School Initiative, a study of school shootings and other school-based attacks, in collaboration with the United States Department of Education. The study examined school shootings in the United States as far back as 1974, through the end of the 1999-2000 school year, analyzing a total of 37 incidents involving 41 student attackers. The study found that school shootings are rarely impulsive acts, but are well-planned in advance. Almost every attacker had done something before the shooting that seriously concerned at least one adult – many had concerned three or more different adults. Prior to most of the shootings, other students knew about the planned shooting but did not tell an adult.[57] Thus, the findings from the study suggest that some school attacks may be preventable, and that students should be viewed as critical partners in prevention efforts.[58]

Students we interviewed identified the characteristics of those adults in the school building whom they trust the most:

- Adults who sit down and talk with them at any time instead of just lecturing during class.
- Adults who acknowledge them and provide words of encouragement in the hallways and cafeteria.
- Adults who went through the same experiences as the students did growing up and therefore understand where the students are coming from.

---

[56] Osher, D. Poirier, J.M., Jarjoura, G.R., Brown, R. & Kendziora, K. (2013, January 2), 22. ("Low-quality implementation and cultural disconnects between students, families, and educators contribute to disparities. There is an increasing body of research that suggest the importance of implementation quality and capacity as well as of educator cultural competence. Policy and practice should support development of individual and organizational capacities to reduce disparities while building safe, orderly schools that have strong conditions for learning." (citations omitted)).

[57] U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education. (2002, May), 25. (In 81% of instances, at least one person had information that the attacker was thinking about or planning the attack.).

[58] *Id.* at 41.

- Adults who take the time to understand the students' daily experiences even if they didn't grow up in similar circumstances.
- Adults who don't get angry at every little thing, taking valuable time away from academic instruction to address behavior that is not disruptive to other students.
- Adults who understand when students need extra help and patiently provide it.
- Adults who genuinely believe in the abilities of their students even when the students don't.

One of Jeff S.'s priorities is to make sure that his school is safe and inviting for the students, which means an adult greets them in a friendly and welcoming way when they walk into the building each day, and every student receives regular affirmation. Creating and sustaining these relationships is essential to creating safe schools.

A key element of prevention is hiring necessary personnel who will focus exclusively on student mental health and overall well-being. School mental health professionals such as counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, community intervention specialists, and peace builders are an alternative to law enforcement in schools and keep a watchful, and caring, eye on the students in the building. These professionals focus on students' personal, emotional, and social wellness, providing mental health services and academic support, charting a successful career course, and coordinating school services and community services, such as local departments of mental health, Child Protective Services, and Child and Family Services, to link students' home, school, and community.

Mental health professionals – counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists – should be a part of the school safety team, crisis response team, and general safety planning to help advocate for children and explain to children, in an age-appropriate way, what is happening during crisis situations. School mental health professionals can assist with early intervention and, when adequately resourced and relied upon appropriately, contribute to positive school culture.

Threat assessment is one way to determine whether a student needs early intervention services. School mental health professionals can administer threat assessments, a method used by the F.B.I. and Secret Service, and increasingly by schools, to identify, assess, and manage threats that certain individuals may pose and intervene before an attack can occur.[59] Threat assessment involves three principal steps before an attack occurs: (1) identifying individuals who have the idea or intent of attacking the school or anyone in the school; (2) assessing whether the individual poses a risk to the school, after gathering sufficient information from multiple sources; and, (3) managing the threat the individual poses, in those cases where the individual investigated is determined to pose a threat. The Secret Service considers threat assessment to be as important to preventing targeted violence as the physical measures it employs for protection purposes.[60] School mental health professionals can conduct threat

---

[59] U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education. (2002, May), 41-2; Cornell, D. & Lovegrove, P. (2012, December 12). *Student Threat Assessment as a Method of Reducing Student Suspensions.* (on file with authors).
[60] U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education. (2002, May), 5.

assessments with empathy for all involved and gently guide all individuals, especially students, through a very sensitive process.

School mental health professionals must have the space and resources they need to be successful. The American School Counselors Association recommends that no more than 250 students be assigned to one counselor. The national average, however, is almost double that, with 459 students to one counselor, and some states have even worse ratios.[61] In Arizona, the ratio is 815 students to one counselor – over three times the recommended ratio; in California, the ratio is 810 to one; and the ratio in Minnesota is 771 students to one counselor.[62] In many schools where counselors are present, they are overburdened with other duties and are not permitted to operate within their specialized training to advocate for youth and provide students with the support they need in order to be successful. Counselors and other mental health professionals are too often pulled away from their primary duties to help prepare students for high-stakes standardized tests, act as proctors for standardized tests, and handle other administrative issues such as building students' class schedules and monitoring student attendance. To truly provide supportive learning environments, mental health professionals must be able to serve as counselors instead of filling administrative gaps.

C. Academic Curriculum and Instruction

Other key components of preventing school attacks are for schools to provide students with engaging academic instruction and curricula.[63] With culturally relevant lessons, field trips, hands-on activities, and creative use of technology, schools will keep children engaged and invested in their academic process, and in the school itself. This will contribute to the overall school culture and ensure that students report any concerns they might have to adults in the building rather than conceal concerns, observations, or confirmed suspicions because of peer influence.

D. Student Discipline

Student discipline policies and practices have an enormous impact on the culture and climate of a school and, as such, having intervention-based discipline policies is crucial to prevention of school attacks. Too often, especially for students of color, LGBTQ students, and students with disabilities, educators and police in schools are improperly focused on controlling student behavior instead of enhancing students' learning experience and building on students' academic skills with behavioral instruction.[64] Jonathan Brice told us that fairness and consistency are critical to effective student discipline and, ultimately, authentic school safety. Fairness and consistency can be achieved, he said, when schools adjust their expectations to focus on keeping students in school and employ alternatives to exclusionary discipline, provide

---

[61] American School Counselor Association. (n.d.). *Student-to-School Counselor Ratios 2009-2010 School Year.* Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://www.schoolcounselor.org/content.asp?contentid=658.

[62] *Id.*

[63] Toldson, I.A., McGee, T. & Lemmons, B.P. (2013, January). *Reducing Suspensions by Improving Academic Engagement Among School-Age Black Males*. (on file with authors).

[64] Advancement Project, et al. (2013, January), 6.

sufficient staff training, and monitor student discipline data and practices for fidelity to schools' expectations.

Law enforcement should never be part of a school's discipline process. All too often, police in schools are utilized to control the student body rather than securing schools against external forces that might put students at risk.[65] As a result, minor behavior is criminalized and bonds between students and adults are broken.

Similarly, zero tolerance and harsh discipline practices fly in the face of the primary goal of school safety, which is to generate trust and establish healthy adult-child relationships by letting students know that they are valued and respected in the school environment and by the educators in the building.[66] A positive and nurturing school culture cannot support zero tolerance student discipline policies or overreliance on exclusionary student discipline practices.[67] Schools with zero tolerance and harsh discipline policies tend to have breakdowns in communications between staff, students, and parents, which allows distrust to fester and contributes to a school culture that criminalizes and penalizes children for developmentally appropriate behavior.[68] Schools with high suspension and exclusionary discipline levels are actually less safe than those without and have depressed educational outcomes in comparison.[69]

Student discipline must be based in common sense. In the 2011-2012 school year, Joshua Moore received 298 detentions and dozens of suspensions for having his shoes untied, showing up late to class, skipping after-school periods, and disrespecting teachers, before he finally gave up and left the school altogether.[70] One student we interviewed, Terrell,[71] a 12th grader, longed for a school with a more "simplified" environment – no security, no police officers, and no constant worry about being suspended for something silly.

The school safety plan should include professional development in student discipline and classroom management and a training plan for staff to help them focus on keeping their

---

[65] *See*, *e.g.*, Advancement Project, American Civil Liberties Union, Mississippi State Conference of the NAACP, & Mississippi Coalition for the Prevention of Schoolhouse to Jailhouse. (2013, January). *Handcuffs on Success: The Extreme School Discipline Crisis in Mississippi Public Schools*. Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://b.3cdn.net/advancement/bd691fe41faa4ff809_u9m6bfb3v.pdf.

[66] Advancement Project & the Civil Rights Project, Harvard University. (2002, July), 10.

[67] Osher, D. Poirier, J.M., Jarjoura, G.R., Brown, R. & Kendziora, K. (2013, January 2), 3. ("Examples of suppression include zero tolerance, which has little evidence to support its effectiveness, and the repeated use of suspension from school, which has been shown to contribute to academic failure, student disengagement from school, antisocial behaviors, and dropout." (citations omitted)).

[68] Advancement Project & the Civil Rights Project, Harvard University. (2002, July), 11.

[69] Steinberg, M., Allensworth, E. & Johnson, D.W. (2013, January 10), 31. ("Both students and teachers feel safest in schools where teachers view parents as partners in children's education. These relationships are so strong that they far overshadow the relationships of neighborhood crime and poverty with safety – and are at least as strong as the relationship of safety with school achievement level.").

[70] Zubrzycki, J. (2013, February 19). Charter Discipline: A Tale of Two Students. *Education Week.* Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2013/02/20/21charters-student.h32.html?tkn=QOTFQqke6FRabQsb4tJah%2BvA%2BLJHDmuZjg3D&cmp=ENL-EU-NEWS2&print=1.

[71] Name has been changed to preserve the student's anonymity.

students in school; develop trusting relationships with students; and utilize alternatives to zero tolerance and exclusionary discipline. Students we interviewed for this report consistently said that their schools seem to be waiting for them to do something wrong, waiting for the privilege of punishing them. One student shared that he only gets the attention he seeks from school administrators and educators when it is thought that he has misbehaved. Otherwise, even when he approaches educators to share information or request assistance, he is ignored or belittled. Jeff S. prepares and mentors new and young teachers at his private school to think beyond themselves and focus on the well-being of their students. He encourages teachers to think about what emotions students are dealing with and what buttons teachers may be pushing. "We have to be empathetic even as we make a show of holding the line…We think of behavior as reflective of needs."

The negative effects of law enforcement, zero tolerance, and exclusionary discipline on children's psyche and future life opportunities are too great.[72] As part of their safety plan, schools should adopt proven student discipline methods that contribute to a welcome, supportive, nurturing, safe and secure climate. Schools should carefully consider the following:

- **Social-emotional learning (SEL) -** The Secret Service and Department of Education joint report found that 71% of the school attackers they studied felt bullied or persecuted.[73] It is crucial that school staff, through their actions, words, and behaviors toward students, build relationships with students, demonstrate care for their students, and nurture students' overall human development. This will overcome peer orientation and develop healthy adult-child connections that are necessary to healthy development. These connections also will encourage students who know about planned attacks to come forward with information.

  Social-emotional learning is a process by which children's and adults' social and emotional development is supported through research-based instruction. It is a curriculum and a way of thought. SEL teaches skills such as "recognizing and managing our emotions, developing caring and concern for others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, and handling challenging situations constructively and ethically. These are the skills that allow children to calm themselves when angry, make friends, resolve conflicts respectfully, and make ethical and safe choices."[74]

---

[72] Osher, D. Poirier, J.M., Jarjoura, G.R., Brown, R. & Kendziora, K. (2013, January 2). *Avoid Simple Solutions and Quick Fixes*, 20. ("It is important to immediately eliminate exclusionary discipline. The conditions contributing to exclusionary discipline must be transformed with a sustained, multi-year effort.").

[73] U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education. (2002, May), 30.

[74] Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. (n.d.). *What is SEL?*. Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://casel.org/why-it-matters/what-is-sel/ ("SEL is also a framework for school improvement. Teaching SEL skills helps create and maintain safe, caring learning environments. Educators receive ongoing professional development in SEL. And families and schools work together to promote children's social, emotional, and academic success.").

- **Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) or School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports (SWPBS) –** PBIS is essentially a student discipline system reboot. "The underlying theme is teaching behavioral expectations in the same manner as any core curriculum subject."[75] Educators select three to five behavioral expectations that are positively stated and re-stated throughout the school and are easy to remember. "In other words, rather than telling students what not to do, the school will focus on the preferred behaviors."[76]

  PBIS and punitive written discipline codes must be reconciled so that prevention-oriented practices such as PBIS are the focus, while exclusionary discipline for minor or subjectively defined behaviors (*e.g.*, disrespect, insubordination, tardiness, truancy) and zero tolerance policies are eliminated.[77]

- **Response to Intervention (RTI) –** RTI is a multi-tiered data-driven prevention and assessment process for identifying and addressing student learning and behavioral needs. RTI "includes a combination of high quality, culturally and linguistically responsive instruction; assessment; and evidence-based intervention" to correct behavior, support academic development, and assist with the identification of students with disabilities.[78] Student Support Teams identify necessary interventions and coordinate the provision of those interventions.

  RTI has been studied from a variety of angles and has demonstrated numerous tangential benefits, including improving family engagement, addressing overrepresentation of particular students in special education programs, supporting English language learners, and improving student discipline.[79]

- **Preventative and post-conflict conflict resolution programs –** Conflict resolution programs provide students with problem-solving and self-control skills.[80] These programs teach young people how to manage potential conflict, defuse situations, assuage hurt feelings, and reduce any inclination to retaliate after a conflict. Conflict resolution programs walk students through their emotions in the presence of one another and guide them through a team process of addressing the issues that gave rise to the conflict in the first instance. Because conflict resolution addresses and works to resolve the root causes of conflict, it helps prevent future incidents from occurring. "Conflict resolution programs can help schools promote both the individual behavioral change necessary for responsible citizenship

---

[75] OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports. (n.d.). *SWPBIS for Beginners*. Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://www.pbis.org/school/swpbis_for_beginners/default.aspx.

[76] *Id.*

[77] Fenning, P., Pigott, T., Engler, E., Bradshaw, K., Ausikaitas, A. & Grunewald, S. (2013, January). *A Mixed Methods Approach Examining Disproportionality in School Discipline*. (on file with authors).

[78] National Center on Response to Intervention. (2010, April). *Essential Components of RTI – A Closer Look at Response to Intervention*. Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://www.rti4success.org/pdf/rtiessentialcomponents_042710.pdf.

[79] Griffiths, A., Parson, L.B., Burns, M.K., VanDerHeyden, A., & Tilly, W.D. (2007, August). *Response to Intervention: Research for Practice*. Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://www.rti4success.org/pdf/RtI_Bibliography2.pdf.

[80] National Education Association. (n.d.). Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://www.nea.org/tools/15828.htm.

and the systemic change necessary for a safe learning environment."[81] Conflict resolution can take the form of an entire curriculum taught as a separate course, a peaceable classroom that "integrates conflict resolution education into the curriculum and classroom management strategy," or to manage conflict in the whole school by incorporating every member of the school community.[82]

One method of resolving conflict with student voice is through peer mediation. "Peer mediation is a demonstrably effective youth leadership model" that trains students to help other students resolve differences.[83] "Peer mediation recognizes that students can utilize conflict resolution practices and social skills to play a leadership role in increasing peace and reducing violence in their school."[84] Peer mediation has been shown to reduce discipline referrals, violence rates, and suspension rates.[85]

- **Restorative justice** – Restorative justice programs focus on righting a wrong committed and repairing harm done. The goal is to place value on relationships and focus on repairing relationships that have been injured. The victim and the wrongdoer are seen as equals in the relationship and have the opportunity to share with one another how they were harmed, as victims, or how they will work to resolve the harm caused, as wrongdoers.

"Restorative justice approaches are increasingly being applied in schools to deal with youth misbehavior, rule violations and to improve school climate, both as individual program in schools as well as overall school district policy. Restorative justice is an evidence-based practice effectively used to reduce suspensions, expulsions and disciplinary referrals."[86] Shamako, 17 years old, is a restorative justice proponent and said that he wants restorative justice in his school because it helps the adults and students communicate.

III.   Security measures

There are measures that schools can take to protect their schools without the use of police.[87] School safety teams must decide what measures will work best for their students and

---

[81] U.S. Department of Justice & U.S. Department of Education. (1996). *Conflict Resolution Education: A Guide to Implementing Programs in Schools, Youth-Serving Organizations, and Community and Juvenile Justice Settings*, 1. Retrieved March 26, 2103, from https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles/conflic.pdf.

[82] Cromwell, S. (2012, January). Conflict Resolution Education: Compare Approaches. *Education World.* Retrieved March 26, 2103, from http://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/curr171.shtml.

[83] Education Systems Reform. (n.d.). *Middle School Peer Mediation*. Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://esrnational.org/professional-services/middle-school/prevention/peer-mediation/.

[84] *Id.*

[85] *Id.*

[86] Schiff, M. (2013, January). *Dignity, Disparity & Desistance: Effective Restorative Justice Strategies to Plug the School-to-Prison Pipeline*. Center for Civil Rights Remedies National Conference. Closing the School to Research Gap: Research to Remedies Conference. Washington, DC.

[87] Osher, D. Poirier, J.M., Jarjoura, G.R., Brown, R. & Kendziora, K. (2013, January 2), 1. ("Although connectedness, mental health support, and the provision of appropriate mental health services can improve safety as well as the conditions for learning, many school districts focus on control through hardware and security officers.").

community. Schools should be laser-focused on protecting children from the outside world rather than policing and punishing students. Thus, any security measure that is employed must be considered with student and family input, teacher and staff input, and regular monitoring to ensure that no student or group of students is unfairly targeted or impacted. The measures suggested below are intended to deter an attack on schools and students, protect students from harm, and improve and maintain positive learning conditions at the school, not to control students or dampen students' natural curiosity, energy, and autonomy. We are aware that some schools utilize measures that create an environment that feels like prison to students. Instead, security can and should happen in the background, barely noticeable to the student population. Security measures have to be integrated into the regular operations of the school with open and ongoing communication between stakeholders, including students. What should be tangible to the students is the confidence that these measures give their educator caretakers to serve them, and the priority their safety and security is for all school staff.

Schools may consider undertaking some or all of the following measures to protect their students:

1.   Appointment of a staff member as a specially trained safety ombudsman to receive student and staff concerns regarding student behavior that may escalate if proper interventions are not provided. The safety ombudsman should initiate necessary conflict resolution, restorative justice, and mental health interventions for the student(s) about whom the concerns were expressed without stigmatizing, shaming, or punishing the student(s). The safety ombudsman would allow for reports to be made anonymously and would be trained to receive reports without judgment or imposing fear of repercussion.

2.   Escorts or a group system to ensure safety for children walking to and from school.[88]

3.   Secure entrances to the school by ensuring that doors are locked from the outside after the start of school. In a crisis situation, teachers should have the ability to lock their classroom doors as well. Locking the building or classroom doors should not keep students who are late to school from entering and attending class.

4.   Secure, remote entry so that, during school hours once school has started and before dismissal, an assigned staff member will be able to monitor one single point of entry to the school, visually observe visitors to the school before allowing entry, communicate with visitors through a speaker system, and remotely unlock the door for students, families, and authorized visitors to enter the school building. Visitors can wait in a

---

[88] Dorn, C. (2013, January 9). 9 Tips for More Effective School Lockdowns. *Campus Safety Magazine*. Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://www.campussafetymagazine.com/Channel/School-Safety/Articles/2013/01/9-Tips-for-More-Effective-School-Lockdowns.aspx.

designated entry area without access to classrooms unless they are escorted by school staff.[89]

5.   Centralized security system linked with the local emergency response team that includes a panic button in the event of an emergency so that the school can immediately alert emergency responders in the event of a crisis.[90]

6.   Centralized communication system within the school building for staff to communicate with one another – public announcement or intercom system and walkie talkies or two-way radios.

7.   Identification badges issued to staff and to students once they register for school. Identification badges can be displayed in order to gain access to the school building. Student identification badges should include student name and grade level and must not include social security numbers or other personally identifiable information.

8.   Allow parents and community members entry to the building (community members by appointment only, for a public event, or with the express permission of school staff or of a parent familiar with the community member), and guide all visitors through a sign-in process. All visitors must be escorted in the building by school staff.

9.   Parking permits for all cars that park on school property in order for staff to easily identify unauthorized vehicles.

IV.   School crisis plan

The school safety team, in developing its comprehensive school safety plan, should develop a school crisis plan or emergency response plan as well. Key components of a school crisis plan are *preparedness*, *response*, and *recovery*.[91]

The crisis plan is also a living document and must be updated and modified on a regular basis. The crisis plan details the school's response during an emergency situation, *i.e.*, an active shooter, a tornado, a terrorist attack, or another event. School crisis plans should avoid the use of codes, which can be confusing,[92] but should instead use plain language so that anyone in the

---

[89] Phillips, C. (2013, March 13). Key Measures Must Be Taken to Ensure School Safety. *Progress Report*. Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://ivn.us/progress-report/2013/03/13/key-measures-must-be-taken-to-ensure-school-safety/.

[90] Grand Junction School Security Group Rejects Guns. (2013, March 19). *Education Week.* Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2013/03/19/603024coschoolguns_ap.html.

[91] The Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, U.S. Department of Education. (2007, January), 1-6.

[92] Dorn, C. (2013, January 9).

building, including visitors, substitutes, and contractors, will understand what is happening – *e.g.*, evacuate vs. code blue.[93]

A. Preparedness

School crisis plans must be individualized to address the unique characteristics of each school. The school safety team will anticipate and define crises that are unique to their locations and communities, such as hurricanes, earthquakes, gang activity, neighborhood tensions, or cultural practices. For instance, while schools all over the country might prepare for active shooters, terrorist attacks, or hazardous material spills, schools in California might also prepare for an earthquake or forest fires, a school in the Midwest might prepare for a tornado, and a school on the East coast might prepare for a hurricane. There are five main components to preparedness:

1. Communications Strategy During a Crisis

   The school safety team must develop a communications strategy for notifying and communicating with parents and families during a crisis, with staff and students who are off-site for a field trip or other purpose, with emergency responders, and with local media. In order to prevent widespread panic, speculation, and rumors, school safety teams should inform families of the crisis plan and release procedures before a crisis occurs so that families know precisely what actions are being taken as a crisis unfolds. Student reunification sites in the school or at evacuation sites where students will be reunited with family members as soon as law enforcement, emergency responders, and the school have indicated it is safe to do so should be carefully selected by the school safety team and communicated to families. The school safety team should create a tracking system so that students are released only to authorized individuals and so that emergency responders can be notified of unaccounted for individuals.

   Local media are a key component of the crisis communications strategy.[94] Keeping media informed will help eliminate speculation and rumor surrounding an emergency. Building trusting relationships with local media will help in the event of a crisis to ensure that only accurate and necessary information is shared. If all communication channels such as mobile phones and two-way radios are inoperable, local media can help keep families and community members informed of the situation.[95]

   Parents and family representatives on the school safety team will be critical in designing a communications strategy for communications between the school and parents and families during an emergency, including, for instance, whether communication will take place through a centralized phone system, phone tree, text messages, and/or e-mail. The school safety team is responsible for designing a process to transport family contact information

---

[93] The Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, U.S. Department of Education. (2007, January), 1-11.
[94] *Id.* at 1-10.
[95] *Id.* at 3-7.

from the school in the event of an evacuation and deciding what devices will be used to communicate during an event. Additionally, one goal of the school safety team will be to consider how to modify the communications strategy if regular modes of communication do not work.

The crisis plan also should include a plan for alerting and protecting staff and students who may be off-site for a field trip or other activity.

2. School and Neighborhood Site Maps

    The school safety team should create school and neighborhood site maps for school staff and emergency responders to utilize during a crisis. Site maps can be developed after the school safety team takes a physical tour of the facilities and school grounds. Emergency responders who can help to identify potential spots to avoid and evacuation sites can be of great assistance in formulating the site maps.[96]

    The site maps require sufficient detail to convey as much information as possible: the location of all classrooms and other rooms, hallways, stairwells, utility shut-offs, communication centers where school personnel will be communicating with parents and with the media, and areas designated as safe spaces, shelter-in-place locations, and areas for emergency responders to use as a meeting space or to tend to victims. Site maps also should include student reunification sites where students will be reunited with family members as soon as law enforcement and emergency responders have given the all-clear. Neighborhood site maps should identify all designated evacuation sites and the groups (for example, by grade or teacher) assigned to each site. The school safety team should share all site maps with emergency personnel during regularly scheduled meetings.[97]

3. Drills and Training

    Drills are a necessary part of preparing for any crisis, but they must be conducted with extensive training beforehand, sensitivity to age-development of students, and a real understanding of what the goals of the drill are.[98] Drills are important because they help develop the physical memory for how to react during a crisis. Drills can take the form of tabletop exercises with a specialist or real-life scenario reenactment and should include practice situations for managing students who have an anxious or panicked reaction during a crisis.[99]

    Emergency drills can be frightening.[100] Students need not participate in active shooter or terrorist attack drills. Instead, staff should regularly participate in lockdown and sheltering

---

[96] *Id.* at 3-9.

[97] *Id.*

[98] Shah, N. (2013, January 31). *From Air Raids to Fake Gunfire, Safety Drills Evolve*. Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/rulesforengagement/2013/01/from_air_raids_to_fake_gunfire_safety_drills_evolve.html.

[99] *Id.*

[100] *Id.*

drills and, with generated trust between adults and students in the building, students will follow the lead of educators during an actual emergency situation. It is important that drills for staff include situations in which they must make executive decisions rather than rely on their supervisors since there may be no hierarchy during a crisis situation.[101] Also, drills should be situation-based rather than location-based so that staff members know how to respond no matter their location in the building or away from the building.[102]

Schools should have regular meetings with family members, at least once per school year, to discuss the school safety plan and crisis plan and to provide training for parents and families about their roles and responsibilities during a crisis.

4. Crisis Response Team

School safety team members will select members of the school's crisis response team who will have specially defined roles. Crisis team members are not necessarily the same as school safety plan members and must be carefully selected for the care they take with students, their discretion, and their ability to remain calm in any situation. Student input on the school safety team is absolutely critical as students and colleagues will offer the best insights about who would best fit what role. Crisis team members include the school commander, usually the building principal, who will make executive decisions and document all actions taken during a crisis; the emergency responder liaison; student caregivers to watch over students, guide students to the appropriate location, and tend to students with disabilities or experiencing anxiety or injury; medical staff such as school nurses; school spokesperson; public information officer to deal with families, community, and the media; and student-family reunification personnel (likely more than one).[103]

5. Crisis Kits

The school safety team should create a crisis kit that includes the crisis plan, student roster, and other things those responding to an emergency might need depending on their role. A school leader kit will contain contact information for all of the crisis response team members, a list of the students with disabilities who will require special accommodation or attention during the emergency, student and staff rosters and emergency contact information, a set of master keys in order to open all doors for inspection and to allow entry for emergency responders, school and neighborhood site maps, and a list of all of the pre-determined evacuation sites.[104]

Teacher kits should be kept in teacher classrooms and also should be carried on field trips and will contain the class roster, an abbreviated or full version of the crisis plan, first aid supplies, and a flashlight and batteries.

---

[101] Dorn, C. (2013, January 9); *see also* Shah, N. (2013, March 11). (some schools too quick to drill students and staff on what to do in an emergency, which is scaring people; people must be well-trained before drills, (quoting David Esquith, Director, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Healthy Students)).
[102] Dorn, C. (2013, January 9).
[103] The Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, U.S. Department of Education. (2007, January), 3-5.
[104] *Id.* at 6-26.

B. Response

A designated member or committee of the crisis response team should develop a method to immediately account for all students, staff, and visitors once a crisis hits. This accountability method will support the school's information and communication efforts and allow emergency responders to modify their interventions according to where people are located.

There are four main responses to crisis situations: evacuation, reverse evacuation, lockdowns, and shelter in place. School safety teams must prepare a plan for each of these crisis responses.[105] Evacuation sites should be carefully selected based on their proximity to the school, their availability during the school day, and their accessibility for students and staff with disabilities. The school safety team should develop an agreement with the selected facilities and communicate the evacuation plan to families. A reverse evacuation is when a crisis event, like the sniper attacks in the D.C. area in 2002,[106] occurs outside of the school building, and students must be quickly evacuated from the outside into safe locations within the school building. Lockdowns "are called for when a crisis occurs outside of the school and an evacuation would be dangerous. A lockdown may also be called for when there is a crisis inside and movement within the school will put students in jeopardy. All exterior doors are locked and students and staff stay in their classrooms. Windows may need to be covered."[107] Shelter in place occurs when there is no time to evacuate the building and students and staff must move to safe locations within the building that have been designated beforehand by the school safety team. Finally, school safety teams should develop a method for clearing students and staff from particular areas of the school and sending students and staff to other areas of the building for lower-level incidents.[108]

C. Recovery

Recovery after a crisis has occurred should involve all of the mental health professionals in the school building and outside mental health providers as well. Teachers should help students get back to the business of learning as soon as possible. The school safety team should meet very soon after an incident to assess the effectiveness of the school safety plan and crisis plan during the crisis and make necessary tweaks.[109]

---

[105] *Id.* at 3-8.

[106] Cline, S. (2012, October 2). A Decade After Killings, D.C. Sniper Malvo Speaks. *U.S. News and World Report*. Retrieved March 26, 2013, from http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2012/10/02/a-decade-after-killings-dc-sniper-malvo-speaks.

[107] The Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, U.S. Department of Education. (2007, January), 3-7, 3-8.

[108] *Id.*

[109] *Id.* at 5-2 – 5-6.

CONCLUSION

Although our schools are as safe as they have ever been, tragedies like Newtown, Connecticut, bring the national conversation back to school security. The School Safety Plan in this report is an alternative to increased police presence in schools, to zero tolerance student discipline policies, and to policing children who need protection. We encourage schools to use this Plan as a guide in developing their own unique, comprehensive, integrated school safety plans, and we urge schools to put students and student well-being at the top of the list of safety priorities. Stationing law enforcement officers in schools provides the appearance of security, but all too often, there are unintended consequences that are detrimental to students. Thus, armed guards and law enforcement should not be part of a holistic, concerted effort to ensure that children are safe. To protect our schools, we have to protect our children.