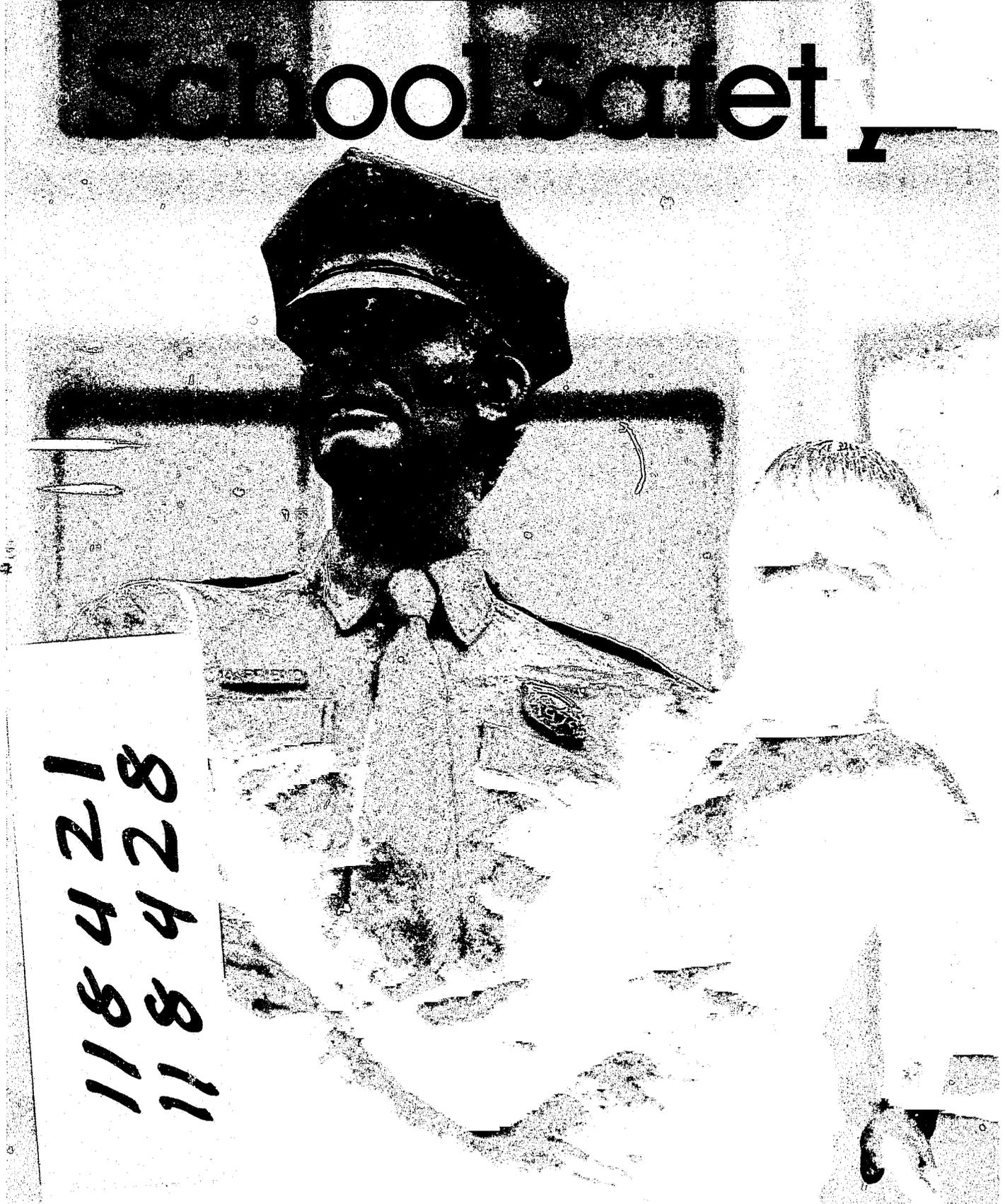


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School Safety



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School Safety

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About the cover:

This statue in front of the Philadelphia Police Administration Building exemplifies the positive relationship needed between law enforcers and youth. Photograph by Greg Lanier.

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 ACQUISITIONS

BY PETER BLAUVELT

As educators and law enforcers learn to integrate their mutual concern and responsibility for providing safe schools, the quality of education will be enhanced.

'I'm an educator, not a cop'

"I'm an educator, not a cop!" Do these words sound familiar? They probably do if you have been in education for the past 15 years or so. Originally, these words were frequently spoken in anger, frustration, and oftentimes despair and seemed to express the sentiments many educators shared as they attempted to learn how to cope with a variety of profound changes that were occurring in the educational community.

It was during the '60s that we first noted a changing social and educational tide. A tide that, for some, came to be a tidal wave that all but destroyed the educator's ability to be effective. Student demonstrations moved from the college campuses to high school corridors. The courts were redefining the traditional role of educator as it impacted the constitutional rights of adolescents. Teacher organizations were becoming militant in their demands for higher pay and safer working conditions. The "traditional" family structure was changing. Parents were becoming more demanding and less supportive of the school principal. The term "accountability" took on a new and more threatening meaning. Taxpayers were no longer willing to support education at

Peter Blauvelt is director of the Department of Security Services for the Prince George County Public Schools, Maryland.

the same level they had in the past. Add to all of this a good dose of student disruptions that include serious criminal acts, and it is little wonder that on more than one occasion a principal was heard to mutter, "I'm an educator, not a cop - darn it!"

This story would have had a simple ending if the law enforcement community had been prepared to effectively assist the educational community in resolving these issues. Unfortunately, law enforcement was no more prepared to deal with these changing times than were their counterparts in education. They too were being rocked back on their heels by this changing tide. Not only were students and young adults demonstrating on college campuses, but they were disrupting traffic on highways, sitting-in at government buildings, disrupting political conventions, and demanding changes in the very fabric of our legal system. Street crime was on the increase. The courts were redefining suspects' rights and established police procedures. Police organizations were also becoming more militant. Overtime pay, sick leave, arbitration, were but a few of the changes occurring in police organizations. The traditional family structure was changing and kids were left without parental supervision. Citizens were becoming more demanding of law enforcement agencies, and taxpayer support of local police was waning.

Sounds familiar, doesn't it? No doubt that when requests started to come in from the educational community for help, more than one police official was heard to mutter under his breath, "I'm a cop, not an educator - darn it!"

It is into this arena that the educator and the cop found themselves pushed. Each one having his or her own agenda for survival but being forced by events, over which they as individuals had little or no control, to establish a relationship which would begin to bring resolution to the issues at hand.

As with most new relationships, particularly those which are forced, there was a period of distrust, suspicion and a general ambivalence among the participants. After all, educators were "fuzzy headed liberals" and cops were "dumb bulls" with little or no education. Fortunately for all, these stereotypes proved false and by the early to mid-1970s we find a number of communities had tried a variety of approaches to combine the talents of both the educational and law enforcement communities to help resolve school disruptions in general, and school crime in particular.

It is about this time, early to mid-1970s, when school security programs had their beginnings. There are some exceptions to this date, in that some school security programs started earlier. For the most part, however, these early programs were designed to respond

only to property offenses such as burglary, vandalism and acts of arson. The newer programs, while still responding to property concerns, had the added responsibility of responding to crimes against persons, which include assaults, robberies, extortion, drug violations and weapons on campus.

This need for controlling crimes against people proved to be the catalyst for many school districts to implement security programs. A variety of approaches were taken. In some districts a contract arrangement was implemented with the local police department whereby officers were assigned to the schools as part of their regular duty assignment. Other districts decided that sworn police officers were not required and opted to contract with a private guard service. Most often this type of service limited the involvement of the security personnel to parking lot duty or fixed posts within a school, such as standing at doors and in corridors. Other districts chose to form their own security departments with both sworn and non-sworn personnel. These staffs were assigned a variety of duties and covered one or more schools. Finally, there were a number of school districts that did nothing, relying on the local law enforcement agency to respond on an as needed basis, without any formal written agreement.

Regardless of the type of approach, changes have occurred. What started out as informal agreements between a school and the local police have, by necessity, become formalized, written agreements, specifying policies and procedures to be followed in governing their relationship. In those districts employing their own security personnel, laws have changed which govern the qualifications, hiring and training of these individuals. For example, in Maryland, all sworn school security officers were classified as special police officers. This classification required a six-week training program. A change in the law eliminated that classification of special police and now all sworn school

security personnel are classified as police officers. They are required to attend a certified police academy for 22 weeks of rigorous training. Additionally, they must successfully complete 18½ hours of inservice training annually.

In keeping with this change in the classification of their security officers, the Baltimore City Board of Education changed the name of their school security department to the Baltimore City School Police Department. (See page 16 for article by Chief Larry Burgan.)

Other changes have occurred which are perhaps less dramatic but nevertheless equally as important in the development of effective school/police relationships. Paramount has been the influence the law enforcement community has had in helping the educational community understand the significant

criminal violation and subject to referral to the police for prosecution.

A less difficult case to call involved five elementary schoolboys who plotted the following event: On the next day of school one of the youngsters was going to bring a gun and he and his four companions were going to "kill the principal, rob the cafeteria manager, steal a van, take a hostage, and have the hostage drive them to a neighboring state." Fortunately, three of the boys thought better of the plan and one of them told his mother who had the good sense to call the school and alert them to the plan. The next morning one of the youths was met at the front door and, based upon "reasonable suspicion," his book bag was searched revealing a .357 magnum revolver with 38 rounds of ammunition. It should be

In those districts employing their own security personnel, laws have changed which govern the qualifications, hiring and training of these individuals. For example, in Maryland, all sworn school security officers were classified as special police officers.

difference between a violation of a school rule and the violation of a criminal law. This has not been without strong resistance on the part of some school administrators. For years, principals have handled all types of unwanted and unacceptable behavior. Now, someone comes along and tells them that if the event is a violation of a criminal statute they must report the incident to the police. The classic example of this involves two youths who engage in the "traditional" school-boy fight. If both youngsters enter into the event willingly, then the resulting altercation is deemed a "fight" and handled administratively without referral to the police. If, on the other hand, one of the combatants is not a voluntary participant and is, in fact, engaged against his will, then the ensuing altercation is an "assault and battery," a

noted that when the father of this youth was notified his son had been arrested and transported to the police station, the father had two questions: 1) What right did the school have to search his 11-year-old son? and 2) When was he going to get his gun back? Needless to say, the school principal had no difficulty in identifying this event as one that needed to be reported to the police.

Not to be overly critical of school administrators, it must be noted that there are times when attempts to report crimes to the police are met with less than total enthusiasm and support. Most often this reluctance occurs when the crime that is being reported is a minor misdemeanor, such as theft of personal property (i.e. under \$100 in value) or a small quantity drug case. The issue becomes one of priorities. The police department has limited personnel that

can be assigned to deal with these minor types of offenses. While they are not minor to a school principal, they are, in fact, of limited importance to the police.

This is not to imply that police departments are insensitive to the needs of schools. It is only mentioned to increase our awareness of the constraints most law enforcement agencies face.

Of great interest to both the educational community as well as the law enforcement community has been the development of some rather sophisticated incident reporting systems. These systems not only capture security incident data but discipline data as well. One such system, called "Incident Profiling," was originally developed by the National Alliance for Safe Schools (NASS). The system was refined and implemented in selected school districts through a program jointly funded by the National Institute of Justice and the U.S. Department of Education.

In its simplest form, incident profiling provides a school principal with a tool for managing unwanted behavior. Specifically, report forms are developed for the reporting of security incidents. Information contained in the report includes type of offense, date of occurrence, class period, location within the school, and a brief description of what took place.

These reports are filed by *type of incident* rather than by student name. For example, all assaults are filed together, all locker thefts, all trespassers, etc. After a number of events have occurred, these reports are sorted by day of week, class period and location within the school. It becomes readily obvious where principals need to place their administrators in order to prevent further occurrences.

NASS, through NIJ's project, "Safer Schools - Better Students" and with the help of numerous dedicated school administrators, took incident profiling the next step which was to also plot and record discipline problems. Now, not only is a school able to keep an accu-

rate record of security incidents, but more importantly, it is able to track discipline problems. Of major importance is that, perhaps for the first time, school administrators have a management tool that allows them to analyze not only the incident itself, but who the referring teacher was and what action the administrator took in resolving the problem. Truly a powerful tool.

The "Safer Schools - Better Students" project has several other very important components associated with it. First, when a school district becomes involved in the project a *security audit* is performed. This audit includes an analysis of security data, interviews with educators, board of education members, police officials, teacher organizations, parent groups, employee organizations, the legal community (including the courts) and other interested groups. It is most important to fully understand not only what has happened or what is happening but the *perceptions* involved. Based upon the findings of this audit, a plan of action is developed which will have a training component for administrators, teachers, students and parents; a review of existing policies and procedures; and the development of a *Memorandum of Understanding* with law enforcement, the prosecutor's office and the courts.

The underlying impetus of incident profiling is the simple belief that through accurate and timely information, analysis can occur; analysis which will lead to prevention strategies and ultimately to control. It has always been my personal belief that educators be *the controller of events rather than be controlled by events*.

If we have learned anything with regard to controlling school crime and violence it most assuredly has been that neither the educational community nor the law enforcement community can do it alone. We need each other. For the truth is that in every good educator there's a little bit of cop and in every good cop there's a little bit of educator. And darn it, that's not bad. □

School Discipline Notebook

Published by the
National School Safety Center



The School Discipline Notebook will help educators establish fair and effective discipline. It reviews student responsibilities and rights, including the right to safe schools. The correlation between orderly, disciplined schools and safe productive schools is examined. Legal policies which regulate discipline methods used in schools are also reviewed.

In addition, suggestions are offered for the many practical tasks required by educators, including preparing discipline codes, defining and tracking infractions and disciplining special education students. A comprehensive resource section suggests publications, films and policies providing further assistance with school discipline.

The School Discipline Notebook is made available - without charge - through a grant from the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Order now while supply lasts. Write:

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