

GUIDE 1 Creating Schoolwide Prevention and Intervention Strategies



NORTHWEST REGIONAL
EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY



SAFE AND DRUG-FREE
SCHOOLS PROGRAM
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION



OFFICE OF JUVENILE
JUSTICE AND DELINQUENCY
PREVENTION
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

SAFE AND SECURE: GUIDES TO CREATING SAFER SCHOOLS

GUIDE 1

Creating Schoolwide Prevention and Intervention Strategies

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September 2002



NORTHWEST REGIONAL
EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY

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FOREWORD

School safety requires a broad-based effort by the entire community, including educators, students, parents, law enforcement agencies, businesses, and faith-based organizations, among others. By adopting a comprehensive approach to addressing school safety focusing on prevention, intervention, and response, schools can increase the safety and security of students.

To assist schools in their safety efforts, the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) has developed a series of eight guidebooks intended to build a foundation of information that will assist schools and school districts in developing safe learning environments. NWREL has identified several components that, when effectively addressed, provide schools with the foundation and building blocks needed to ensure a safe learning environment. These technical assistance guides, written in collaboration with leading national experts, will provide local school districts with information and resources that support comprehensive safe school planning efforts.

One objective of the guides is to foster a sense of community and connection among schools and those organizations and agencies that work together to enhance and sustain safe learning environments. Another objective is to increase awareness of current themes and concerns in the area of safe schools.

Each guide provides administrators and classroom practitioners with a glimpse of how fellow educators are addressing issues, overcoming obstacles, and attaining success in key areas of school safety. These guidebooks will assist educators in obtaining current, reliable, and useful information on topics that should be considered as they develop safe school strategies and positive learning environments.

Each of the guidebooks should be viewed as one component of a school's overall effort to create a safer learning environment. As emphasized in *Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates*, a joint publication of the U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Department of Education, creating cultures and climates of safety is essential to the prevention of violence in school. Each guidebook contains this message as a fundamental concept.

Under No Child Left Behind, the education law signed in January 2002, violence prevention programs must meet specified principles of effectiveness and be grounded in scientifically based research that provides evidence that the program to be used will reduce violence and illegal drug use. Building on the concept in No Child Left Behind—that all children need a safe environment in which to learn and achieve—these guides explain the importance of selecting research-based programs and strategies. The guides also outline a sample of methods on how to address and solve issues schools may encounter in their efforts to create and enhance safe learning environments.

Guide 1: Creating Schoolwide Prevention and Intervention Strategies, by Jeffrey Sprague and Hill Walker, is intended to put the issue of schoolwide violence prevention in context for educators and outline an approach for choosing and creating effective prevention programs. The guide covers the following topics:

- Why schoolwide prevention strategies are critical
- Characteristics of a safe school
- Four sources of vulnerability to school violence
- How to plan for strategies that meet school safety needs
- Five effective response strategies
- Useful Web and print resources

Guide 2: School Policies and Legal Issues Supporting Safe Schools, by Kirk Bailey, is a practical guide to the development and implementation of school policies that support safe schools. Section 1 provides an overview of guiding principles to keep in mind when developing policies at the district level to prevent violence. Section 2 addresses specific policy and legal components that relate to such topics as discipline and due process, threats of violence, suspension and expulsion, zero tolerance, and dress codes. Checklists are included to ensure that schools attend to due process when developing policies for suspensions or expulsions, search and seizure, or general liability issues.

Guide 3: *Implementing Ongoing Staff Development To Enhance Safe Schools*, by Steve Kimberling and Cyril Wantland, discusses the role of staff development within the context of school safety. The guide addresses how staff development should be an integral part of the educational planning process and discusses what its relationship is to safety-related outcomes and overall student achievement.

Guide 4: *Ensuring Quality School Facilities and Security Technologies*, by Tod Schneider, is intended to help educators and other members of the community understand the relationship between school safety and school facilities, including technology. The guide covers the following topics:

- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)
- Planning To Address CPTED: Key Questions To Ask
- Security Technology: An Overview
- Safety Audits and Security Surveys

Guide 5: *Fostering School-Law Enforcement Partnerships*, by Anne Atkinson is a practical guide to the development and implementation of partnerships between schools and law enforcement agencies. Section 1 provides an overview of community policing and its relationship to school effectiveness. Section 2 focuses on developing the school-law enforcement partnership from an interagency perspective. Section 3 focuses on steps for implementing school-law enforcement partnerships in schools. Also included are descriptions of the roles of law enforcement in schools with examples of many strategies used to make schools safer and more effective.

Guide 6: *Instituting School-Based Links With Mental Health and Social Service Agencies*, by David Osher and Sandra Keenan, discusses how schools can improve their capacity to serve all students by linking with mental health and social service agencies. Agency staff members can contribute to individual and schoolwide assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation. Agency resources can enhance schools' capacity to provide universal, early, and intensive interventions. Links with agency resources can also align school and agency services.

Guide 7: *Fostering School, Family, and Community Involvement*, by Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor, provides an overview of the nature and scope of collaboration, explores barriers to effectively working together, and discusses the processes of establishing and sustaining the work. It also reviews the state of the art of collaboration around the country, the importance of data, and some issues related to sharing information.

Guide 8: *Acquiring and Utilizing Resources To Enhance and Sustain a Safe Learning Environment*, by Mary Grenz Jalloh and Kathleen Schmalz, provides practical information on a spectrum of resources that concerned individuals and organizations can use in the quest to create safe schools. It draws on published research and also includes interviews with experts working on school safety issues at the state and local levels. Major topics covered include:

- What are resources?
- What role do resources play in safe school planning?
- Identifying and accessing resources
- Appendix of online and print resources

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INTRODUCTION

Ensuring the safety and security of students and staff members in today's schools is a daunting task that requires a comprehensive approach. Our society's myriad social problems—including abuse, neglect, fragmentation, rage, and interpersonal violence—are spilling over into the schooling process at an alarming rate. Narrowly focused approaches will not address these complex issues. Instead, school officials need to plan systematically to create safe and effective schools.

Although most schools in the United States remain relatively safe places (U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, 1999), fears about the personal safety of students, teachers, parents, and community members are real and need to be addressed. Threats of school violence, and episodes of actual violence, compete with the instructional mission of schools. Educators cannot achieve national educational goals without addressing conditions that interfere with teaching and learning.

Schoolwide prevention programs mesh with the overall mission of schooling: to promote academic excellence, socialization, citizenship, and healthful lives for our children. Indeed, school can serve as an ideal setting to redirect children and youth away from antisocial behavior.

What This Guide Includes

This guidebook is intended to put the issue of schoolwide violence prevention in context for educators and outline an approach for choosing and creating effective prevention programs. It covers the following topics:

- Why schoolwide prevention strategies are critical
- What is a safe school?
- Four sources of vulnerability to school violence
- How to plan for strategies that meet school safety needs
- Five effective response strategies
- Useful Web and print resources

WHY SCHOOLWIDE PREVENTION STRATEGIES ARE CRITICAL

Complex, interconnecting factors affect the climate and safety of schools. Understanding these factors is necessary for identifying antisocial and violent youth early in their school careers, and developing and implementing effective interventions in the contexts of schools, communities, and families.

School Safety and Violence

Some schools face serious problems with crime and violence. Most schools, however, have to address problem behaviors such as bullying, harassment, and drug and alcohol abuse. The tragedy of interpersonal violence and conflict now plays out in the daily lives of students and staff, in settings that were once relatively safe. Recent reports on school violence provide striking examples of students who carry weapons, fear victimization, or face gang recruitment on school grounds. Teachers also report threats of violence by students; some teachers are physically injured on school grounds. (See sidebar, School Violence: By the Numbers.)

These problems compete directly with the instructional mission of schools. They result in decreased academic achievement and lower quality of life for students and staff alike. The *National Educational Goals Panel Report* (U.S. Department of Education, 1998) cites a decline in school performance in reading achievement at grade 12, an increase in student drug use, an increase in threats and injuries to public school teachers, and an increase in teachers reporting that disruptions in their classrooms interfere with their teaching. These outcomes illustrate the clear link among school climate, school violence, and academic achievement.

School Practices and Violence

Schools can serve as ideal settings to organize efforts against the increasing problems of children and youth who display antisocial behavior (Mayer, 1995; Sugai & Horner, 1994; Walker et al., 1996). A solid research base exists to guide the administrative, teaching, and management practices in a school toward effective approaches.

School practices that promote positive schoolwide discipline and violence prevention include (Biglan, 1995; Lipsey, 1991; Mayer, 1995; Sprague, Sugai, & Walker, 1998; Sugai & Horner, 1994; Tolan & Guerra, 1994; Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995; Walker et al., 1996):

- Systematic social skills instruction
- Academic and curriculum restructuring and adaptation
- Early identification and treatment of antisocial behavior patterns
- Positive schoolwide discipline systems

School Violence: By the Numbers

- Statistics from recent reports on violence show how interpersonal violence and conflict play out in the daily lives of students and staff.
- More than 100,000 students bring weapons to school every day with an average of 32 students killed with these weapons annually on school campuses in the period 1992–2000 (U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, 2000).
- Large numbers of students fear victimization (e.g., mean-spirited teasing, bullying, and sexual harassment) in school and on the way to and from school where bullies and gang members are likely to prey on them (Kaufman et al., 2001).
- Several thousand teachers are threatened annually and many are physically injured by students on school grounds.
- Schools are major sites for recruitment and related activities by organized gangs (National School Safety Center, 1996; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1999; Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995).
- Half of all students who admit bringing weapons to school say they do so for their own protection.

Rather than promoting positive school climate, many school practices contribute to the development of antisocial behavior and the potential for violence. Such practices tend to put an overemphasis on detecting individual child or youth characteristics that predict violence or disruption. School practices that contribute to the problem of violence include:

- Ineffective instruction that results in academic failure
- Inconsistent and punitive school and classroom behavior management practices
- Failure to teach positive interpersonal and self-management skills
- Unclear rules and expectations regarding appropriate behavior
- Failure to effectively correct rule violations and reward adherence to them
- Failure to adequately supervise and monitor student behavior in classrooms and common areas
- Failure to individualize instruction to adapt to individual differences
- Failure to assist students from at-risk backgrounds to bond with the schooling process

(For more detail on these factors see Colvin, Kameenui, and Sugai, 1993; Hawkins, Catalano, Kosterman, Abbott, and Hill, 1999; Mayer, 1995; Walker and Eaton-Walker, 2000; and Walker et al., 1996.)

Unfortunately, school personnel have a long history of applying simple and unproven solutions to complex behavior problems (e.g., office discipline referrals, suspensions, expulsions). They express understandable disappointment when these attempts do not work as expected (Walker et al., 1996). This practice is sustained by a tendency to try to eliminate the presenting problem quickly (i.e., remove the student via suspension or expulsion), rather than focusing on changing the administrative, teaching, and management practices that may contribute to the behavior problem (Tobin, Sugai, & Martin, 2000).

Integrating and Sustaining Effective Approaches

Even when educators are given advice regarding effective interventions, they receive scant help in *integrating and sustaining* effective practices. Accomplishing change of this magnitude in schools requires an appropriate and sustained investment in staff development (Hawkins et al., 1999; Sprague et al., 2001).

The violence prevention process developed at the Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior, for example, involves teams of teachers participating in two to three years of training and technical assistance. These school teams work to complete initial and ongoing needs assessment, choose interventions (such as school rules or a social skills curriculum), and use student- and staff-level data to refine and evaluate their efforts (see Sprague et al., 2001, and Todd, Horner, Vanater, & Schneider, 2000, for a description of this work).

Similarly, recommendations from the recent Surgeon General's report on school violence (Elliott, Hatot, Sirovatka, & Burns, 2000) provide a compelling rationale for adopting a prevention approach in which school is organized as a hub of intervention. The report outlines steps consistent with a schoolwide approach to violence prevention, including:

- Establishing “an intolerant attitude toward deviance” by focusing on breaking up antisocial peer networks and changing the social context of the school
- Increasing “commitment to school” so that academic success is possible for all children and positive school climates are established
- Teaching and encouraging students to display the skills and behaviors that enable them to respond appropriately to events that may occasion and promote antisocial behavior

This landmark report is buttressed by parallel recommendations from at least two other reports. Mark Greenberg of Penn State University and his colleagues (Greenberg, Domitrovich, & Bumbarger, 1999) outline the research on effective, school-based interventions for antisocial behavior at the primary, secondary, and tertiary level. (A framework for understanding these levels of intervention is explained on Page 13.) These authors and others (Walker et al., 1996) recommend that schools work to offer integrated interventions at all three levels.

The challenge then becomes how to give schools the capacity to adopt and sustain the processes, organizational structures, and systems that will enable them to carry out these effective interventions (Gottfredson et al., 2000). The Gottfredsons recently conducted a first-of-its-kind *National Study of Delinquency Prevention in Schools* and argue convincingly that the problem is not the lack of *effective* programs (those that work), but rather one of *efficacy* (helping schools adopt and carry out the interventions).

The *National Study of Delinquency Prevention* (Gottfredson et al., 2000) points out that, while most schools already have a large number and variety of prevention programs in place, implementation of prevention activities may be too weak or lack the program fidelity necessary to produce desired results. The authors conclude that more emphasis should be given to the quality of program implementation. In particular, they cite the need for improving the amount and quality of training and other staff development activities, for assisting schools in implementing more local planning, and for making better use of information to improve the quality of prevention activities.

WHAT IS A SAFE SCHOOL?

Describing a safe school as one without serious violence is necessary, but not a sufficient definition to guide school and community leaders. Such a narrow focus may lead policymakers toward narrowly focused and expensive approaches. If the only goal is to prevent school shootings, for example, overuse of law enforcement or school security technology may be the result (Green, 1999). While often necessary and appropriate, these specific approaches need to be balanced with the overall mission of schooling, which is to promote academic excellence, socialization, citizenship, and healthy lives for our children.

In taking a schoolwide approach to prevention, it's helpful to remember that safe schools are not only less vulnerable to violence, they are also more effective schools (Morrison, Furlong, & Morrison, 1994). Effective schools share common characteristics (Braaten, 1997), including:

- Clearly defined goals in a school improvement plan
- Close monitoring and feedback regarding progress toward these goals
- High academic expectations for all students
- Clear and positive expectations for behavior
- High levels of student bonding and engagement with the schooling process
- Meaningful involvement of parents and the community

Students exhibiting antisocial and violent behavior present serious risks to the safety and climate of any school. However, the presence of substantial numbers of antisocial students in a school is not the *only* risk to safety. Typically, in the search for school safety solutions, educators' attention often is focused exclusively on student backgrounds, attitudes, and behavioral characteristics. *The child is viewed as the problem.* However, the remaining sources of vulnerability can be powerful in accounting for school safety.

The following section outlines four major sources of vulnerability that need to be understood and addressed to promote school safety in a comprehensive manner.

FOUR SOURCES OF VULNERABILITY TO SCHOOL VIOLENCE

Table 1 illustrates four major sources of vulnerability to the safety of school settings. These include:

- Physical layout of the school building, and the supervision and use of school space
- Administrative, teaching, and management practices of the school
- Characteristics of the surrounding neighborhood(s) served by the school
- Characteristics of the students enrolled in the school

Table 1: School Safety Sources of Vulnerability in School Settings

Design, Use, and Supervision of School Space	Administrative and Management Practices of the School	Nature of the Neighborhood Served by the School	Characteristics of Students Enrolled
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Height of windows • Number and type of entrances/exits • Location and design of bathrooms • Patterns of supervision • Traffic patterns and their management • Lighting • Ratio of supervising adults to students • Size of school relative to capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of administrative leadership • Positive inclusive atmosphere • Consistency of student supervision • Direct teaching of social-behavioral skills • Positive recognition of all students • Effective academic support for all students • Support for teachers in classroom and behavior management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime levels in neighborhood <ul style="list-style-type: none"> —person —property —drugs and alcohol • Domestic violence • Child abuse and neglect • Lack of cohesion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty of student body (% eligible for free and reduced-price lunch) • Number of at-risk students enrolled • Frequency and type of juvenile arrests • Number of school discipline referrals, suspensions, and expulsions • Academic achievement levels (% not meeting academic standards)

Physical Layout of the School Building

Perhaps the most neglected of these four sources of vulnerability is the architectural design of the school building and surrounding grounds (Schneider, Walker, & Sprague, 2000). The average school building in use today is 40 years old. School planners paid relatively little attention to this area in previous decades, perhaps because school safety ranked lower on the list of priorities that drive school design.

However, the knowledge required for designing safer schools has existed for some time. The ecological knowledge base, relating to the influence of the social and physical environment on safety and security, has emerged during the past four decades (Schneider et al., 2000). This knowledge has been organized and formulated into a set of principles known as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED).

CPTED helps us to understand how the physical environment affects human behavior. It can be used to improve the management and use of physical spaces in both school and nonschool settings. It has been used extensively in the prevention and deterrence of criminal behavior in a range of community settings, and has been applied with considerable effectiveness in making school sites safer and more secure in recent years (Schneider et al., 2000).

In the wake of recent, highly publicized school shootings, some communities have discussed adopting a high-security architectural design using metal detectors, locked gates, video surveillance cameras, and so forth. However, a well-designed school should look like a place to learn—not a locked-down fortress. Prudent application of CPTED principles can satisfy both perspectives. Architectural features that allow natural surveillance, while providing controlled access to the school, provide for an environment that can reduce the risk of violence while enhancing, rather than detracting from, the learning environment.

Weaknesses in the overall architectural design of the school can be difficult or expensive to overcome in older buildings. Reasonable security arrangements can reduce, but not likely eliminate, the risk of an armed intruder or other violent incidents (Schneider et al., 2000).

Recommended arrangements for facilities and a detailed discussion of CPTED are discussed in more detail in Guide 4 in this series, *Ensuring Quality School Facilities and Security Technologies*. In the context of schoolwide prevention planning, schools should consider the following:

- **Closed campus.** Closing high school campuses during school hours simplifies surveillance demands and helps prevent entry by unauthorized persons.
- **Security cameras.** The existence of strategically placed cameras can be a deterrent and may assist in identifying intruders.
- **Staff and visitor identification badges.** Visitors, staff, and substitutes should be asked to check in at the office and wear identifying badges.
- **Volunteer or campus supervisors.** Volunteers can assist with building supervision before school and during lunch, patrolling and talking to students. Teachers or school resource officers can be assigned each period throughout the day to walk around and monitor activity on campus.
- **Two-way communication systems.** All adults in the school should have the ability to achieve two-way communication with the front office at all times, without leaving the classroom or otherwise entering a dangerous situation.
- **Lockdown procedure.** Building emergency procedures contained in the staff handbook should be reviewed with the staff each fall and practiced by all staff and students, like a traditional fire drill.
- **Confidential reporting system.** The school should make available a confidential reporting system for anyone during school or nonschool hours. Options include anonymous “tip lines” or Web-based applications such as www.report-it.com.
- **School resource officer.** Schools increasingly use either sworn officers or community safety personnel to supervise students, provide training, and intervene in conflicts or illegal activity.

Administrative, Teaching, and Management Practices of the School

Schools have been identified as ideal settings for organizing efforts against the increasing problems of children and youth who display antisocial behavior (Mayer, 1995; Sugai & Horner, 1994; Walker et al., 1996). Effective interventions must be implemented that apply a multiple-systems approach to schoolwide discipline aimed at *all* students, support educators in today's classrooms and schools, and adopt and sustain evidence-based, cost-efficient practices that actually work as intended (Gottfredson, 1997; Walker et al., 1996).

Effective approaches to schoolwide discipline and management include:

- Systematic social skills instruction (such as conflict resolution education or drug and alcohol resistance curriculum)
- Academic or curricular restructuring
- Positive, behaviorally based interventions
- Early screening and identification of antisocial behavior patterns
- Alternatives to traditional suspension and expulsion
(Biglan, 1995; Lipsey, 1991; Mayer, 1995; Sprague, Sugai, et al., 1998; Sugai & Horner, 1994; Tobin et al., 2000; Tolan & Guerra, 1994; Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995; Walker et al., 1996)

Specific program selection should be based upon a thorough assessment of school needs. (See Page 15 for discussion of conducting needs assessments to guide planning, avoid overlapping or conflicting services, and serve as the basis for evaluation of change.)

A multiple-system, whole-school approach will address the problems posed by antisocial students and help schools cope with challenging forms of student behavior.

Effective Behavioral Support

An example of a promising approach to administrative and management approaches in schools is the Effective Behavioral Support (EBS) Model, which is a system of training, technical assistance, and evaluation of school discipline and climate. The EBS model has been developed and field-tested extensively by researchers at the University of Oregon (Sprague et al., 1998; Sprague et al., 2001; Sugai & Horner, 1994; Taylor-Greene et al., 1997). EBS provides an example of practices that can greatly decrease office discipline problems and increase consistency of communication among adults in the school.

These essential features of EBS illustrate a whole-school approach to discipline and behavior issues:

- Problem behaviors are defined clearly for students and staff members
- Appropriate, positive behaviors are defined for students and staff
- Students are taught these alternative behaviors directly and given assistance to acquire the necessary skills to enable the desired behavior change
- Effective incentives and motivational systems are developed and carried out to encourage students to behave differently
- Staff commits to staying with the intervention for the long term and to monitoring, supporting, coaching, debriefing, and providing “booster shots” as necessary to maintain the achieved gains
- Staff members receive training and regular feedback about effective implementation of the interventions
- Systems for measuring and monitoring the intervention's effectiveness are established and carried out

Characteristics of the Surrounding Neighborhood(s) Served by the School

Risk factors that influence a school exist in the contexts of family, neighborhood, community, and the larger society (Hawkins & Catalano, 1992). Across these contexts, contributing risk factors can include poverty, dysfunctional and chaotic family life, drug and alcohol abuse by primary caregivers, domestic abuse, neglect, emotional and physical abuse, negative attitudes toward schooling, the modeling of physical intimidation and aggression, sexual exploitation, media violence, the growing incivility of our society, and so forth. These risk factors provide a fertile breeding ground for the development of antisocial attitudes and coercive behavioral styles among the children who are pervasively exposed to them.

Assessment of neighborhood and family characteristics can be accomplished in large measure by using archival data collected (often routinely) by law enforcement, child protective services, juvenile authorities, and health departments. (The use of these information sources in the needs assessment process is discussed on Page 15.)

Characteristics of the Students Enrolled in the School

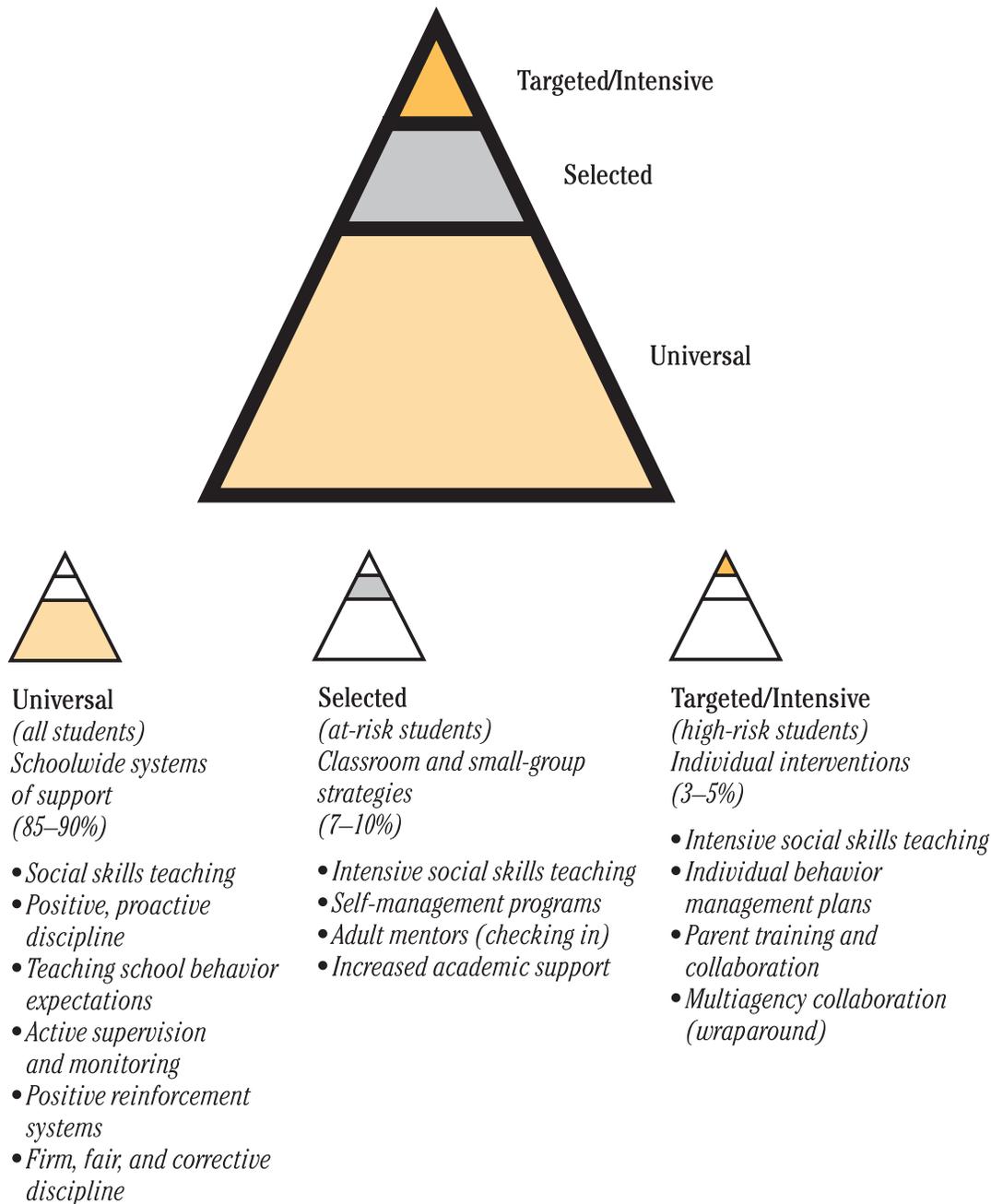
Schools are made unsafe by the attitudes, beliefs, and dangerous behavior patterns of antisocial children and youth who attend them. These characteristics are stimulated by the risk factors listed above regarding family, community, and society. Schools, families, and communities face the tasks of promoting resilience, teaching skills for success, and developing positive alternatives to replace the maladaptive forms of behavior children may have learned to use in achieving their social goals.

Any school can expect to find three relatively distinct populations of students. These include (Sprague & Walker, 2000):

- Typically developing students (not at risk)
- Students at risk for behavioral and academic problems
- High-risk students who already manifest serious behavioral and academic difficulties

Differing but complementary approaches are necessary to address the needs of these three student groups in any school. Figure 1 illustrates a characteristic distribution of students of each type and indicates the level of intervention each group needs. Assessing and identifying the characteristics of students in the school includes identifying rates of juvenile arrests or contacts with law enforcement, the frequency and severity of discipline referrals in school, the proportion of students in poverty, academic achievement levels, social skills development, and so forth.

Figure 1: Three-Tiered Model of Schoolwide Discipline Strategies



Characterizing a school as safe or unsafe is a complex task involving assessment of several interrelated factors. In the following pages, we outline an organizational framework for using data from multiple sources to illustrate risk and protective factors in schools in planning for schoolwide prevention and intervention strategies.

HOW TO PLAN FOR STRATEGIES THAT MEET SCHOOL SAFETY NEEDS

To guide schools in planning effective strategies, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools has developed the Principles of Effectiveness. These principles provide an organizing framework for planning and implementing whole-school approaches.

The steps outlined in these principles include:

- Conducting local needs assessment of the risk and protective factors affecting model sites
- Establishing measurable goals and objectives by the school in collaboration with project personnel
- Selecting research-based and research-validated curricula and interventions
- Developing a comprehensive and rigorous evaluation plan that features an experimental research design and includes evaluation of the inputs (resources, staff, materials); outputs (actual costs, description of the process of implementation); outcomes (e.g., student behavior change); and impact (overall satisfaction with project products and outcomes)

In the context of schoolwide prevention, we outline below key considerations for conducting a needs assessment, setting measurable goals and objectives, and selecting evidence-based strategies.

Conducting a Local Needs Assessment

Selection of interventions should be based on a thorough assessment of school functioning (Sugai, Lewis-Palmer, Todd, & Horner, 2000), with special attention to the four sources of vulnerability outlined in the previous section. Thorough needs assessments can guide planning, avoid overlapping or conflicting services, and serve as the basis for evaluation of change.

Table 2 provides a summary of the assessment tools recommended for conducting a comprehensive needs assessment that will explore all four sources of vulnerability.

Table 2: Four Sources of Vulnerability to School Safety: Needs Assessment Tools

Architecture and Supervision of the School Building	Administrative and Management Practices of the School	Characteristics of the Community and Its Families	Characteristics of Students Enrolled in the School
CPTED School "Walk-through" assessment (Schneider et al., 2000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole-school discipline practices survey (Sugai et al., 2000) • Schoolwide Education Evaluation Tool (SET) (Horner, Sugai, & Todd, 2001) • Oregon School Safety Survey (Sprague, Colvin, Irvin, & Stieber, 1998) • Faculty characteristics • Office discipline referrals (frequency, type) • Suspensions and expulsions (frequency, type) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty (free and reduced-price lunch status of school) • Mobility • Family or domestic violence rates • Community crime rates • Community focus group information (needs, goals, barriers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School enrollment (school size) • School demographics • Academic achievement test scores • Attendance • Juvenile crime rates • Universal screening (assess prevalence of adjustment problems) • Teacher nomination • Alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use (e.g., Youth Risk Behavior survey)

Setting Measurable Goals and Objectives and Selecting Evidence-Based Strategies

An effective approach to preventing school violence has the potential to positively affect at least two of these sources of vulnerability: administrative and management practices of the school, and characteristics of students enrolled in the school.

The U.S. Public Health Service has developed a classification system of prevention approaches that is useful in selecting appropriate strategies. This system provides for the coordinated integration of differing intervention approaches necessary to address the divergent needs of the three student types present in different proportions in every school (not at risk, at risk, severely at risk). The three prevention approaches contained in the classification system are called primary, secondary, and tertiary (see Figure 1).

Primary prevention refers to the use of approaches that prevent problems. *Secondary prevention* addresses the problems of those who already have problems, but whose problems are not yet of a chronic nature or severe magnitude. *Tertiary prevention* uses the most powerful intervention approaches available to address the problems of severely at-risk individuals.

Walker and his colleagues have outlined an integrated prevention model based on this classification system for addressing the problems of school-based antisocial behavior patterns (Walker et al., 1996).

Universal interventions, applied to everyone in the same manner and degree, are used to achieve primary prevention goals; that is, to keep problems from emerging. These interventions should benefit both high- and low-risk schools. Examples of such interventions are:

- Developing a schoolwide discipline plan
- Teaching conflict resolution and violence prevention skills schoolwide
- Establishing high and consistent academic expectations for all students
- Using the most effective, research-based methods for teaching beginning reading at the point of school entry and in the primary grades.

Individualized interventions are applied to one case at a time or to small groups of at-risk individuals (e.g., alternative classrooms or “schools within schools”). Individualized interventions are used to achieve secondary and tertiary prevention goals. Typically, these interventions are labor intensive, complex, often intrusive, and costly, but they can be very powerful if properly implemented.

Child study teams, for example, engage building administrators, school psychologists, counselors, and others in regular meetings to review the adjustment status of students in the school, especially those who have generated concerns by any staff member or parent. In this context, problem solving takes place and action plans are developed, ranging from continued monitoring to more intense intervention.

Individualized interventions are necessary to address the more severe problems of chronically at-risk students who “select” themselves out by not responding to primary prevention approaches. These students are in need of much more intensive intervention services and supports. Often, implementation of these interventions is preceded by a functional behavioral assessment (O’Neill et al., 1997) to identify the conditions (e.g., antecedents and consequences) that sustain and motivate the problem behavior. A comprehensive assessment of family, school, and individual risk (e.g., Achenbach, 1991; Walker & McConnell, 1995; Walker & Severson, 1990) and protective factors (Epstein & Sharma, 1998) is also recommended to guide delivery of broader ecological interventions.

This integrated model, although it has rarely been implemented fully in the context of schooling, provides an ideal means for schools to develop, implement, and monitor a comprehensive management system that addresses the needs of all students in the school. It is also a fair system in that students who are following typical developmental patterns are not penalized by being denied access to potentially beneficial interventions. In addition, it has the potential to positively affect the operations, administration, and overall climate of the school. This model, through its emphasis on the use of primary prevention goals, achieved through universal interventions, maximizes the efficient use of school resources and provides a supportive context for the application of necessary secondary and tertiary interventions for the more severely affected students. Finally, it provides a built-in screening and assessment process; that is, through careful monitoring of students' responses to the primary prevention interventions, it is possible to detect those who are at greater risk and in need of more intensive services and supports.

Next, we outline examples of five effective response strategies.

FIVE EFFECTIVE RESPONSE STRATEGIES

Effective strategic approaches move schools in the direction of greater safety. Over time, they should reduce the likelihood of a school tragedy occurring. The higher the risk of violence in a particular school, the more important these topical areas become, and the greater the investment that should be made in them. Their importance and relevance increases from elementary to middle school to high school.

Five strategic strategies that should be addressed in schoolwide violence prevention planning include:

1. Secure the school
2. Address the peer culture and its problems
3. Involve parents in making the school safer
4. Create a positive, inclusive school culture
5. Develop a written school safety and crisis-response plan

1. Secure the School

The most immediate and direct method of addressing school safety issues is to secure the school. Three primary approaches to consider in this regard are the appropriate use of school security technology, employment of school resource officers, and the use of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles and techniques. Used in combination, these three approaches can be effective in reducing the likelihood or probability of a school shooting or other tragedy.

Considerable progress has been made in the development and appropriate use of security technology to make schools safer without turning them into fortresslike structures. This technology is being increasingly used in schools across the country. An excellent resource on this topic has been developed and published by the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (Green, 1999, Appendix A). Guide 4 in this series, *Ensuring Quality School Facilities and Security Technologies*, also addresses security in more detail. School administrators should be aware of the status, advantages, and limitations of this technology when considering implementation of school safety options and strategies.

2. Address the Peer Culture and Its Problems

The primary target for prevention and safer schools efforts should be the peer culture of school. The norms, actions, beliefs, and values within broad sectors of today's peer culture are socially destructive and demeaning. Many youth experience a trial by fire in negotiating the complex and difficult social tasks involved in finding one's place in this peer culture. Far too many fail this critical test, become lost within it, and wander aimlessly while seeking acceptance that is generally not forthcoming. They become homeless persons within the larger peer group and their lack of fit is well known among their peers. This process forces many marginalized youth to affiliate with atypical or deviant peer groups, which can prove destructive to them.

Transforming this destructive peer culture is perhaps the most formidable task in the area of school safety. This culture is not of the schools' making, but schools are perhaps the only social institution, excluding the family, capable of addressing it effectively. The following strategies are recommended for consideration.

(See Resources section for more information on specific programs.)

- **Adopt and implement the Ribbon of Promise school violence prevention programs: By Kids, For Kids (BK4K) and Not My Friends, Not My School.** These programs are designed to transform peer attitudes and beliefs about the risks to school safety that emerge from the peer culture. They promote ownership by peers of the tasks involved in preventing school tragedies and are highly recommended as a first strategy for enlisting a school's peer culture in this effort. Their video has been widely distributed and is available to all local schools.

- **Bully-proof the school setting by adopting effective antibullying or antiharassment programs, such as *Bully-Proofing Your School and Steps to Respect*.** The best disinfectant for bullying, mean-spirited teasing, and harassment is sunlight. These events need to be defined as clearly unacceptable in the school by everyone (administrators, teachers, other school staff, students, and parents), and made public when they occur. Students should be taught strategies for reporting and resisting bullying or harassment in an adaptive fashion. The reporting of those who commit these acts should be made acceptable. The above-cited programs incorporate these principles and strategies.
- **Teach anger management and conflict resolution techniques as part of regular curricular content.** The Second Step Violence Prevention Program, developed by the Committee for Children in Seattle, is one of the best means available for creating a positive peer culture of caring and civility and also for teaching specific strategies that work in controlling or managing one's anger and resolving conflicts without resorting to coercion or violence. This program was recently rated as the *most effective* of all those currently available for creating safe and positive schools by an expert panel of the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Division of the U.S. Department of Education.
- **Refer troubled, agitated, and depressed youth to mental health services and ensure that they receive the professional attention they need.** Youth with serious mental health problems and disorders, who are alienated, socially rejected, and taunted by peers, can be dangerous to themselves and others. These students are often known to peers and staff in the school and should be given the appropriate professional and parental attention, access to services, and social supports. Having mental health problems combined with being the target of severe bullying and taunting by peers has proven to be a dangerous combination in the context of school shootings.
- **Ask students to sign a pledge not to tease, bully, or put down others.** Reports from schools that have used this tactic indicate that it makes a difference in the number of incidents that occur and in improving the overall school climate.

3. Involve Parents in Making the School Safer

With each new school shooting tragedy, parents of school-age children and youth seek greater assurances that their child's school is safe. Increasingly, parents are asking for a voice and a role in helping the school attain this goal. Parents have much to offer in this regard and can be a powerful force in bringing greater safety and a sense of security to the school setting.

The following four strategies are recommended for facilitating parent involvement.

- **For each school, create a parent advisory/planning group devoted to school safety issues at that site.** Such an advisory group would bring valuable knowledge, experience, and advocacy to the process of dealing with local school-safety challenges. It could also serve as a forum for reacting to district- and state-level policy directives in this area.
- **Advocate for parents to teach their children adaptive, nonviolent methods of responding to bullying, teasing, and harassment at school and to avoid encouraging them to fight back.** In the vast majority of cases, fighting back will not be effective and may escalate the situation to dangerous levels. It will more likely increase the probability of the offensive behavior occurring again rather than reducing it. A school-based antibullying program that has parental support and involvement will be much more effective than one without parent advocates.

- **Advocate for the securing of weapons at home and to access gun safety instruction for all family members.** Given the society we live in and the number of guns in U.S. homes, it is becoming imperative that everyone have some understanding of the dangers involved in handling guns and in being in proximity to those who are doing so. Trigger locks and secured gun cases are essential elements for securing weapons in the home where the keys to same are also secured. The National Rifle Association has developed some excellent information on gun safety. In connection with these efforts, young children need to be taught a golden rule about the sanctity of life and that guns are deadly, life-ending instruments.
- **Make available to parents solid information on effective parenting practices and provide access to those parents who seek training and support in more effective parenting.** Five generic parenting practices are instrumental in determining how children develop. They include discipline, monitoring and supervision, parent involvement in children's lives, positive family-management techniques, and crisis intervention and problem solving. A number of parent-training programs are available to address these practices.

4. Create a Positive, Inclusive School Culture

Solid evidence shows that effective schools are safer schools and vice versa. The research of Gottfredson and others shows that a school climate that is positive, inclusive, and accepting is a key component of an effective school.

Three recommended strategies address this component of school safety.

- **Create and promote a set of school-based positive values about how we treat others that include civility, caring, and respect for the rights of others.** It may be unfortunate that schools have to teach civility in addition to everything else they do, but such is now the case. Children and youth are exposed daily to poor models of behavior toward others by adult society. Making civility a core value of the school's culture may help to reduce some of the coarseness of the peer culture that has become such a problem in our schools and society.
- **Teach all students how to separate from their own lives the exaggerated media images of interpersonal violence, disrespect, and incivility to which they are exposed daily.** School curricula exist that teach media literacy relative to interpersonal violence. It is especially important that young children learn how to make the disconnect between media displays of violence and their own behavior and actions.
- **Establish schoolwide rules and behavioral expectations.** Programs such as Effective Behavioral Support (see sidebar, Page 11) offer proven vehicles for accomplishing this goal. Such programs are being broadly implemented in local school districts across the country with the goal of creating orderly, positive, well-managed school environments.

5. Develop a Written School Safety and Crisis-Response Plan

Every school should go through a planning process designed to reduce the likelihood of a school tragedy and to manage a crisis if it should occur.

CONCLUSION

Policy generally lags well behind the research that validates evidence-based approaches that can inform and guide policy decisions and practices based upon them. This is especially true in the area of school safety and violence prevention. The pressures and demands of the moment force school administrators into making decisions about school safety strategy and tactics that may appear promising, but are not yet proven through the research process. Thus, we are left with basing such decisions upon practices that appear promising, relying on our experience and using our best judgment, until the knowledge base on school safety becomes more solid, cohesive, and evidence-based. The action recommendations described above represent what we believe to be true about these complex issues at present.

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RESOURCES

The SafetyZone

www.safetyzone.org

The SafetyZone, a project of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory's Comprehensive Center, Region X, provides technical assistance related to school safety and violence prevention. The center also provides information and a variety of resources, as it tracks the latest research about possible causes of violence and the best practices that foster resilient youth and promote safe and productive schools and communities.

101 S.W. Main St., Ste. 500

Portland, OR 97204

Phone: 1-800-268-2275 or (503) 275-0131

Fax: (503) 275-0444

E-mail: safeschools@nwrel.org

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL)

www.nwrel.org

NWREL is the parent organization of the SafetyZone, a project of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory's Comprehensive Center, Region X. It provides information about coordination and consolidation of federal educational programs and general school improvement to meet the needs of special populations of children and youth, particularly those programs operated in the Northwest region, through the U.S. Department of Education. The Web site has an extensive online library containing articles, publications, and multimedia resources. It also has a list of other agencies and advocacy groups that addresses issues pertaining to, among other things, school safety issues as well as alcohol and drug abuse.

101 S.W. Main St., Ste. 500

Portland, OR 97204

Phone: (503) 275-9500

E-mail: info@nwrel.org

Hamilton Fish Institute

www.hamfish.org

Founded with the assistance of Congress in 1997, the institute serves as a national resource to test the effectiveness of school violence prevention methods. The institute's goal is to determine what works and what programs can be replicated to reduce school violence.

2121 K St., N.W., Ste. 200

Washington, DC 20037-1830

Phone: (202) 496-2200

Fax: (202) 496-6244

Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior

<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~ivdb/index.html>

The institute's mission is to empower schools and social service agencies to address violence and destructive behavior, at the point of school entry and beyond, to ensure safety and facilitate the academic achievement and healthful social development of children and youth. This is a combination of community, campus, and state efforts to research violence and destructive behavior among children and youth.

1265 University of Oregon

Eugene, OR 97403-1265

Phone: (541) 346-3592

Fax: (541) 346-2594

National School Safety Center (NSSC)

www.nssc1.org

The NSSC was created by presidential directive in 1984 to meet the growing need for additional training and preparation in the area of school crime and violence prevention. Affiliated with Pepperdine University, NSSC is a nonprofit organization whose charge is to promote safe schools, free of crime and violence, and to help ensure quality education for all children in the United States.

141 Duesenberg Dr., Ste. 11
Westlake Village, CA 91362
Phone: (805) 373-9977
E-mail: rstephens@nssc1.org

Prevention Research Center for the Promotion of Human Development

www.prevention.psu.edu

The Prevention Research Center aims to promote the well-being of children and youth and to reduce the prevalence of high-risk behaviors and poor outcomes in children, families, and communities.

Penn State University
109 South Henderson Bldg.
University Park, PA 16802
Phone: (814) 865-2618
Fax: (814) 865-2530
E-mail: prevention@psu.edu

Schoolwide Information System (SWIS)

www.swis.org

SWIS is a Web-based information system designed to help school personnel use office referral data to design schoolwide and individual student interventions.

Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

www.pbis.org

The Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports was established by the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education, to give schools capacity-building information and technical assistance for identifying, adapting, and sustaining effective schoolwide disciplinary practices.

Behavioral Research and Training
5262 University of Oregon
Eugene, OR 97403-5262
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Fax: (541) 346-5689
E-mail: pbis@oregon.uoregon.edu

Programs for Preventing Violence and Bullying or Harassment

Bully-Proofing Your School

This resource is popular as a first approach to bullying and for its transparency when used in conjunction with other conflict resolution, antibullying, or peer mediation approaches.

Sopris West, Inc.
4093 Specialty Pl.
Longmont, CO 80504
Phone: 1-800-547-6747 or (303) 651-2829
Fax: (303) 776-5934

Second Step Violence Prevention Program

www.cfchildren.org

Second Step is a school-based social skills curriculum for preschool through junior high that teaches children to change the attitudes and behaviors that contribute to violence. The curriculum teaches social skills to reduce impulsive and aggressive behavior in children and increase their level of social competence.

Committee for Children
2203 Airport Wy., S., Ste. 500
Seattle, WA 98134
Phone: 1-800-634-4449 or (206) 343-1223
E-mail: info@cfchildren.org

Steps to Respect: A Bullying Prevention Program

www.cfchildren.org

Steps to Respect: A Bullying Prevention Program™ is a research-based, schoolwide approach to help foster a safe, caring, and respectful school environment.

Committee for Children
2203 Airport Wy., S., Ste. 500
Seattle, WA 98134
Phone: 1-800-634-4449 or (206) 343-1223
E-mail: info@cfchildren.org

Programs for Making Schools Safer, Effective, and Positive

Building Effective Schools Together (BEST)

BEST, or BEST Practices, is based on the Effective Behavior Supports (EBS) schoolwide systems approach to addressing behavior and performance in schools. The model encompasses two major phases of many behavioral components and integrates and draws from all research-validated practices to create effective schools. It currently serves more than 700 schools nationwide.

Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior
Contact: Jeff Sprague, (541) 346-3592
1265 University of Oregon
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Phone: (541) 346-3592
Fax: (541) 346-2594

Effective Behavioral Support (EBS)

EBS refers to a system of schoolwide processes and individualized instruction designed to prevent and decrease problem behavior and to maintain appropriate behavior. It is not a model with a prescribed set of practices, rather, it is a team-based process designed to address the unique needs of individual schools.

Behavioral Research and Teaching

University of Oregon

231 College of Education

Eugene, OR 97403

Contact: George Sugai, (541) 346-1642 or Rob Horner, (541) 346-2460

Ribbon of Promise Program**By Kids 4 Kids (BK4K)**

www.ribbonofpromise.org/bk4k/index.html

BK4K is a branch of the Ribbon of Promise National Campaign to End School Violence. Ribbon of Promise is a grassroots student movement dedicated to preventing school violence. Their 12-minute video, “Not My Friends, Not My School,” offers the perspective of students on the topic of school violence. The video also provides a glimpse of the aftermath of a school shooting—in this case, Springfield High School in Springfield, OR.

Ribbon of Promise

150 Seventh St.

Springfield, OR 97477

Phone: (541) 726-0512

Fax: (541) 726-0393

E-mail: info@ribbonofpromise.org

Additional Readings

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Project coordination:
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Bibliographic review:
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This project was supported by Award No. 1999-JN-FX-K001 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, and Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program, U.S. Department of Education. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of any agency or department of the U.S. government.

Guide 1: Creating Schoolwide Prevention and Intervention Strategies

Guide 2: School Policies and Legal Issues Supporting Safe Schools

Guide 3: Implementing Ongoing Staff Development To Enhance Safe Schools

Guide 4: Ensuring Quality School Facilities and Security Technologies

Guide 5: Fostering School–Law Enforcement Partnerships

**Guide 6: Instituting School-Based Links With Mental Health
and Social Service Agencies**

Guide 7: Fostering School, Family, and Community Involvement

**Guide 8: Acquiring and Utilizing Resources To Enhance
and Sustain a Safe Learning Environment**



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