Sustaining Safe Schools

High profile acts of violence, particularly in schools, can confuse and frighten us all, especially those attending school. They may feel in danger or worry that their friends, siblings and/or themselves are at risk. They may look to school staff and parents for information and guidance on how to react. Parents and school personnel can help kids feel safe by establishing a sense of normalcy and security and by talking with them about their fears, rational or not.

Overall, schools are safe places. School districts and school staff work diligently with parents, law enforcement, fire departments and other emergency responders to keep those in the school safe. Schools work very hard to prevent school violence of any kind whether that be verbal and physical fights, bullying incidents or school shooter occurrences.

Students, staff, and parents all have an important role in promoting school safety. Adults can provide leadership by reassuring students that schools are generally very safe places for kids and reiterating what safety measures and student supports are already in place in their schools.

Fostering Safety

Schools can promote a safe, supportive school climate through school-wide behavioral expectations, caring school climate programs, positive interventions and supports, and access to mental and emotional therapeutic services.

Emphasize the efforts of the school to teach students alternatives to violence including peaceful conflict resolution and positive interpersonal relationship skills using social, emotional, learning programs such as Second Step.

Highlight violence prevention programs, such as your bully and suicide prevention curriculums, courses and lesson plans currently being taught in school.

Give students a voice by encouraging students to take an active role in maintaining a safe school environment, including student participation in safety planning and action plans.

Review on an ongoing basis, the school policies/rules with school staff and students. Furthermore, encourage students to report potential problems to school officials. Schools can also create anonymous student tip-lines or suggestion boxes to help reporting students feel at ease knowing they will remain anonymous and won't be singled out.

Control access to the school building, especially during school hours. Having a designated entrance with all other access points locked from the exterior will also help strengthen school

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check-in procedures for visitors. Whenever possible be visible by greeting and welcoming all visitors.

Monitor school common areas and hallways as well as parking lots, play grounds and playing/practice fields. Establish the presence of security cameras, security and/or resource officers, and local police departments.

Develop crisis plans and provide preparedness training to all school staff. Also, develop and practice school-preparedness drills with students (intruder alerts, weather, fire, lockdown and evacuation).

Conduct an annual review of all school safety policies and procedures to ensure that emerging school safety issues are adequately covered in current school crisis plans and emergency response procedures.

Develop threat-assessment and risk-assessment procedures and teams for conducting the assessments.

References:
https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/school-violence-prevention

https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/schoolviolence/prevention.html