How to Maintain a Safe School Climate

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Session Overview
1. Why Prevention Matters
2. Qualities of a Safe School
3. School Climate Assessment
4. SRO Engagement
5. Resources for Improvement

Why Prevention Matters

Annual Gun Toll
- 33,000 deaths
- 67,000 injuries
100,000 total

275
Shootings per day


5 yrs x 100,000 = 500,000
outside of schools
For every shooting in a school, there are 1,600+ outside of schools.

Schools are much safer than the surrounding community.

2005-2010 Homicides in 37 States

- Residence: 9847
- Street: 4455
- Parking lot/garage: 1209
- Outdoors: 629
- Restaurant/bar: 533
- Store/gas station: 492
- Public building/business: 288
- Hotel/motel: 211
- School: 49

Restaurants are 10x more dangerous than schools.
Homes are 200x more dangerous than schools.


When was the last time a student was murdered at one of Virginia’s K-12 public schools?

Serious violent crime rate in U.S. schools

Indicators of school crime and safety, 2014. Table 2.1. National Crime Victimization Survey data reported by National Center to Education Statistics (Zhaq et al., 2004).
The fear of school violence has generated costly and ineffective reactions.

As schools cope with safety threats since Fla. shooting, parents and leaders try to balance concern with calm

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

Costly Reactions to School Violence


Copy cat hoaxes
Attention-seeking
Students in crisis

Boy who held pencil like gun suspended

School has “zero tolerance” weapons policy
Updated: Thursday, 06 May 2016, 10:47PM EDT
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Annie Mandel

CHESATUCE, VA (WUSA9) — A Fairfax school suspended a second grader for pointing a pencil at another student and making gun noises.

Seven-year-old Christopher Mandel said he was playing with another student in class Friday, when the teacher at Oxer Elementary asked them to stop pointing pencils at each other.

"When I asked him about it, he said, 'I told I was being a Marine and the other guy was being a bad guy,'" said Paul Mandel, the boy's father. "It's as simple as that."
3.3 Million Suspensions Per Year
Fuel the School to Prison Pipeline

Latest available data April 2018

We should prevent shootings rather than just prepare for them.

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.

Seemingly minor problems may lead to poor academic performance and dropout but may also lead to serious acts of violence such as shootings.

Minor Issues May Become Major Problems
- Peer Bullying and Aggression
- Sexual Harassment
- Bullying by Staff
- Aggression against Teachers
Peer Aggression and Bullying

Students reporting at least one form of bullying in the past 12 months:
- I have been physically bullied or threatened with physical bullying at... 29%
- I have been verbally bullied at school this year. 16%
- I have been socially bullied at school this year. 18%
- I have been cyberbullied at school this year. 27%
- I have been physically bullied or threatened with physical bullying at... 29%
- I have been verbally bullied at school this year. 16%
- I have been socially bullied at school this year. 18%
- I have been cyberbullied at school this year. 27%

Boys (n = 41,017)
Girls (n = 44,733)

2018 VSSCS Results, n = 85,750, See VSSCS One Pager Issue 14 on Peer Aggression

Student Reports of Sexual Harassment

Students reporting at least one form of sexual harassment in the past 12 months:
- During the past 12 months, how often did another student spread sexual rumors... 25%
- During the past 12 months, how often did another student bother you by repeatedly... 15%
- During the past 12 months, how often did another student touch, brush up against... 20%
- During the past 12 months, how often did another student spread sexual rumors... 25%
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Boys (n = 41,017)
Girls (n = 44,733)

2018 VSSCS Results, n = 85,750, See VSSCS One Pager Issue 13 on Sexual Harassment

Bullying By Staff

Some teachers or other adults at this school pick on certain students. 36%
Some teachers or other adults at this school say things that make students feel badly. 36%
There are teachers or other adults at this school who make fun of students. 25%

2018 VSSCS Results

Aggression Against Teachers

A student threatened me with a weapon. 1%
A student said rude or insulting things to me. 59%
A student physically attacked, pushed, or hit me. 6%
A student threatened to harm me. 11%
A student stole or damaged my personal property. 21%

2018 VSSCS Results, n = 16,525 staff

Qualities of a Safe School

Prevention begins with a safe and supportive school climate.
Students need to trust the adults in their school and be willing to seek help to prevent violence.

What is Authoritative School Climate?

Authoritative parents, who are both demanding and warm with their children, are more effective than authoritarian parents who are demanding but cold and permissive parents who are warm but not demanding. (Baumrind, 1966)

Schools are most effective when discipline is strict but fair, and teachers are supportive.

Prevalence of Teasing and Bullying Across 4 Types of School Climate

Student Engagement

Four types of schools?

- Authoritarian
- Authoritative
- Disengaged
- Permissive

School Percentile in Student Engagement

Prevalence of Teasing and Bullying Across 4 Types of School Climate

School Percentile in Student Engagement

8/9/2018
Authoritative School Climate Leads to Higher SOL Scores and Graduation Rates
**Authoritative School Climate Linked to:**

- Greater student engagement
- Less peer aggression & bullying
- Less aggression toward teachers
- Lower rates of risk behaviors
- Fewer discipline problems
- Better academic performance
- Higher graduation rates

**Authoritative School Climate**

Findings consistent across schools varying in:

- School size
- Student poverty %
- Minority students %
- Urbanicity

**School Climate Assessment**

Identify Strengths and Areas for Improvement

**School Climate Survey Development**

1998-2007 developed school climate surveys for Albemarle, Roanoke, and Virginia Beach

2007 tested first statewide school climate survey in 9th grade

2009-13 development of surveys for grades 4-12 in Albemarle and Charlottesville

2013-18 conducted statewide school climate surveys (alternate years grades 6-8 and 9-12)

Each year we have examined the reliability and validity the survey, incorporated feedback, and made improvements.
Virginia Secondary School Climate Study

- Surveys of students and teachers
- 700+ middle and high schools
- Biannually since 2013
- Funded by federal grants
- In collaboration with DCJS

Improvement of School Climate Assessment in Virginia Secondary Schools

3-year project (2018-2020)

- Assess how climate surveys being used
- Improve survey scoring and reporting
- Answer longitudinal questions over 8 years
  - Factors linked to improved safety
  - Factors linked to lower suspension and dropout rates
  - Role of SROs in school safety

2018 High School Results

322 high schools
85,750 students
16,525 staff
Median completion 14.5 minutes, 92% < 30 minutes

Schools receive individual reports of their school climate and safety

23 pages, detailed findings for students and staff, comparisons to state and regional norms

Selected Student Responses 2018 Statewide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel safe in this school.</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If another student talked about killing someone, I would tell one of the teachers or staff at school.</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If another student brought a gun to school, I would tell one of the teachers or staff at school.</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Selected Staff Responses 2018 Statewide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel physically safe at this school.</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel there is adequate safety and security in this school.</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school administration responds and supports staff when they have problems with student aggression.</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Disciplinary Structure and Support established in multi-level structural factor analysis

Discipline - Strict, but Fair

- Overall Structure: 2.6
- The adults at this school are too strict: 2.4
- Students are treated fairly regardless of their race or ethnicity: 2.9
- When students are accused of doing something wrong, they get a chance to...: 2.6
- Students are suspended without a good reason: 2.3
- Students at this school are only punished when they deserve it: 2.6
- The punishment for breaking school rules is the same for all students: 2.6
- The school rules are fair: 2.6

2018 Statewide Student Responses, 1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree

Support - Caring and Willing to Help

- Overall Support: 3.0
- There is at least one teacher or other adult at this school who really wants me to do well: 3.4
- I am comfortable asking my teachers for help with my schoolwork: 3.1
- If I tell a teacher about a problem I am having, the teacher will do something to help: 3.0
- There are adults at this school I could talk with if I had a problem: 3.1
- Most teachers and other adults at this school...Care about all students: 3.0
- Most teachers and other adults at this school...Want all students to do well: 2.7
- Most teachers and other adults at this school...Listen to what students have to say: 3.2
- Most teachers and other adults at this school...Treat students with respect: 3.1

Support - Caring and Willing to Help

Survey Use

- 92% share results with staff
- 67% share with students
- 65% share with parents
- 63% use for school planning

Principal Feedback

- More questions on safety
- More recommendations on school improvement
- More breakdown by student demographics
Principal Comments

• Report was very helpful.
• We look forward to the results.
• Used to improve our school safety and security protocols.
• The survey is too long.
• We have multiple surveys to complete.

SRO Engagement

98% of staff and 95% of students know their school has an SRO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student and Staff Perceptions of SROs</th>
<th>Students: 1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree</th>
<th>Staff: 1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The school resource officer (SRO) makes a positive contribution to our school. (Staff)</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school resource officer (SRO) makes me feel safer at school. (Staff)</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school resource officer (or security officer) makes me feel safer at school. (Students)</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

School Resource Officer Engagement

SRO Engagement – Interaction Frequency

- Over the past school year, about how often have you interacted with the school resource officer who works in your school? (Staff)
- Over the past school year, about how often have you interacted with the school resource officer who works in your school? (Students)

- 1 = never, 2 = once or twice a semester, 3 = about weekly, 4 = every day

Resources for Improvement

- **Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports (VTSS)**: data-driven decision-making framework for establishing academic, behavioral and social-emotional supports for effective learning.
- **Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS)**: federal resource for multi-tiered social, emotional, and behavioral support.
School Climate and Discipline

- **School Discipline Consensus Report**: comprehensive resource on school discipline improvement, behavioral interventions, and school-police partnerships.
- **U.S. Department of Education**: resources on school climate and discipline.
- **Implementing Restorative Justice: A Guide for Schools**: comprehensive tool for school personnel to implement restorative justice.

Mental Health, Substance Abuse, Gang Prevention

- **Mental Health and Substance Abuse Programs**
  - National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP): list of evidence-based programs.
- **Gang Prevention**
  - National Gang Center: information about gang violence prevention.

Threat Assessment

- Virginia schools are **required** to have threat assessment teams.
- **Resources**
  - Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services
  - Youth Violence Project at the University of Virginia.

Threat Assessment Takes a Problem-Solving Approach

The team takes action based on threat seriousness.

- What protective action, if any, is needed?
- What problem stimulated the threat?
- What can be done to resolve that problem?
- What ongoing support does the student need?
Percentages for 1,865 threat cases from 785 schools. One case can involve more than one type of threat.

Types of Threats (%)

- Unspecified: 33%
- Kill: 23%
- Use weapon: 21%
- Hit, beat: 18%
- Stab, cut: 13%
- Bomb: 5%
- Arson: 1%
- Sexual: 1%

Percentages for 1,865 threat cases from 785 schools. One case can involve more than one victim.

Intended Victim (%)

- Student: 68%
- Teacher: 15%
- Whole school/group: 13%
- Staff/administrator: 7%
- Other: 4%

Percentages for 1,865 threat cases from 785 schools. One case can involve more than one intended victim.

Threat Outcomes (%)

- Threat Not Attempted: 97.7%
- Attempted and Averted: 2.6%
- Threat Carried Out: 0.7%

Percentages for 1,865 threat cases from 785 schools. One case can involve more than one outcome.

Disciplinary Outcome (%)

- Reprimand: 53%
- Suspension out of school: 44%
- Suspension in school: 16%
- Expulsion reduced to: 5%
- Detention after school: 3%
- Placed in juvenile: 3%
- Arrested: 1%
- Expelled: 1%

Percentages for 1,865 threat cases from 785 schools. One case can involve more than one outcome.

School Placement Outcome (%)

- No Change: 84%
- Transferred to alternative school: 8%
- Homebound instruction: 5%
- Transferred to regular school: 1%
- Other: 2%

Percentages for 1,865 threat cases from 785 schools. One case can involve more than one outcome.

No Racial Differences in Disciplinary Outcomes for Students Receiving a Threat Assessment

No statistically significant differences for White vs Black or White vs Hispanic students.
Virginia School Threat Assessment: Positive Findings

• Schools resolve thousands of threats without serious violence.
• Schools make 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.

Threat assessment is effective when students trust the adults in their school and are willing to seek help to prevent violence.

Virginia Student Threat Assessment Project

Educational programs to:
1. Increase school understanding of threat assessment
2. Increase serious threat reporting.

School Safety Online Educational Program

• Students (15 min)
• Parents (25 min)
• Teachers/staff (25 min)
• Team members (25, 20, 30 min)

Programs include anonymous survey questions to measure learning. Answers will be used for research purposes. For more information, contact Dr. Jennifer Maeng at jlc7d@virginia.edu

School Staff and Parent Evaluations

- Parents (113)
- Staff (283)

I found the information in this program to be clear and easy to understand.

This program was a useful learning experience

Excerpt from online program for students
Threat assessment is effective when students trust the adults in their school and are willing to seek help to prevent violence.
2018-19 Research Team

Rear: Patrick Meyer, Jennifer Maeng, Yuane Jia, Tim Konold
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