How safe are our schools?
How can we prevent violence in schools?

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Overview

1. Our schools are safer than we think.
2. The fear of school violence is costly.
3. We need more emphasis on prevention.
4. There are many effective strategies for keeping schools safe.
5. Threat assessment can help prevent violence and reduce suspensions.

School shootings are so traumatic that they skew perceptions of school safety and convince the public and policymakers that there are dramatic needs for security measures.

The alarming number of school shootings since 2012 killings in Newtown

Correct Number Of Mass School Shootings Since Sandy Hook: ZERO

No, There Haven't Been '74 School Shootings Since Newtown

CNN Decides Not To Count 80 Percent Of School Shootings

Lying About School Shootings
By Charles C. W. Cooke
June 11, 2014 11:19 AM
How safe are our schools?
APA 2015 Annual Convention

Annual Gun Toll
- 32,000 deaths
- 84,000 injuries
116,000 total
318 Shootings per day


But 232,000 outside of schools

Homicide Locations

- FBI NIBRS (National Incident-Based Reporting System)
- 18,873 homicide incidents
- 2005-2010
- 1/3 U.S. population

Restaurants have 10x more shootings than schools.

Restaurants/Bar

2005-2010 Homicides in 37 States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Homicides</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residence</td>
<td>9847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street</td>
<td>4455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking lot/garage</td>
<td>1209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoors</td>
<td>629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant/Bar</td>
<td>533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store/gas station</td>
<td>492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public building/ business</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel/motel</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How safe are our schools?

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1. School Security Spending
2. School Fortification and Active Shooter Drills
3. School Suspensions

The Fear of School Violence Is Costly.

Sources: CDC National Center for Health Statistics and School Associated Violent Death Surveillance Study. (All annual totals are approximate, using the school year for school homicides and the calendar year for non-school data).

“Any given school can expect to experience a student homicide about once every 6,000 years.”


School Violence Has Declined.

Indicators of school crime and safety; 2013, Table 2.1. National Crime Victimization Study data reported by National Center for Education Statistics (Robers et al., 2014)


Extra security in Hillsborough schools would cost $4 million

School security measures could cost millions locally

Additional Florida School Security Could Cost $100 Million

School security wish list would cost Marion County $160M
Armed guards in every Minn. school would cost $139 million
NRA national would cost state schools about $136 million

(DeAngelis, Benth, & Larr, 2011)
School security measures are expensive and deprive schools of resources that could be allocated to preventive measures such as anti-bullying programs and counseling services.

Building Security Measures

Bullet-Proof Building Entrances

Metal detectors and x-ray screening

Security and Police Officers

School Shooter Drills Are Widely Practiced
Students are involved in shooter drills.

Simulated Injuries

Students taught to prepare for intruders.

Many states mandate 1 or more lockdown drills per year.

Training Students to Attack

The Expansion of Zero Tolerance

From No Guns to
- No Toy Guns
- No Nail clippers
- No Plastic utensils
- No Finger-pointing
- No Jokes
- No Drawings
- No Rubber band shooting

No Accidental violations
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Zero Tolerance Suspensions After the Newtown Shootings

6 year old pointed finger and said "pow!"

http://www.sott.net/article/255552-6-year-old-suspended-for-pretend-gunshot

Texas Study of School Discipline

Tracked school and court records
1 million 7th grade students for six years
60% suspended, placed, or expelled
(54% in-school, 31% out-of-school suspension, 15% placed in alt program)


Texas Study of School Discipline

Disciplinary Violations
83% Black males
74% Hispanic males
59% White males
Only 3% were mandated suspensions (no race differences)


Suspension Practices

Suspension is a practice that has more negative than positive effects on students:
- Fall behind in their classes
- Feel alienated and rejected
- Continue to misbehave and be suspended
- Drop out of school
- Juvenile court involvement

The school-to-prison pipeline

We Need More Emphasis on Prevention

1. Prevention is not crisis response.
2. Prevention does not require prediction.
3. School Suspensions

Prevention means “to keep something from happening”
Crisis response is not prevention.

A crisis occurs when prevention has failed.

Prevention must start before the gunman is at your door.

Critics say, "We can’t predict who will be violent, and therefore prevention is not possible."

House Education and Labor Committee
Hearing on Campus Safety
May 15, 2007

Shootings seem unpredictable, but prevention does not require prediction.

House Education and Labor Committee
Hearing on Campus Safety
May 15, 2007

Prevention does not require prediction.

We cannot predict who will have an accident, but safety regulations make safer roads, cars, and drivers.

Universal, primary, or tier 1 prevention

Prevention can reduce risk factors.

We cannot predict who will get cancer, but we can identify risk and protective factors that reduce cancer rates dramatically.

Selected, secondary, or tier 2 prevention
Prevention to stop deterioration.

We can intervene to resolve crisis situations before they deteriorate into violence.

Intensive, tertiary, or tier 3 prevention

3 Levels of Prevention

Intensive Interventions
- Students with very serious behavior problems
- Clear and consistent discipline
- Positive behavior support system
- School security program
- Programs for bullying and teasing
- Character development curriculum
- Conflict resolution for peer disputes

At-Risk Students
Students with some problem behaviors
- Intensive monitoring and supervision
- Ongoing counseling
- Community-based treatment
- Alternative school placement
- Special education evaluation and services
- Social skills groups
- Restorative counseling
- Monitoring and after-school programs
- Tutoring and other academic support
- Group counseling and problem-solving

Schoolwide Prevention
- All students
- Anger management
- Bullying prevention
- Conflict resolution
- Family therapy
- Parenting skills
- Problem-solving
- Social competence
- Substance abuse resistance
- Etc.

Many effective school-based programs

- Reviewed 221 studies of diverse school-based violence prevention programs
- Average effect size = .25 for demonstration programs, which would reduce fighting 50% in a typical school

Routine practice programs much less effective than demonstration programs (ES .10 vs .25)

Need to study routine school practices.

Threat assessment can help prevent violence and reduce school suspension.
FBI Recommendations on School Violence

“Although the risk of an actual shooting incident at any one school is very low, threats of violence are potentially a problem at any school. Once a threat is made, having a fair, rational, and standardized method of evaluating and responding to threats is critically important.” (FBI report p 1)

Download at www.fbi.gov

What is Threat Assessment?

Threat assessment is a problem-solving approach to violence prevention that involves assessment and intervention with students who have threatened violence in some way.

School-based teams gather information
• Follow decision-tree to determine whether threat is transient or substantive
• Take protective action if needed
• Attempt to resolve the problem underlying the threat

Available from Amazon.com

Continuum of Threats

Warning of impending violence
• Attempts to intimidate or frighten
• Thrill of causing a disruption
• Attention-seeking, boasting
• Fleeting expressions of anger
• Jokes
• Figures of speech

Team roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Team duties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal or Assistant Principal</td>
<td>Leads team, disciplinary decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Resource Officer</td>
<td>Advises team, responds to illegal actions and emergencies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health Staff (School counselors, psychologists, social workers)</td>
<td>Team member to conduct mental health assessments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not ordinarily on team Teachers, aides, other staff</td>
<td>Report threats, provide input to team. No additional workload.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

School divisions may further specify team roles and include other staff to meet local needs.
How safe are our schools?

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Threat Reported to Principal

Step 1. Evaluate Threat.

Step 2. Decide if threat is clearly transient or substantive.

Step 3. Respond to transient threat.

Step 4. Decide if the substantive threat is serious or very serious.

Step 5. Respond to serious substantive threat.


Step 7. Follow up on action plan.

Transient Threats

Threat Reported to Principal

Step 1. Evaluate Threat.

Step 2. Decide if threat is clearly transient or substantive.

Step 3. Respond to transient threat.

Step 4. Decide if the substantive threat is serious or very serious.

Step 5. Respond to serious substantive threat.


Step 7. Follow up on action plan.

Very Serious Substantive Threats

Threat Reported to Principal

Step 1. Evaluate Threat.

Step 2. Decide if threat is clearly transient or substantive.

Step 3. Respond to transient threat.

Step 4. Decide if the substantive threat is serious or very serious.

Step 5. Respond to serious substantive threat.


Step 7. Follow up on action plan.

Research on Threat Assessment


Research on Threat Assessment

1. Reduced suspension rates
2. Increased use of counseling
3. Improved school climate
   - Less bullying
   - More student willingness to seek help

2013 NREPP Listing

Governor’s School and Campus Safety Task Force

40 members, Led by Secretaries of Public Safety, Education, and Health and Human Resources

http://dcjs.virginia.gov/vcscs/SchoolCampusSafetyTaskForce/

Student Threat Assessment as a Safe and Supportive Prevention Strategy

4-year project (2015-2018)

This project supported by grant FNE-2014-OJP-BX-0004 awarded by the National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Justice.

Selected sample of 1,470 threat assessment cases reported by 810 Virginia public schools during the 2013-14 school year

Types of Threats (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threat</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kill</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hit, beat</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stab, cut</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoot</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bomb</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentages for 1,470 threat cases from 810 schools. One case can involve more than one type of threat.
How safe are our schools?

### Intended Victim (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Intended Victim (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole school</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentages for 1,470 threat cases from 810 schools. One case can involve more than one type of threat.

### Threat Category for 732 Threat Cases

- **Very Serious Substantive**: 11
- **Serious Substantive**: 16
- **Transient**: 76

### Threat Outcomes (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threat Not Attempted</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted and Averted</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat Carried Out</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentages for 1,470 threat cases from 810 schools. Caution: no control group for these outcomes.

### Disciplinary Outcome (%)

- **Suspension out of school**: 47
- **Reprimand**: 38
- **Suspension in school**: 13
- **None**: 6
- **Detention after school**: 6
- **Expulsion reduced to suspension**: 6
- **Expelled**: 2
- **Arrested**: 1.5
- **Placed in juvenile detention**: 1

Percentages for 1,470 threat cases from 810 schools. One case can involve more than one type of threat.

### Racial/Ethnic Differences in Disciplinary Response

- **Suspensions**: White 1.6, Black 7.8, Hispanic 8.8
- **Change in Placement**: White 5.6, Black 8.8, Hispanic 2
- **Revised Block**: White 2, Black 2, Hispanic 2

No statistically significant differences for White vs Black or White vs Hispanic students.

### Virginia Student Threat Assessment Project

- In our initial year, preliminary analyses show positive results for statewide implementation of student threat assessment.
  - Schools are making differentiated assessments, recognizing that most cases are not serious.
  - Most students are able to return to school, with few arrests or expulsions.
  - Similar outcomes for Black, Hispanic, and White students.
How safe are our schools?

Virginia Student Threat Assessment Project

Next Steps:
1. Statewide inventory of practices
2. Identification of best practices
3. Assessment of outcomes by race
4. Technical assistance/training
5. Randomized control trial on training effectiveness

http://youthviolence.edschool.virginia.edu