

SCHOOL SAFETY
(Safe Schools Checklist)

Note: The following are items to be considered for purposes of evaluating school safety preparedness. The implementation of all of these items may not be appropriate in all school districts - the value of each item must be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Is the school district doing everything it can to keep its schools safe?

A. The School Board

- The School Board has, in conjunction with the superintendent and school administrators, helped form a crisis prevention plan to be used in the case of any emergency, including fire, tornado, or school violence situations. This crisis prevention plan is a combination of training objectives, School Board policy, building policy, and detailed additions to job descriptions. This plan addresses all aspects of school safety, including but not limited to personnel screening, limiting persons on campus, detailed discipline codes, professional development and training, cooperation between the School Board and local community agencies, maintenance of safety features on campus, creation of alternative learning environments for students with discipline problems, etc.
- The district accentuates the positive. It publishes the goals met, and honors the students who follow the rules.
- The district has organized meetings between local law enforcement and parents to inform them of the importance of safely storing guns and weapons, the warning signs of drug or alcohol abuse, and to explain parental liability for property damage or injury.
- Every building in the school district has an alternative means of contacting emergency personnel in case of an emergency.

Explanation: News of an emergency spreads quickly and well-meaning parents often tie up essential phone lines inquiring about the safety of their children. In an emergency, school officials need to be able to contact ambulances, the fire department, and the police immediately. Schools should have a cellular phone, a radio, or at least a separate, unpublished line that will be open in an emergency.

- The School Board and school administrators have met with law enforcement and have developed a system of sharing information on at-risk students and community crime.

- The School Board and school administrators have met with other community agencies to develop a referral system or at least a current list of the services available to parents and students in the community.

Explanation: Mental health facilities, free or low-cost medical services or clinics, tutoring services, services for depression, food pantries, sources of free or low-cost clothing and housing, contacts for welfare, Medicaid, or programs for substance abuse.

- The school district recognizes and enforces suspensions given to transfer students who were disciplined by the school district from which they are transferring.

Example: A regular education student is suspended for a year from one district. The next day the student seeks to enroll in another district. Under Missouri law, the receiving district may honor the student's suspension and refuse to allow him/her on school grounds until the year is completed IF the superintendent or his/her designee determines the student's action which resulted in the suspension or expulsion would have likewise resulted in a suspension or expulsion from the receiving district.

- The district has, or has a contract with, an alternative school designed to provide an education to students with discipline problems.

- The school district has an alternative meeting location where parents know the children will be relocated in the case of an emergency during which the school will be evacuated.

Example: The gym of a nearby school, community center, etc.

- The school district has set a designated "communication center" where parents and media representatives may call and obtain information in the case of an emergency. To prevent confusion and the circulation of inaccurate information this "communication center" will be the only office in the district that will release information on the crisis. The staff has been trained to refer all questions to the "communication center."

- The district has a policy of refusing media interviews with students unless parental consent is obtained. The teachers and staff have been trained to keep students away from media representatives.

Explanation: One of the most tragic results of the shooting in Arkansas was the unexpected stalking of students by pedophiles who had seen students interviewed on television.

- The school district has provided local emergency personnel a listing of the administrators for each school and a current blueprint of the school grounds and school buildings.
- The school district has emergency telephone numbers attached to or posted nearby all telephones accessible to school personnel.
- The School Board pays for teachers and administrators to obtain professional development hours for instruction on handling at-risk students and violent students.
- The School Board pays for teachers and administrators to obtain professional development hours for instruction on IDEA regulations and procedures to prevent special education students from disrupting the classroom.
- The School Board pays for teachers and administrators to create programs for rewarding good behavior. The School Board regularly recognizes students who are good citizens.
- The district requires all authorized personnel and enrolled students to wear identification tags.
- The district requires all visitors to first report to the office, provide identifying information, and to wear a sticker or other identifier while they are on campus.
- The district runs criminal background checks on all personnel in contact with students.
- The school hours are set so that buses do not unload or leave more than 10 minutes before school starts or after the last class is released, unless there are supervised before- and after-school programs for students.

Explanation: Schools have discovered that idle time leads to fights and opportunities for students to get into trouble. Limiting the amount of students' unstructured free time may curb incidences of school violence.

- The schools do not allow students to leave the school campus during lunch or during the school day.
- The district utilizes an anonymous reporting system that allows students to share crime-related information without identifying themselves.
- The district has made the school facilities available for support groups servicing children and families.

Example: Groups for grieving youth, children of alcoholics, victims of violence, those overcoming substance abuse, victims of child abuse.

- Security and safety factors are considered by the Board when siting, designing, and building new facilities or remodeling older facilities.

B. The Administrators

- The district's administrators report EVERY crime committed on school property to the law enforcement.

Example: Some schools have interpreted the reporting mandates in the Safe Schools Act as providing the maximum types of crimes a school can report to law enforcement. Notably absent from the list is drug possession. Some schools therefore do not report a student who was in possession of drugs, but merely destroy the evidence and discipline the student. Schools should report ALL crimes that occur on their campus. It does not help the student or the school district to cover up or dismiss crime.

- The school administrators and the local law enforcement know the exact boundaries of school property so that in an emergency they may legally exclude the media or the "curious" from the property until the situation is resolved.
- The administrators regularly survey school grounds for potential hazards and hiding places for unwelcome persons, as well as unsupervised areas where students congregate.
- The administrators regularly review the "traffic flow" of students within the school and attempt to relieve congestion that can lead to tension and fights in the hallways.
- The administrators review the school crisis prevention plan every year and train and retrain staff members.

C. The Staff

- The staff has been trained on how to effectively take reports from students and administrators follow up on all incident reports.
- The staff has been trained on how to break up fights with minimal risk and on how to handle situations where a student has brought a weapon to school.
- The staff has been trained on anger management skills and is teaching students how to control their anger.

- The teachers give "refresher" courses on school rules to students throughout the year.
- The staff disciplines all students who make threats or alienate other students at the school, no matter how innocent the "teasing" may be.
- The maintenance personnel regularly, at least once a month, verify that:
 - ✓ all external and internal lighting sources are operative.
 - ✓ all alarms are in working order.
 - ✓ all emergency exits are functional.
 - ✓ all locks on doors and windows are working.
 - ✓ all vandalism and graffiti is removed from school buildings.
- During school, all of the doors to school buildings are locked from the outside except the door closest to the office. Students may leave the building from these doors, but they cannot come back in from these exits. School personnel regularly throughout the day make sure that these doors have not been propped open and that they are locked.
- School personnel are trained to stop all untagged visitors and escort them to the office for identification.
- School staff member receive a revised student handbook every year so that they may most effectively enforce school policies.
- The district has an at-risk student team to which teachers and staff can make referrals and know that referred students will be monitored and mentored.

D. The Student Handbook

- The school district has a detailed student handbook that is reviewed and revised at least once a year. This handbook clearly states the penalties for infractions.
- The student handbook clearly outlines which items may be brought to school (backpacks, etc.) and which items must be left at home (laser pointers, electronic devices, etc.)
- The student handbook puts students on notice that the district reserves the right to conduct random searches of all lockers and desks.

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- If the district utilizes drug-detecting dogs, the student handbook notifies students that they are used.
- The school district has a strict no-violence policy that is communicated to students both verbally and through the student handbook.

E. The Students

- The district trains student peers to become mediators of student problems.
- Each school in our district clearly informs students of the staff persons they can approach if they are angry, depressed, or need help working through a problem.
- The district assigns positive student mentors to transfer students to help them adjust to new environments and to prevent alienation.
- The district allows students to reduce the length of their in-school or out-of-school suspensions for drug or alcohol possession upon completion of a designated alcohol or drug abuse program.

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Note: The reader is encouraged to review policies and/or forms for related information in this administrative area.

Implemented: 11/20/2000

Clinton School District #124, Clinton, Missouri