School Safety Programs

"As long as one teacher is assaulted, one classroom disrupted, or one student is attacked, then I must and will speak out to give you the support you need to enforce discipline in our schools. I can't say it too forcefully: to get learning back into our schools, we must get crime and violence out."

The Problem

Schools play a key role in the lives of young people—generally as a source of learning, but also as a socializing influence and environment for forming the young generation. In recent years, however, our schools have all too often undergone a downturn in the neighborhood. In turn, crime in the schools is becoming more of a serious problem. In its January 1985 issue, the National School Safety Center, a program of the National Institute of Justice, pointed to the need for schools to address the problem of violence. The center highlighted the need for schools to provide a safe and secure environment for students, teachers, and staff. The National School Safety Center

in answering the survey over school crime and disruption, President Reagan directed the United States Department of Justice and Education to form the National School Safety Center (NSSC) in 1984. Funded by a two-year grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Center began operations on June 1, 1985, with headquarters in Sacramento, California. It is patterned after the California School Safety Council, founded in 1980 by Governor George Deukmejian, at that time California’s State attorney general. The Center is interested in several specific areas: Law Enforcement, Education, Legal, Research, and Communication. Collectively, these areas provide a comprehensive approach to the school safety issue. The goal of NSSC is to act as an analysis which brings together the Nation’s resources to examine our schools as a safe place for learning. Specifically, NSSC promotes an exchange of information related to school crime and violence prevention through a wide array of resources. The Center uses its extensive national educational, legal, criminal justice network, and its experienced professional staff to:

- Promote intermediary cooperation and replication of exemplary school safety techniques and programs.
- Expand existing resources in school safety and develop new strategies and programs to promote appropriate U.S. development for law enforcement and other criminal justice personnel.
- Improve statistics is school safety issues, including organizational management, law in the school, child abuse reporting, and pre-service education curriculum development.
- Assert schools in developing techniques to involve business, criminal justice, and community leaders in school safety and delinquency prevention.
- Collect and disseminate information on school safety and delinquency prevention, criminal law, rules, and procedures in Federal, State and local jurisdictions.

In addition, NSSC is responsible for compiling nationwide information on school safety and delinquency techniques and exemplary programs, tracking legislative trends, and developing local school safety resources for a comprehensive library system, and launching a national public service advertising campaign.

A major emphasis of the National School Safety Center is the identification and promotion of successful programs that creatively produce innovative joint efforts among educators, law enforcers, and other personnel serving professionals. With their cooperative framework, these programs offer professionals in collaboration among themselves and with students, parents, community leaders, and others to improve the campus environment and promote school safety. The programs mentioned below are representative of the many initiatives developing throughout the country.

Students’ safe school programs

In response to the President’s educational goals of discipline, safety, order and a safe, secure, and peaceful environment, the National School Safety Center identified those school-based efforts that were truly effective in reducing violence in schools. The results of this research effort that the President’s goal of reducing violence in schools is achievable and that these efforts have been successful. The study identified efforts that were effective in reducing violence in schools and recommended strategies for implementing these efforts on a larger scale.

For additional information, contact:
National Institute of Justice
633 Indiana Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20531
202-514-6000

Office of Educational Research and Improvement
U.S. Department of Education
1201 Nineteenth Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20202
202-708-8113

The problem of American education can be both understood and corrected if people and their public officials care enough and are courageous enough to do what is required.
In San Joaquin County, California, the District Attorney’s Office has assigned a deputy district attorney to serve on both city and county School Attendance Review Boards (SARBs). These SARBs address, consisting of representatives from schools, juvenile justice and welfare departments, police agencies, district attorney’s office, parent’s groups, private youth-serving organizations, and mental health agencies, meet regularly to consider individual cases of truant students. The District Attorney’s Office plays a crucial role on these boards by providing a legal enforcement perspective. If a truancy problem is not corrected through the SARB hearing, the D.A.’s office can issue a citation in both the person and student for violating compulsory attendance laws.

In New York City the Federal Bureau of Cyncn and the New York Alliance for Public Schools’Oom a “n.n. program. Major law firms are paired with public schools to initiate law-related activities. Events such as field trips to courtrooms, law firms, and courtroom tours for students in the “adopted” schools are provided to educate participants about the impact of law on the daily lives, the rights and responsibilities of citizens, the legal system of the United States, and careers in and related to the legal profession.

Youth School Watch: Miami, Florida

In the early 1980’s, the Dade County, Florida, School Board responded to an increase in school crime by directing all primary and secondary schools to develop a crime watch program. Each school selected a special program and then designed its own response. By the 1983–84 school year, Youth School Watch programs had been formed in all 77 of the district’s secondary schools and in 60 of its 176 elementary schools. The program has ultimately produced a significant decline in vandalism rates and graffiti.

As many of the school programs developed, the Highland Oaks Elementary School produced an especially detailed plan. The principal recognized a need for additional law enforcement assistance and, in cooperation with the PTA, solicited both the County Sheriff and Police Departments for assistance in developing a school safety program. The Highland Oaks Youth School Watch program integrates law enforcement and students into a positive crime prevention program that includes safety and registration, a fingerprinting campaign, care and protective safety instruction, and deputizing all students to encourage the reporting of suspicious activity by school officials and parents. The principal attributes the success of the program to the excellent response and involvement of local law enforcement combined with the commitment of the PTA members and the community.

Further information about the Highland Oaks program can be reached by writing to:
Ms. Virginia Bouse, Principal Highland Oaks Elementary School 23000 Northside Drive North Miami Beach, FL 33181

TIPS: Charlottesville and Albemarle, Virginia

In 1976, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) combined resources to fund pilot projects to develop a crime awareness curriculum in the State of Virginia. TIPS (Teaching Individuals Preventive Strategies; Teaching Individuals Positive Solutions) was implemented in two school districts, one urban (Charlottesville) and the other rural (Albemarle).

Curriculum research and design were initiated in late 1976, and in 1978 the TIPS-K curriculum component was developed. A specific behavior objective and implementing positive student attitudes and behaviors, and promoting student responsibility toward ensuring the safety and welfare of self and others. Grade-specific instruction was planned, including classroom discussion and workbook activities, identifying behavioral issues and helping students achieve program goals.

TIPS has positively affected students’ knowledge, attitudes and behaviors toward crime. In 1982, after an extensive evaluation, the Department of Education’s Joint Dissemination Review awarded national validation status to the TIPS program. Since then, Primary schools and the Johnson Schools, school district, have adopted the TIPS curriculum and the Virginia School TIPS Office has begun statewide utilization in every State and several foreign countries.

For further information on the TIPS program, contact:
Mr. Lowell Dumont, Project Director TIPS Program Jefferson Building 4th Street NW
Charlottesville, VA 22901

Social Development of Youth: Seattle, Washington

With the assistance of a grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the University of Washington, the Seattle city school system, and the Seattle Police Department collaborated in designing the Social Development of Youth Project. Program to increase student learning and simultaneously decrease classroom discipline problems, the program focuses on involving the home and the community in improving learning techniques and the learning process.

Approximately 250 first graders and 550 seventh graders in 11 Seattle schools participated in the project’s first year (1981). The instructors were trained to utilize the following teaching techniques:

- Establish clear classroom routines.
- Prevent minor classroom disruptions from interrupting instruction.
- Present lesson objectives to all students.
- Verify community that all students understand the lessons.
- Teach students how to answer the boxes and help each other.
- Use student work teams to teach young students how to learn and compete in a positive manner.

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In 1982, educators listed their most serious discipline problems in schools as rage, robbery, burglary and arson, murder, extortion and gang warfare.

California State Attorney John Yao de Komp, School/Law Enforcement Partnership Conference, Fresno, CA April 22, 1985

Taking Charge: Mesa, Arizona
Taking Charge, a program designed to keep young people in school, was started in the Mesa Public School District in response to the triannually consequent school of a strict drug policy; as the number of students suspended for drug-related reasons increased, so did the number of youth who never returned to school. Community members, educators, and guidance counselors, concerned about the growing dropout rate, proposed an approach to the school board for retaining suspended drug offenders in school.

The Taking Charge program, which is initiated when a student receives a mandatory summary suspension for possessing, using, buying, or selling drugs at school grounds, gives the student the opportunity of enrolling in full or partial year participating in the program while remaining in school. Students who elect to enroll in the program have the opportunity of enrolling in the program while remaining in school.

Students who elect to enroll in the program will be given the opportunity of continuing in the program without losing their place in the program.

Statewide partnership: California
An exceptional school safety model representing a "partnership" between education and law enforcement at the State level was implemented in California in 1983. Led by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the School Environment Task Force was formed to promote interagency communication and cooperation in producing a comprehensive school crime and discipline intervention plan. Representatives from the State Department of Education's School Climate Unit, the California School Safety Center, California Youth Authority, and the Governor's Office of Criminal Justice Planning participated on the Task Force which continues to operate today.

Building on this foundation, the California School Safety Center and the School Climate Unit have provided joint-training and school safety training to education and law enforcement personnel statewide. This statewide partnership received its strongest support from the citizens of California when it was added in 1983 to add Article 1, Section 21 of the California Constitution. This amendment and self-exercising provision mandates the right to safe schools, stating "All students and staff of primary, elementary, junior high and senior high schools have the inalienable right to attend schools which are safe, secure, and peaceful."

Request for information
Although the specific targets and methods of operation of these exemplary programs are diverse, each one makes the widely held belief that elimination alone cannot solve the problem of school discipline and violence—a common understanding the concern of interagency cooperation is the key to halting this evil crime. The National School Safety Center is committed to the development of guidelines and supporting new programs that contribute to safe schools and the protection of successful efforts. If your community has a program that it would like us to examine, it

youth would like assistance in starting a program, contact:
The National School Safety Center
7311 Greenwave Drive
Sacramento, CA 95831
916-427-6620

Publications of the National School Safety Center
The Rightful Safety Schools: A Methodology by B. A. Sawyer


School Safety and Schools of Safe Center New Journal.


For further information or copies of these publications, contact the National School Safety Center, 7311 Greenwave Drive, Sacramento, CA 95831.

Suggested Readings

Bibliographic Resources

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