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Planning

STRATEGY 1

Starting the School Year

A Checklist for Safety and Security

Creating a checklist before the school year begins helps ensure school safety procedures are in place and implemented throughout the school year.

As schools across the country prepare for the start of school each September, school officials know safety and security issues related to public and private education continue to change and evolve. Local and international events have put school personnel in the position of needing to continually emphasize and reassure students, staff, and their communities that school still provides an environment of normalcy and routine in the lives of all. In fact, school may be the only predictable environment for some students. School superintendents, principals, and teachers must go the extra mile to ensure that every reasonable and prudent precaution is taken to make certain the school is always a safe place for students.

FOLLOWING A SAFETY CHECKLIST

One of the ways administrators can accomplish this important mission is to create a checklist of safety tasks before the school year begins. Just as a pilot checks a preflight list before rolling down the runway, it is important for school leaders to make changes before “taking off” into the new school year. Once “in flight,” it may be more difficult to make a correction.

Suggested checklist tasks include the following:

- Review the school’s crisis management plan. This should include a start-up meeting with the emergency response team before the school year begins. Do not forget to include staff who are listed as alternates in the plan. Alternates should be just as familiar with the plan and specific responsibilities as are their designated counterparts.
- Use tabletop exercises for staff development. Because it is important for the entire emergency response team to engage in problem solving for specific security and safety-related scenarios as part of the practice and planning process, the emergency response team should take part in tabletop exercises at the start of the school year.

- Meet with representatives of local law enforcement agencies to discuss school safety issues. These meetings provide a good opportunity to exchange information on safety issues that may directly or indirectly affect the school community. Be sure to provide law enforcement representatives with a list of all anticipated major school activities for the coming school year. Send them updates during the year, as necessary. Many law enforcement agencies will give this information to area patrol officers so that added attention can be given to those school events.
- Communicate with community agencies that have a vested interest in the school's safety. These groups include juvenile authorities, health department agencies, and the local fire department. The purpose of this dialogue is to review any interagency agreements, new rules, or laws that pertain to the school. This is also a good opportunity to update contact information and to meet new staff members in those agencies. These contacts can be invaluable throughout the school year.
- Review existing laws and inform the administrative team and staff members of any new laws, court decisions, district policies, or practices that affect school safety and discipline. It is important to dedicate a portion of the first faculty meeting for reviewing this information. Do not forget to keep documentation about these meetings. In the aftermath of a critical incident, this information could be vital to everyone involved.
- Review the school's access-control measures, including the check-in procedures for visitors. Make certain appropriate signage is in place. If changes need to be made in procedures, it is generally less problematic for the public if they are made during the summer and implemented before the start of a new school year.
- Review all safety-related work orders. It is important for the principal or his designee to review all safety-related work orders prior to the first day of school. If critical repairs have not been completed, the principal should make appropriate contacts related to completion date and any interim measures necessary to ensure safety.
- Audit all first aid supplies and crisis management kits within the school to verify they are properly stocked and in their designated locations. Perishable items, such as batteries for flashlights and radios, should be replaced or recharged. Verify that the location of each kit is identified in the school's floor plan.
- Ensure that the school's floor plan includes any recent building modifications, including the plans previously supplied to emergency service providers. This will assist those agencies if they need to respond to the school during a critical incident.
- Verify that each classroom has all emergency information in place or posted, to include fire evacuation routes, sheltering locations, and emergency

flip charts. This information should also be provided to each substitute teacher during the school year. To facilitate this process, a classroom checklist (see Resources) can be created so that each staff member can audit the classroom environment for the necessary items. Having faculty members participate in this process will add to their sense of ownership of the school's safety program.

- New staff members should receive in-service training on the various safety components and strategies of the school, and returning staff members should be reminded of these strategies. Do not overlook basic training, such as how to use a fire extinguisher, first aid procedures, and the classroom emergency-response flip chart.
- Review and analyze last year's discipline statistics and campus crime incidents. Review the statistics for possible trends involving specific infractions and the locations where they occurred. Review student and staff accident reports to determine if there is any causation commonality.
- Remind teachers to discuss appropriate safety procedures and security measures with their students. This discussion should occur during the first week of school as a part of the teacher's classroom orientation. Teachers should thoroughly review with all students their responsibilities related to reporting incidents of school violence. This can include hotline numbers and other anonymous reporting methods available to them.
- The principal should discuss and explain security and safety measures in use at the school during school orientations for students, parents, or guardians. This information should also be included in the student handbook, teacher handbook, and school website as part of the school's safety portfolio. This strategy can provide reassurance to all that school safety is a priority.

Although the summer months provide time for school administrators to reflect and review the past year's accomplishments, reflection alone is not enough. School leaders should strategically plan safety procedures as part of their overall decision-making process. A safety checklist provides an excellent method to ensure a quality-controlled beginning to each school year.

STRATEGY 2

The Principal's Homework

What Does Your Teacher Handbook Say About Safety and Security?

Ensure that your teacher handbook addresses safety and security concerns. Schools now almost always provide a written handbook for teachers and certificated staff members. Administrators should make certain the handbook is reviewed and updated at least once each year. The most important aspect of the handbook, however, is that all teachers have a copy of the most up-to-date edition, that they have signed for receipt of it, and that they are held accountable for the information within. Copies also should be distributed to substitute teachers, student teachers, and teacher aides.

Because the teacher handbook is one of the primary methods of communicating administrative expectations, it provides the perfect opportunity to outline important safety and security information. The following checklist is not inclusive, but it does include what we consider minimal information related to safety and security. Use it to review your current teacher handbook.

- Administrative duties and responsibilities. The duties and responsibilities related to discipline and other assignments for each site administrator should be explained. If there is more than one site administrator, staff members need to understand which administrator oversees which specific tasks.
- Campus security expectations. If applicable, the handbook should explain how staff can enter and exit the building or campus after regular business hours. Information about working on the campus on weekends or holidays should be provided. The handbook is a good place to include information about access control for school classrooms, buildings, and campus during the school day.
- Key control. Schools should have a method of controlling and accounting for all keys that are issued to staff; all keys should be inventoried at least once a year. The handbook should include instructions for issuing keys, and what to do if building or classroom keys are lost or stolen during the school year.

- Procedures for reporting student attendance. This section should contain detailed procedures for reporting attendance. Definitions of and the appropriate faculty response for truancy and tardiness should be explained.
- Identification badges. The teacher handbook should explain the rules and regulations for displaying visual identification. If students are required to display or carry a picture badge, procedures for monitoring this practice should be in the handbook. If staff members must wear a picture badge or other identification, this requirement should also be included in the handbook.
- Disciplinary referrals and office procedures. Written guidelines for referring students to the office should be in the teacher handbook. Teachers should be encouraged to avoid using terms such as “defiant” and “disrespectful” in written referrals. For consistency and fairness, the teacher should refrain from prejudging the incident. Instead, the administrator should be the one to categorize the offense on the basis of the specific behavior described. Guidelines for contacting parents in a timely manner should also be given in the handbook.
- Visitor check-in procedures. Procedures for campus visitors should be detailed. Teachers should be directed to help maintain a closed campus by identifying and monitoring individuals who have not followed the appropriate protocol. Instructions for staff members on how to approach visitors when they observe them on campus should be in the handbook.
- Teacher check-in procedures; procedures for reporting teacher absence. Staff member check-in and check-out procedures should be in the handbook, along with a brief explanation of why these procedures are important. These should include time lines for how teachers should report a personal absence.
- Supervisory expectations. Included in the handbook should be detailed guidelines for teachers on supervising classrooms, hallways, the cafeteria, and restrooms. Instructions should include guidelines for teachers on supervision during assemblies and other activities. This section should also cover student passes, and whether and under what circumstances students are allowed to be in the hallways or common areas during class time.
- Guest speakers. If teachers are allowed to schedule classroom guest speakers, include in the teacher handbook guidelines for gaining administrative approval, along with check-in procedures for the guests.
- Student permission to leave campus. Write down the conditions under which students may leave the building or campus during the school day. High school handbooks should also contain procedures for going to the parking lot during the day.

- School nurse. How and under what conditions students are permitted to go to the school nurse should be outlined in the teacher handbook. If the nurse has specific office hours, they should be included in the handbook. This section should also contain regulations for dispensing student medication. All staff members should have a thorough understanding of acceptable and unacceptable possession and use of prescription and non-prescription drugs by students while on campus or at a school event.
- Lunch procedures. The handbook should address the lunch schedule, lunchroom procedures, and guidelines for supervising students during lunch.
- Assembly procedures. The handbook should provide procedures for attendance, entrance and exit, and behavior during assemblies. It should also state whether and under what circumstances staff is expected to attend assemblies, and their supervisory responsibilities.
- Field trips and cocurricular activities. Procedures for taking students off campus for a school activity—whether it is for an overnight or for a shorter trip during the school day—should be in the handbook. The handbook should also state that the following information is needed before the departure of any field trip:
 - a. The name, address, and phone numbers of each student
 - b. A printed itinerary of the trip
 - c. Written permission from parents
 - d. The trip time line
 - e. Emergency medical forms
 - f. The names of the chaperones, and copies of their security or background checks, as applicable
 - g. Sponsor and chaperone expectations
 - h. Transportation details
 - i. Administrative approval
- Cash on campus. Teachers should be directed to never leave money in the classroom overnight. The handbook should outline how to deposit money collected for school activities, whether the deposit is made to a building financial secretary or a banking institution. Information about student fundraising can be included in this section.
- Instructions for substitute teachers. Teachers should be instructed to provide to the school office a folder containing instructions for substitute teachers. Each folder should include class seating charts, attendance procedures, disciplinary procedures, campus-level emergency plans, evacuation and sheltering procedures, safety and security information, and forms for disciplinary referrals.

- Parent and student handbook. Because teachers are often in a position of enforcing and explaining school rules to students during the school year, copies of parent and student handbooks should be issued to teachers along with the teacher handbook. Teachers should review the student handbook with their classes at the beginning of each year.
- Equipment inventory. The handbook should address the care, storage, and inventory of equipment. In particular, teachers should be directed to secure electronic devices when they are not in use. This section should also outline the storage of equipment during the summer months.
- Staff parking. If the school provides designated parking for staff members, the guidelines for parking should be in writing. This section should include information about parking permits, restricted areas, and other parking-related concerns.

After reviewing your handbook and comparing it to the checklist, how did you do? Did you “ace the test,” or do you need to do some more handbook homework?

Everyone in school has homework from time to time, and school leaders are no exception. Those who procrastinate and fail to complete all the assignments could receive more than just a bad grade: they could find themselves in a potentially embarrassing position or, worse yet, in a situation that compromises student or staff safety. It is important that personnel review and revise the teacher handbook annually. This document will provide a written record of the expectations for staff and faculty.

STRATEGY 3

Strategic Supervision

The Foundation for School Safety

Well-planned supervision of students is the key to keeping them safe and preventing inappropriate behavior. Supervision is one of the basic building blocks of a safe and orderly school environment. Because supervision is such an essential component of a school safety program, it often becomes the focal point when something unfortunate happens, such as when a student is injured. Whether an injury occurs as a result of an accident or as the outcome of a confrontation with other students, the question of whether supervision was adequate may be asked.

The value of supervision is immeasurable in terms of monitoring and controlling student and adult behavior. Therefore, it is essential for school administrators to use every tool at their disposal to ensure the staff is properly educated and trained in how to supervise the students, and that the campus environment supports those efforts. Effective supervision begins with the guidance provided to staff members.

- Review the teacher handbook. The expectations for all staff who supervise students, including personnel in support roles, should be included in the teacher handbook.
- Staff should be present, alert, and in the hallways during class changes. Grading papers and visiting with coworkers minimizes staff's ability to supervise. Greeting students as they enter the school or classroom can positively impact staff's relationship building with them.
- Staff should position themselves in the middle of hallway traffic patterns. This will force groups of students to disband as they pass the central position, and will increase the supervisor's ability to see what is going on.
- Staff should engage students in conversation. When students appear upset or angry, talking to them may help staff ascertain what is wrong and to intervene, if appropriate.
- Staff should monitor restrooms near the area they supervise. Restrooms are high on the list of locations where inappropriate behavior occurs. High faculty visibility will discourage problem behavior.
- Staff should watch exterior doors that may be located near classrooms for unauthorized people entering or students exiting without

permission. All staff members must be part of the access control plan for the school.

- Staff should watch for visitors or students who are not displaying—or who do not have—the necessary pass or badge. The value of visitor check-in procedures is greatly diminished if staff members do not speak with people who fail to follow the procedure.
- Staff should use hallway passes and classroom sign-out ledgers to help ensure that students are in the right place at the right time. A teacher's responsibility for student safety extends to the activities associated with giving them permission to leave class.

Handbooks should be specific and clear about supervision.

Now, take a minute to locate and review the teacher handbook for your school. Does it specifically address supervision? What guidance is provided for staff, and are expectations clear? If the handbook makes only a general statement that staff is expected to be in the hallways during class changes, then it probably does not provide enough direction, and school personnel will be left to interpret the administrative expectations and guidelines. **Remember, adult presence alone does not mean that students are adequately supervised.** Finally, check to see if the handbook references members of the support staff. As school employees, these important individuals have the responsibility for supervising students, if only indirectly and within the parameters of their assignments. If this responsibility has not been conveyed to the support staff, that oversight should be addressed.

PROVIDE APPROPRIATE STAFF DEVELOPMENT

In addition to issuing staff members a handbook that provides definition and guidance for student supervision, related staff development must be provided during the initial faculty meeting at the start of each school year.

- Within a few days of receiving the handbook, staff should be required to sign, indicating they have read and understood it, and that they have had an opportunity to ask questions.
- An administrator should retain agendas that provide documentation of items discussed in faculty meetings.
- Provisions should be made to ensure that substitute teachers and staff members hired after the beginning of the school year understand their supervisory responsibilities. Substitute teacher folders should include instructions for those teachers to follow the same supervisory guidelines as the regular teacher.

MODEL AND DISCUSS APPROPRIATE SUPERVISORY BEHAVIORS

The value of supervision cannot be overemphasized, and staff should be reminded of those expectations periodically throughout the school year. This can be accomplished through email messages, staff newsletters, posters in faculty lounges, and follow-up discussions at faculty meetings. Administrators should remember that ensuring understanding is not about telling someone something once. Rather, it is about teaching teachers how to accomplish the art of supervision while maintaining an atmosphere that is positive and conducive to learning.

Administrators should model proper supervisory techniques by refraining from personal adult conversations while they are on supervision duty. When faculty members see administrators who are not paying attention to students while on duty, they get the message that this is an acceptable practice.

Now, take a minute to think about the following questions:

- How does your school promote supervision and remind staff that it is an essential safe school strategy?
- Does your administrative team model appropriate supervisory techniques?
- What strategies do you currently have in place to inform substitute teachers and newly hired staff about the administrative expectations for supervision?
- Do you maintain yearly documentation related to staff development on the topic of supervision?

SUPERVISION MUST BE STRATEGIC TO BE EFFECTIVE

It's really not about working harder—it's about working smarter. Ask a fisherman what determines where the best place is to fish, and you are likely to hear about data analysis. It will probably include time of day, weather conditions, geography, first-hand experience, and fishing reports. A fisherman would not just randomly cast a line any more than a staff member should randomly decide where to supervise. While developing the supervisory plan, school personnel should review information such as disciplinary referrals, altercations, and faculty and student perceptions.

The strategic part of supervision is having a written plan and communicating it to those who are expected to carry out their duties. For most schools, one plan will not fit all. For some regularly occurring events and

activities—such as arrival, dismissal, bus loading, lunch, and assemblies—a separate written plan should be devised, and then disseminated to those involved in supervisory roles. These written plans should include the following information:

- Beginning and ending times for supervisory duties
- Communication procedures, such as a requirement to carry a two-way radio or cell phone
- Unique or specific rules for the event being supervised
- Procedures and requirements for substitutions when supervising staff is absent
- Instructions for evacuations or in-place sheltering
- Expectations and duties for staff members
- Notations of special problems or areas requiring extra attention

TAKE STRATEGIC SUPERVISION INTO ACCOUNT WHEN PLANNING FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION OR REMODELING

New construction and building renovations provide opportunities for school personnel to increase the effectiveness of strategic supervision. To the extent that it is practical, avoid constructing hallways that are narrow or that contain protrusions, alcoves, or other features that may obstruct the supervising staff's view. Restrooms and other locations that are conducive to inappropriate student behavior should be located and designed with supervision in mind. The same applies to student centers and areas where large numbers of students congregate before and after school.

Soft drink machines and other large objects should be recessed into walls. Locating reception, secretarial, and other offices near where students assemble provides additional indirect supervision. The use of camera systems should be considered but should not replace staff presence. Landscaping and the placement of sidewalks and parking lots around the school affect pedestrian traffic patterns and change how students can be supervised. As personnel review construction plans, they should consider the plan's impact on supervision.

Maintaining a safe school environment requires implementing a number of proven strategies. Strategic supervision—which includes all staff members actively monitoring students and visitors to prevent safety lapses—should be at the top of every school administrator's list.

STRATEGY 4

A Safety Game Plan for Cocurricular Events

Staff members who oversee, direct, or coach cocurricular activities spend countless hours working and practicing with students—not only to ensure a top-quality performance, but also to ensure that the activities project a positive and polished image of the school. Whether it is a drama teacher preparing for a theatrical production, a coach developing a game plan for an upcoming competition, or a music teacher practicing with students for a PTA performance, everyone must understand that planning for the unexpected is a necessary part of the safety process.

When something goes awry at a cocurricular activity, there are a number of circumstances that can negatively affect safety in an already unusual situation. Consequently, school employees should give due diligence to planning for security at cocurricular activities throughout the school year by considering the following recommendations:

- A clear and structured chain of command for supervision should be in place. Indecision can be detrimental to successfully resolving or responding to an emergency situation. It is essential for all staff members who are working at a cocurricular activity to know who is assigned specific duties and where each person can be located in case of an emergency.

- Staff members acting in a supervisory role at cocurricular events should have adequate training, and should understand the expectations for making decisions. The administrator may not always be present at every after-school activity. In fact, it is not uncommon for teachers or other staff to be in charge at low-profile or lightly attended evening events. Nevertheless, the public expects the administrative designee to be as qualified and knowledgeable on safety-related issues as the principal or other administrators. Therefore, developing a handbook or checklist for those in charge of an event can be a real asset, especially for staff members who only occasionally find themselves in an administrative role. It is particularly important for those staff members to understand that they have the authority to make decisions.

- A meeting of staff members who are assigned to supervise or work the activity should be held before each cocurricular activity. This does not need to be a long or formal meeting, but it should review the specific duties and responsibilities of staff members and explain where supervisory staff members will be located during the event. In addition, the discussion topics should include how to contact or locate those in charge,

how to handle any potential or anticipated problems, and how to verify that safety and security devices or supplies are readily available and working properly. In an emergency, staff members will be under stress and will be more likely to remember important information if it has been recently discussed.

- Evacuation routes and in-place sheltering locations should be identified, verified, and posted in clear view at all entrances and exits. When considering the location of sheltering areas, the anticipated size of the crowd should be considered. The maximum allowable occupancy should be posted at the entry to gymnasiums, auditoriums, or other locations where significant numbers of people attend school functions. When large crowds are expected, someone should be designated to monitor attendance to ensure that the maximum occupancy is not exceeded.

- In-place sheltering and evacuation maps should be developed that are specific to the locations that are commonly used for cocurricular events. Normal school-day sheltering and evacuation routes and maps usually reflect a student body that is spread throughout the building or campus, but that will not be the case at cocurricular activities. Consequently, plans specific to those locations should be developed. Be sure to include cafeteriums and food courts when developing evacuation and sheltering plans.

- It is advisable to announce certain safety information in advance of large events or when the noise level may be a serious factor in communicating with the crowd. For certain events, many schools already make announcements concerning tobacco usage, crowd conduct expectations, and so on. It is recommended that these announcements also contain information related to emergency exits and evacuation procedures. In addition, rules and conduct expectations should be posted at entryways to the events to remind everyone of what the school expects, condones, and prohibits.

- Supervisory staff members, ushers, or others who are designated to assist or oversee an event should wear easily recognizable attire. As part of the general announcements made at the beginning of an event, the crowd should be given instructions as to how to locate school staff members should the need arise. Staff who dress in apparel that display school colors or clothing with a mascot's image may tend to blend in with patrons and fans and may not be readily identified. It is therefore recommended that supervisory staff members wear badges that identify them as someone in authority. Wearing identical blazers, vests, or hats can also make staff members easy to identify, especially at events with large crowds.

- Staff members should be equipped with essential equipment and supplies, such as flashlights and cell phones. A small, powerful flashlight can be a valuable tool in the event of a power outage or if staff needs to go outside during evening hours to address a problem. In addition, staff

should have a pocket-size notepad and pen; it is also a good practice for at least the supervisory staff to have cellular telephones. If two-way radios are used at the school, they should be carried by as many of the staff as is practical. Schools that are in areas where severe weather can be a threat should keep a weather-alert radio in a place where staff members will hear it if it is activated—perhaps in a concessions stand or ticket booth. For outside events, lightning detectors are also recommended.

- First aid supplies and emergency response kits should be located in the area where an event is being held. Although many athletic events will have a trainer or other similarly qualified person present, other cocurricular activities will not. Staff members should be aware of who among them has first aid training and where first aid supplies can be located. An emergency response kit should always be placed in areas where large numbers of students or the public congregate. In addition to the standard supplies that these kits normally contain, a battery-powered megaphone is recommended. This will be an invaluable tool if it is necessary to communicate to large numbers of people under adverse conditions.

- Local law enforcement agencies should be kept informed when large crowds are anticipated at cocurricular activities and events. Most law enforcement agencies are more than willing to disseminate a schedule of the school's events to the officer who covers that beat. Police departments like to be proactive and will want to know when large numbers are expected to attend a cocurricular activity. In addition to your scheduled staffing for security, having a police officer make a pass through the event or the school parking lots adds to the overall security plan for the event.

- Finally, scenario-based training should be provided to members of the crisis management team and others who may be called on to work cocurricular activities. School personnel should already be using tabletop exercises to train their school population about safety issues. Tabletop exercises are recommended by the U.S. Department of Education and are an excellent training method for a school's staff development program related to emergency response procedures. Consequently, it is recommended that personnel occasionally select a tabletop exercise where something is going awry at a cocurricular event. Forcing individuals to respond to the unusual circumstances of these events will allow for a better response when staff members and students are confronted with an actual emergency.

No school administrator can be at all activities, so training others to occasionally fill that role is critical. In the words of Ronald Reagan, "Surround yourself with the best people you can find, delegate authority, and don't interfere as long as the overall policy that you've decided on is being carried out."

STRATEGY 5

On the Road Again

Discipline Investigations Away From School

How prepared are you to manage the discipline, safety, and legal issues that occur on out-of-town, school-sponsored trips? To manage disciplinary incidents that occur in a school, personnel must know how to conduct an investigation, and must be familiar with the educational and statutory laws governing the procedural guidelines that must be followed. However, disciplinary issues will sometimes arise when students and staff are on school-sponsored activities that take them out of town, out of state, and—on rare occasions—out of the country. To avoid problems, administrators should address potential discipline issues, in advance, when the trip is being planned.

Besides disciplinary matters, accidents and injuries may also occur on out-of-town trips. Parents expect the school to have considered all contingencies and will insist staff members respond appropriately and decisively if an incident occurs. The following are some tips that should be followed prior to out-of-town trips:

- **Checklists.** Perhaps the best tool to assist staff with the safety planning process is to provide a written checklist of tasks to be completed prior to departure. The checklist should be considered a living document that can be modified by staff on their return, and used to prepare for future out-of-town events. A completed checklist should be part of the pretrip documentation record. When applicable, certain tasks on the list should include a time line for completion (see Resources).

- **Trip handbooks.** Expectations of behavior and the potential school and legal consequences should be discussed with students prior to trip departure. This information should be clearly communicated in a student handbook or a similar document designed for each specific trip. It should be reviewed with parents in a pretrip group meeting. After reviewing the document, parents and students should sign the document to acknowledge they have read and understood it.

- **Laws of foreign countries.** When the trip involves travel to a foreign country, parents and students should be reminded that the legal system in other countries may be very different from the U.S. legal system, and penalties may be much harsher—especially those related to the possession or use of controlled substances.

- Inspection of student belongings. Travel permission documents should give administrators the right to inspect a student's personal belongings prior to departure and at any time during the trip. When inspections are done randomly, they may negate the need for the threshold of reasonable suspicion usually required for a student search, though you should always consult legal counsel before including such language. We also suggest using the term "inspect" rather than "search." The word "search" may have additional legal implications, depending on local judicial interpretations. To ensure that the scope and nature of the inspections are appropriate, a set of written guidelines should be used, and more than one staff member should be present during the inspection. Only authorized staff members should be involved if there is a need to conduct an inspection of student belongings.

- Volunteer chaperones. When an administrative designee, in lieu of an administrator, is placed in charge of an out-of-town trip, the designee should have a thorough understanding of the disciplinary procedures and investigative requirements. When an administrator is left to handle an incident that occurred several days earlier across state lines, it may be difficult to reconstruct the circumstances if the incident was not handled properly at the time. Incorrect or inappropriate actions by chaperones who are not school employees may significantly hinder an administrator's ability to reconstruct an incident.

- Student handbooks and statement forms. Staff members on out-of-town trips should always take a copy of the student handbook and other documents that contain the discipline code; they should also take witness-statement forms. In most situations, it is not advisable to wait until after students return from a trip to take written and oral statements. The best statements are taken when an incident is fresh in everyone's mind and when there has not been an opportunity for those involved to compare stories, discuss the event, or collaborate.

- Cameras to document evidence. Chaperones for out-of-town trips should have a camera at their disposal for those circumstances when evidence will not be available at a later time, or where property damage has occurred. Pictures may be important evidence to document an event or a specific item. Cameras should be provided by the district to avoid any issues over the possession rights of the pictures.

- Local and state jurisdictions. Many states have statutes that require schools to notify law enforcement officials when certain types of offenses occur. Some state laws require schools to report certain types of incidents to the agency that has jurisdiction for that type of infraction. If in doubt, contact the police where the incident occurred and make the appropriate inquiries related to state and municipal regulations. Obtain a copy of the written police report if one is prepared. If the police counsel no action, ask the officer to put that counsel in writing.

- Dealing with contraband. Law enforcement officials should be contacted when contraband, such as controlled substances or weapons, is seized. Maintaining possession of these items until the return to the home school is risky and may be illegal. However, pictures of the contraband should be taken as part of the record of events.

- Debriefing. In the aftermath of a serious incident occurring on an out-of-town trip, it is important for staff members and those directly involved with the incident to debrief as a group. This will provide two valuable sources of information: First, depending on the level of media involvement and the seriousness of the event, debriefing will provide the administrator with the best overall picture of the who, what, where, when, how, and why of the incident. Second, debriefing provides an opportunity to adjust the planning process for the next out-of-town trip.

Taking students to school-sponsored activities and letting them participate in out-of-town cocurricular trips is a valuable and viable part of any comprehensive school experience. If school personnel have already made proper preparations during the planning process, discipline violations, accidents, and injuries that occur on out-of-town trips can be managed successfully. Remember: prior to an out-of-town event, it is important to clearly communicate all of a school's behavioral and procedural expectations with parents, students, accompanying staff members, and chaperones. Should a regrettable incident occur, administrators will be better prepared to act quickly, decisively, and appropriately.

STRATEGY 6

Visitor Check-in and Screening Procedures

It's More Than Just Signing the Visitor Log

Systematic and consistent check-in and screening procedures for school visitors help ensure the safety of the school environment. Although a visitor check-in system is a standard operating procedure for most school buildings, establishing systematic, practical, and successful visitor check-in and screening procedures entails much more than making visitors sign a visitor's log and giving them an identification badge. To implement a successful visitor check-in process, staff members must first have a clear understanding of the need for check-in procedures. The real purpose of visitor check-in and screening procedures is not only to observe and identify individuals who have followed the procedures, but also to make it easier to identify those individuals who have not followed them.

POSTING CHECK-IN PROCEDURES

All entry points to the school should have the rules and procedures for visitor check-in clearly posted. It is recommended these be written in both English and Spanish. Posting the rules serves two purposes: First, it provides an opportunity to notify visitors that they will be required to follow established procedures when they visit the school. Second, it provides the basis for inquiry when staff members must confront individuals who have disregarded the posted instructions.

Individuals who arrive at the school without the intention to engage in prohibited behavior will generally follow visitor check-in procedures. However, those arriving to do otherwise will, in most situations, disregard the posted instructions.

PROCEDURE

School secretaries often feel embarrassed when they are checking in a visitor who is well known within the school community, but all staff members should understand that an important aspect of successful access control is maintaining consistency in administering procedures. Listed below are some specific strategies that should be considered when

setting up or reviewing your school's current visitor screening and check-in procedure.

- **Signage.** Instructions that clearly portray visitor check-in requirements and direct visitors to the proper check-in location should be posted at all entry points. If a local ordinance or other legal requirement is the basis for enforcement, the signage should so indicate.

- **Screening requirements.** Additional signage should appear at the check-in location to advise visitors that school staff members reserve the right to ask for picture identification. Visitor check-in and screening requirements should also appear in student handbooks and in school newsletters that are sent home. The goal is to provide as much advanced notice of the check-in and screening procedures as possible. This will usually result in greater compliance within the school community.

- **Friendly conversation.** As part of the standard check-in procedure, the staff member on duty should engage each visitor in a friendly conversation to determine if there are any abnormalities in the visitor's demeanor or mental state. This provides an opportunity to ascertain if the individual is unhappy or agitated with staff members or students, or if the individual is under the influence of a controlled substance.

- **Visitor log.** The visitor log should indicate who the visitor is, the reason for the visit, the person the visitor will be seeing, and the times the visitor checks in and out. The staff member who processes the visitor's check-in should initial the visitor log; having staff members take ownership of this process will ensure greater attention to detail.

- **Legibility.** Unless the staff member who is overseeing the check-in procedure recognizes the visitor, the visitor's signature should be checked for legibility. If the signature is unreadable, the staff member should ask the visitor to pronounce the name.

- **Picture identification.** The decision to ask for picture identification should be based on the comfort level the staff member has regarding whether the visitor is, in fact, who he or she claims to be. Staff members should always err on the side of caution and request identification if there is any doubt.

- **Visitor badges.** Visitor badges should be color coded, numbered, and designed so individuals who fail to return their badges on leaving the campus cannot readily use the same badge on another day. Moreover, reusable badges should be inventoried periodically to ensure that they are all accounted for and ready for use. Commercially produced visitor badges that are designed for one-time use are also available. It makes little sense to design a secure check-in procedure if the visitor can leave with a badge that can be reused another day.

- **Staff notification.** When a visitor arrives, it is a good idea to alert the person who is receiving the visitor. This can provide the staff member at the time of check-in with additional information if the visitor is someone who may be expected to create a problem. For added security, staff members may want to escort visitors through the school to the meeting or classroom.

TRAINING AND PREPARATION

The final part of a sound visitor check-in procedure is to ensure all staff members understand the process and their role in the overall success of the program. The person assigned to process visitors is only one part of the procedure. The rest of the staff should act as eyes and ears within the building or on the campus, and be aware of any persons who ignore the check-in process, are intent on creating a disruption, or might pose a threat to the school population.

Staff members who check visitors in should receive a written copy of the school's building or campus procedures, as well as instructions about how to respond when a visitor is noncompliant or exhibits unusual behavior. All staff should receive training in how to approach and tactfully engage in dialogue with individuals who do not have visitor identification badges. These instructions should include information about how to properly respond to a visitor's defiant or abusive behavior. A friendly demeanor can sometimes defuse even the angriest person. When that does not work, staff should remain calm, speak softly, keep a reasonable distance, and stand at a right angle when speaking with the individual. However, if the visitor is visibly agitated and distressed, the staff member should get to the nearest communication device and notify the office of the visitor's presence and location on the campus.

Visiting a school campus can and should be a positive experience for everyone in the school community, and most of the time it is just that. Publicizing, practicing, and providing written procedures for staff to follow when visitors arrive should be a routine part of each school year. Visitor check-in requirements can then be accurately promoted as one of the components that a school uses to ensure a safe environment.

STRATEGY 7

Ensuring the Safe Evacuation of Students With Physical Disabilities During an Emergency

For in-place sheltering and evacuation plans to work during an emergency, schools need to prepare—and practice—individualized evacuation and shelter plans for students with disabilities.

Throughout the school year, students and staff participate in fire drills and severe weather drills that are usually simple and routine. But what happens when a school cannot accommodate students with physical disabilities through the normal sheltering and evacuation procedures? Just as schools are committed to meeting the educational requirements of students with physical disabilities, schools should be committed to develop a plan to evacuate and shelter in place these students during an emergency event.

Because of the unique risks and circumstances associated with moving students who have limited mobility or complete immobility, administrators should take the following factors into consideration when making evacuation plans:

- Physical conditions that may create additional risks for students with disabilities if they have to be moved rapidly
- Special equipment or medication that must accompany students with disabilities
- The use of stairways, as opposed to elevators, during an evacuation
- Evacuation routes that require students to traverse terrain that could be affected by bad weather
- Evacuations that may require students and staff to travel a considerable distance to be clear of the danger
- The assignment of staff members to assist students with special needs during evacuation and in-place sheltering
- The supervision of students whose teachers have been temporarily reassigned to assist students with physical disabilities
- The special circumstances associated with cocurricular activities and events—such as crowd movement—and the availability of sheltering locations and evacuation routes from auditoriums, gymnasiums, and stadiums
- Special considerations for students with physical disabilities who may also have emotional and cognitive impairments

- Schedule and class modifications made throughout the school year that will affect the location of students with physical disabilities during the school day
- Classrooms that, by their specific design, cannot be relocated to a ground level

DEVELOPING AN INDIVIDUALIZED EVACUATION AND SHELTERING PLAN

Every student with a disability who could be adversely affected during an evacuation or in-place sheltering event should have an individualized evacuation and sheltering plan (IESP). The IESP should be an addendum to the school's emergency response plan and should include the following:

- The class schedules of students with disabilities
- Information about any specific medical conditions of students with disabilities, including notations about medications and critical peripheral equipment such as the need for an oxygen tank or wheelchair
- Any special instructions on medically approved techniques for the physical movement of a student with a disability, such as restrictions for lifting, and so on
- A sheltering location in close proximity to each of the classrooms used by students with disabilities
- A designated exterior exit for evacuation and an alternate exit specific to each class that a student with a disability attends
- Staff members and alternates who are assigned to assist in the evacuation or in-place sheltering of students with disabilities

Written operating instructions for medical equipment should accompany the student.

The school nurse, students, parents, and an administrator should all provide input into the IESP process and sign the document when it has been completed to indicate they have reviewed and agreed. In some cases, it may also be well advised to consult the physicians of students with disabilities. Members of the emergency response team should have a copy of the IESP as an addendum to their individual emergency response plans. In addition, any classroom teacher who has daily or periodic responsibility for a student with a disability should have a copy of the student's IESP. The plan should also be given to persons involved in the actual transport of students with disabilities. A copy of the IESP should also be included in the folder provided to substitute teachers.

PRACTICING THE IESP

Writing the IESP is only the first step in the process. The IESP is of little value until it has been practiced and modified as appropriate. When school personnel practice evacuation and in-place sheltering plans for students with disabilities, the following considerations should be taken into account:

- School personnel involved in assisting students with disabilities should clearly understand each student's medical condition. When possible, parents should be encouraged to observe a practice drill. By doing so, they will be able to provide input and will have a greater comfort level with the process.

- When possible, use the same staff members each time a student with a disability is moved. When possible, assign alternate staff members to fill this role in the event the primary staff member is absent. Transporting these students might not be an easy task. Consequently, both designees and alternates should be trained in how to correctly transport a physically disabled student so neither staff nor student safety is compromised.

- It may be ill advised to physically carry a student with a disability during a practice evacuation drill. However, the student should be present during the drill so the student will understand the proper procedure. When necessary, a mannequin or dummy can be used during a practice drill; the local fire department is a good resource for obtaining such an item. Staff members who are assigned to move students should be reminded that these individuals may have limited movement in some limbs and may be unable to protect themselves during a fall.

- Evacuation plans should account for times when students with disabilities are not in a classroom, such as during lunch or class changes. In addition, students with disabilities should be told what actions they should take if something happens during times when they are not with a staff member.

- Remember that a student with a disability may not be able to assume protective positions during certain in-place sheltering events, such as during earthquakes or severe weather. Therefore, it is important for administrators to work with local emergency management officials and district risk management staff members to identify where and how these students should be protected.

- Use monthly drill reports to note when practice sessions involving students with disabilities occurred. This information is an important part of any school's routine record keeping.

- Remember to debrief relevant participants after all practice and actual evacuations. Although debriefing should be an integral part of crisis planning, it is often overlooked because of time constraints.

ASSISTING STUDENTS WITH SHORT-TERM PHYSICAL NEEDS

Throughout the school year, there will be students with temporary medical conditions, such as a broken leg, who will have restricted mobility. Consequently, a short-term IESP will need to be considered. An appointed staff member should have the responsibility for monitoring and updating all evacuation plans for these students. The school nurse might be a good person for this task.

Although practice drills are an invaluable tool in preparing to evacuate a student with a disability, administrators should remember there are certain factors—panic, stress, and so on—that will be present in an actual event that cannot be simulated in a practice drill. Although perfection is seldom achieved in the world of school safety, thorough planning and regular practice will certainly be a means toward that end.

Authors' note: As is true in life, many valuable lessons are learned through experience. As readers you might be interested to know the information shared within this article is a direct result of a fire drill involving a physically disabled student that went awry. While it was true there was a plan, it was not detailed enough and did not account for the absence of one of the designated transporters. Thus, the idea of an IESP had its inception. It was a valuable lesson learned for all involved.

STRATEGY 8

Invest in a Safety Committee

Creating Strategies You Can Bank On

A safety committee requires time, energy, and sometimes money, but the rewards can be significant. Call it a focus group, a team, a commission, or a board, but a committee by any other name is still a committee. And isn't it just what everyone needs? Ah yes, another committee to monitor, chair, and facilitate. Right? Absolutely not! But before the idea of adding to an already overstressed workload makes you stop reading, please consider the fact that taking the time to institute a productive school safety committee will ultimately be time well spent in terms of shared expertise, professional and personal liability, and overall schoolwide safety. Does that sound like it has some possibilities? Of course it does.

Often underutilized, a school safety committee is one of the best tools an administrator can have. If formed carefully, this group can help create, maintain, and assess school safety and climate in a strategic, intentional, and timely manner throughout the school year.

It is virtually impossible for any one person to be solely responsible for the safety and security needs of elementary, middle, and high school students and staff in the twenty-first century. Schools that have a positive and safe educational environment usually have it because all staff contributes to ensuring it. In fact, if a school's overall safety plans do not encourage—or require—the participation of staff from all departments, the plans will be compromised.

A safety committee will encourage staff member participation through a multidisciplinary mix of members. This combination is necessary if the committee is to be effective. Bringing together individuals who have expertise in specific areas and a vested interest in a safe and secure work environment will pay big dividends over time.

WHO ARE THE PLAYERS?

When forming a committee designed to facilitate safety and security, school personnel will want to ensure the right players are included. The following are some of the areas, departments, and groups that should be represented:

- Administration
- Counseling

- Health
- Secretarial
- Security
- Food service
- Custodial and maintenance
- Teaching staff
- Athletic staff
- Student body

Depending on the composition, special considerations, or unique needs of the school, there may be other staff who also need to be a part of the school safety committee. Representatives from each of the listed areas will bring specific expertise and unique perspectives to the table. The mix of individuals from these various departments will broaden the knowledge base of all committee members, making them more effective and versatile in the event of an emergency.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE?

Safety committees must operate with clear direction and purpose. “Safety” is too broad a term to simply designate it as the purpose. It is important for the committee to have well-defined functions and specific tasks. Creating a document that outlines these administrative expectations will help provide structure and guidance to the committee members.

WHAT ARE SOME SUGGESTED DUTIES AND ACTIVITIES?

A frustration of many administrators is ensuring basic safety and security functions and strategies are consistently in place throughout the school. The larger the school, the more difficult this becomes. Safety committees can develop guidelines and ensure compliance by developing checklists that are completed by each staff member in the school. For example, the committee might consult with the school nurse to create a checklist of first aid supplies that should be readily available in each classroom. In turn, each teacher would verify once each semester that the supplies are available in the assigned area and note such on a copy of the checklist. This process creates the kind of participatory leadership imperative to any school safety plan. The same process can be used to verify that evacuation and sheltering plans are posted, door locks are in working order, important telephone numbers are posted, and so forth (see Resources).

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE FIRST?

Certainly a good place to start is a review of accident statistics and data. The committee can and should review each accident, and should examine statistical and anecdotal information to identify possible causation. Then the committee will be able to recommend actions to reduce the likelihood of a recurrence. The committee should also follow up, and periodically review that the recommended actions have been implemented.

A well-chosen and energized safety committee may prevent a significant number of accidents. Developing schoolwide themes, projects, and initiatives will enhance the overall safety of the school, and will create and maintain a high level of awareness among staff and students. Tackling such issues as thefts at school by providing information to students and staff on how to avoid becoming a victim will help address that problem. There are a limitless number of activities and projects that can be used to enhance the safety of the school climate and environment.

WHAT IS THE COST?

The actual monetary expenditure of a safety committee is minimal, but some funds for supplies and materials may be necessary. It is not realistic to expect a safety committee not to recommend some strategies that have an associated cost or develop safety awareness promotional programs without some expenditure.

The question is, "What will the cost ultimately be if such a committee is not formed and fully functioning?" The fear of generating costly and untimely work orders should not be a reason to delay forming a safety committee. In matters such as school safety, timing is everything.

WHAT WILL BE THE RESULTS?

The value of a safety committee should be measured not only in the dollars and cents saved, but also in the benefit it provides in the area of academics. When a school increases its safety record, it will likely increase the feeling of safety, which will have positive effects on student and staff attendance, and on academic achievement. If a school experiences a tragedy or accident of significant consequence, staff and student emotions are affected long after the event. Safety can and does affect everyone, and safety is a fundamental need for all. When a school begins to experience a reduction in accidents, injuries, school crime, and disciplinary problems, personnel will spend less time with these issues and more time doing what is more rewarding and important—spending quality time with students.

STRATEGY 9

Speaking of School Safety

Creating a Conversation Within the School Community

Conversations about school safety should take place throughout the year to assure parents and community members that the school is prepared for emergencies.

Communicating with parents and others in the school community on the topic of school safety can be a balancing act. Say too little and parents may believe not enough is being done to address safety and security concerns. Say too much and some will assume personnel are overreacting or that the school has serious safety issues that need to be addressed by extreme measures. Either way, it takes reflection and insight on the part of school personnel to decide what to explain regarding safety and security measures and when it is appropriate to share information. It can be a win-win or a lose-lose situation, depending on the circumstances prompting the release of information, the interpretation of the information by the listener, and the ability of the school official to communicate clearly, strategically, succinctly, and confidently.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

Before considering how to share information about school safety, ask yourself the following questions:

- What type of information is appropriate to share?
- How detailed should the information be?
- In what format is this type of information best communicated?
- When is the best time for this type of information to be disseminated? Should it be a routine part of the beginning of a new school year, disseminated only in the aftermath of a tragic event, or a combination of both? We recommend being proactive, as opposed to being reactive, when it comes to making this decision.
- What board policies, if any, need to be considered?

Educators know the feeling of safety is essential to students and staff to maximize academic achievement and to recruit and retain employees.

Promoting school safety should be part of the school's routine, and discussing safety and security with parents and others in the community should be as important as promoting academics, cocurricular activities, special programs, and other services. Although there may be a few specific details of safety and security that are privileged information, such as bomb threat procedures and threat assessment screening, most strategies are already visible; their value will not be compromised if they are broadcast.

SEVEN POINTS TO SHARE

Seven topic areas we believe should be discussed as part of the routine dialogue are outlined in the following paragraphs. For emphasis and clarity, we provide suggested language.

- The school has a comprehensive emergency response plan. The plan is reviewed periodically and updated when necessary. Emergency procedures are practiced with the faculty, staff, and students. The school works closely with local emergency service providers to ensure everyone is prepared for an emergency. The school conducts drills for fire, severe weather events, and armed intruders.
- The school has a check-in procedure for visitors during the school day. Although we encourage parents to visit our campus, please keep in mind check-in procedures apply to all visitors as part of our access control measures. Visitors should use the appropriate entrance and be prepared to state the nature of their visit, sign a guest register, and show picture identification if asked to do so. Our procedures are structured to help ensure the safety of all students and staff. We ask that you set the correct example for others by following them.
- Parents should contact school personnel as quickly as possible if they become aware of a situation that could endanger students or staff members. As a parent, you are a valuable partner in helping us ensure a safe school environment. When you have any safety and security information the school should know, please contact a building administrator, school counselor, or teacher immediately. We will treat all information in an appropriately confidential manner.
- As a district, we have adopted a variety of safety and security policies, including a student code of conduct we enforce fairly and consistently. All students are provided a copy of the student code of conduct in the student handbook, which is also available online at the school's website. Parents are asked to read and review the handbook with their children. In addition, parents are welcome to contact school officials with their questions and concerns about content, implementation, or enforcement of school policies.

- We have procedures in place for disseminating information to parents and the greater community during an emergency. In the case of an emergency in the community, listen to local radio and television stations. This information will also be posted on the district's website and sent electronically via text message to cell phones and email addresses, as provided by the parents. As quickly as possible, we will provide information on how, where, and when parents can pick up their children. In some emergencies, it may not be advisable for you to come to the school. Please remember the safety of your children is foremost in our minds, and you may be required to show identification as an added security measure before your child is released to you. If the school is considered by law enforcement to be a crime scene, students will not be released until the police instruct school officials to do so.

- We use the expertise of a school safety team throughout the school year. Although injuries and disciplinary infractions occur periodically, all necessary precautions are taken to ensure the school environment remains hazard free. Our school safety team includes administrators, the school nurse, a counselor, a custodian, a member of the food service staff, and selected teachers. The team routinely reviews accident reports and discipline violations to determine whether adjustments must be made to supervision policies, the student code of conduct, or the school building. Please contact the school if you believe you have information about a safety hazard.

- Our school uses a number of strategies to help ensure a safe climate. The following is a sample of what we do to help ensure a safe learning environment for students and staff members:

- A nurse and a school counselor are available during the school day.
- Specific procedures for supervision are in place.
- Visitors are required to follow check-in procedures.
- Students and staff members are required to wear identification badges.
- A school resource officer is assigned to the campus.
- Coaches and certain selected staff members have first aid and CPR training.
- Surveillance cameras are placed strategically throughout the campus.
- Volunteers greet students in the morning as they arrive.
- Peer mediation and conflict resolution teams are available to students.
- An antiviolence curriculum is incorporated in lessons throughout the year.
- The discipline code is enforced consistently.
- Custodial staff members routinely check doors and grounds throughout the school day.

CONCLUSION

Remember, parents, students, and the entire school community should be involved in maintaining a safe learning environment. Teachers do not mention an important concept only once and expect every student to internalize and understand it. To truly teach is to repeatedly explain and reinforce what others need to know. Although the conversation about safety may begin at a meeting with parents in September, the topic should be part of the overall message from the school throughout the year.

For most people, it is enough to know the school staff is making every effort to address safety and security concerns, but the community will not be aware of that if it is not communicated clearly and often. Host parent meetings, use the school's website, or provide information through the school newsletter—or do all three. Just keep parents informed.

STRATEGY 10

Closing Out the School Year

Every school leader approaches the month of May and the subsequent end-of-year tasks with mixed feelings of stress and relief.

Although preparations for ensuring a safe ending to the school year are crucial, for many schools the month of May will also be a time for transition from the regular school year into a summer school program or other activities. End-of-year tasks are important, but it is important not to overlook what must be readied for these summer activities as well as beginning the preparation for the next school year.

A number of items should be on a “To Do” list related to school and student safety as the regular school year concludes, including the following:

1. Identify students who planned to graduate but who will not do so because of academic issues or discipline violations that occur at the end of the school year. Staff should be kept informed of these students; not being allowed to participate in graduation ceremonies can be a triggering event for violent or escalating aggressive behavior. Principals, counselors, and parents should maintain dialogue with the student and monitor the student’s mental state. In addition, an effort should be made to ascertain if the student plans to attend the graduation ceremony. When practical, it is recommended pictures of these students be provided at graduation ceremonies to security and other supervisory staff who may not recognize them by sight.

2. Encourage teachers and other staff to remain vigilant for students who exhibit signs of threatening behavior. This directive should come in the form of a written reminder and should be reinforced at end-of-year faculty meetings. Supervision does not end until the last student leaves the campus on the last day of school.

3. Remember that access control is basic and critical to maintaining safety within a school. End-of-year activities will create additional visitors to the campus as well as greater student movement to and from the school. Consequently, access control can be even more frustrating for administrators; vigilance by all must be maintained. Inconvenience to staff or a patron is not a reason to ignore established visitor check-in procedures. If you are expecting an influx of patrons for an end-of-year assembly, make several staff members available at school entrances to issue visitor identification badges.

4. Plan carefully for field trips, school picnics, and senior excursions. During the end of the year, many types of student activities are scheduled. Make certain there are sufficient chaperones when students are taken out of their familiar environments. Students should understand the parameters for exploration, and should be allowed to participate only after parents have given written permission for them to do so. If the length of the school day is shortened, make certain this information is provided in a variety of formats to parents prior to the early dismissal days.

5. Provide adequate security and supervision at such end-of-year functions as proms and graduation ceremonies. It is important to clearly set and communicate expectations to both students and staff. It is also advisable to provide the local law enforcement agency with a listing of the end-of-year activities where large crowds are expected. In many jurisdictions, local law enforcement officers may be instructed to put these events on special patrol.

6. Explore the possibility of using private security for the evening and overnight hours during the last few weeks of school. Many schools experience an increase in vandalism at the end of the school year. In lieu of hiring outside services or to supplement such, consider adjusting custodial work shifts to create an overnight presence on the campus. At a minimum, ask local law enforcement to patrol the campus more frequently as the school year comes to a close.

7. Account for all building and room keys at the end of the school year and collect them from the staff and faculty who will not be returning in the fall. Also collect district identification badges, parking permits, and other items issued to employees. If the school utilizes an intrusion alarm system, make sure that access privileges have been removed for nonreturning staff and faculty.

8. Move mobile electronic equipment from rooms not in use during the summer months to an area of high security during that time period. Valuable items should not be left near windows or exterior doors for extended times when school is not in session. For schools that have intrusion alarm systems, equipment should be placed where alarm coverage is available and practical. An inventory of major equipment should be completed at the beginning and end of the summer months. As part of the "check-out procedure," individual classroom teachers should complete the end-of-year inventory specific to the classroom.

9. Start planning for the next school year in terms of safety and security. Although the school year is coming to an end, it is not too early to begin thinking about safety and security for the next school year. As part of one of the last faculty meetings it is a good idea to spend a

designated amount of time debriefing the staff and compiling a list of the things related to staff and student safety to be done differently during the next school year. Some of the items discussed may require work orders or specific modifications which will need to be completed over the summer months. With the window of opportunity consisting of only a few months, it will be important to plan how these tasks will be accomplished. The summer will also provide the opportunity to address those items from the debriefing list that are procedural in nature, which may require changes in handbooks, directives, or postings and placards.

10. Review the exterior lighting and other environmental issues such as foliage around the school. As foliage increases in size with each passing year, it can begin to create shadowing and negate the value of the intended lighting schemes. At the end of the school year and throughout the summer months, lighting takes on an added significance. Check that all lighting is functioning and is illuminating the intended areas.

11. Review the close of school year issues with staff related to safety and security. Because this task takes time, making a checklist for individuals to follow will help ensure that important items are not forgotten. In addition, assigning specific tasks to department heads, custodial staff, secretarial staff, and teaching staff will serve three purposes. First, it will help with the already full schedule of end-of-year "must do's." Second, it will create ownership because the entire staff is taking part in specific tasks. Third, it will continually reinforce the need to put safety and security at the forefront as the school year concludes.

12. Visitor check-in procedures and other security strategies related to movement of individuals in and out of the building should be continued. While summer school or other activities generally bring with them fewer disciplinary issues, the overall issue of building security is not lessened. Administrators should also make certain summer school students are provided with pertinent information such as student handbooks and codes of conduct, and that they are afforded the opportunity to practice emergency drills.

13. A concerted effort should be made to familiarize summer school staff and students to the specific procedures and practices within the summer school sites. Often, staff and students are assigned to schools that are not their regular assignments. In an emergency, staff and students will respond to the way they have practiced and planned. Therefore, acclimating staff and students to the new environment will be crucial. This procedure should include practicing evacuation and in-place sheltering drills.

PROACTIVE MEASURES

Planning for safety and security is critical in minimizing the chances that an unpleasant or tragic event will occur at the close to the school year or during the summer months. While every day of a school year has the potential to generate a number of safety and security issues, the end of a school year creates unique circumstances that must be considered as part of the cycle of planning and preparation for student and staff safety.