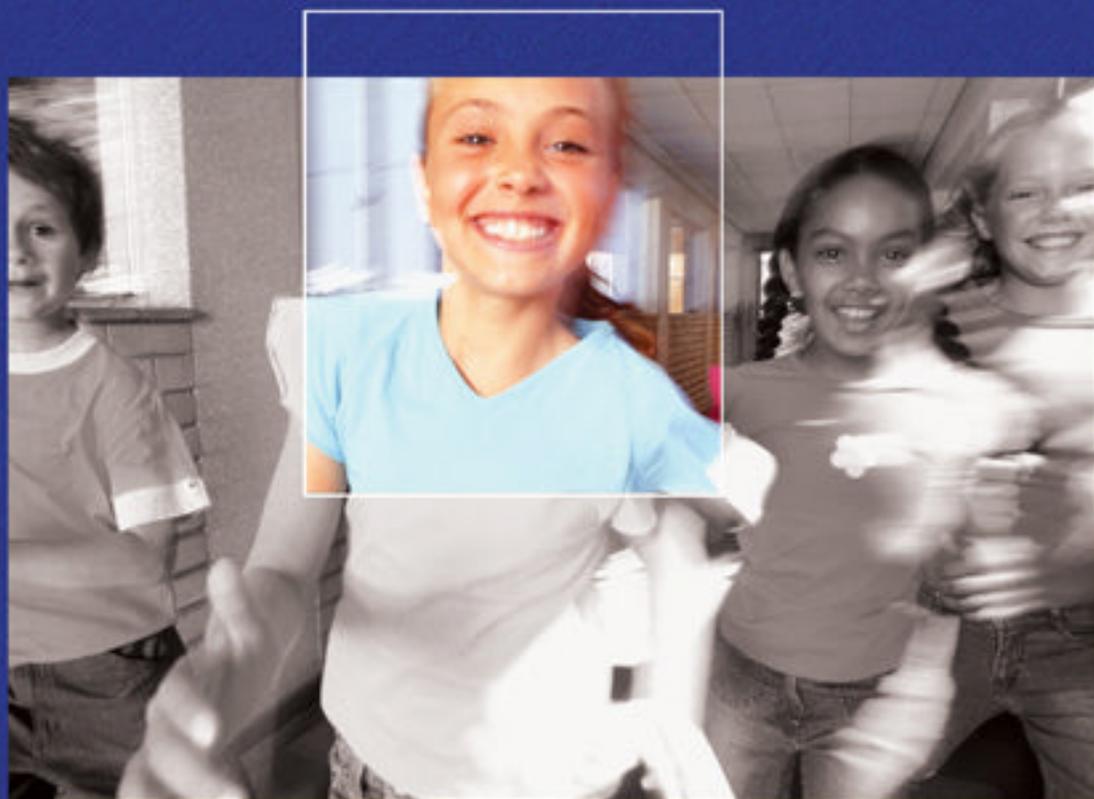


# Safe & Secure SCHOOLS

27 Strategies for Prevention and Intervention



Judy M. Brunner  
Dennis K. Lewis

A Joint Publication



Safe & Secure  
**SCHOOLS**



# Safe & Secure **SCHOOLS**

**27 Strategies for Prevention and Intervention**

Judy M. Brunner  
Dennis K. Lewis

A Joint Publication



Copyright © 2009 by Corwin Press

All rights reserved. When forms and sample documents are included, their use is authorized only by educators, local school sites, and/or noncommercial or nonprofit entities that have purchased the book. Except for that usage, no part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

---

*For information:*



Corwin Press  
A SAGE Company  
2455 Teller Road  
Thousand Oaks, California 91320  
www.corwinpress.com

SAGE India Pvt. Ltd.  
B 1/I 1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area  
Mathura Road, New Delhi 110 044  
India

SAGE Ltd.  
1 Oliver's Yard  
55 City Road  
London EC1Y 1SP  
United Kingdom

SAGE Asia-Pacific Pte. Ltd.  
33 Pekin Street #02-01  
Far East Square  
Singapore 048763

Printed in the United States of America.

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Brunner, Judy M.

Safe & secure schools : 27 strategies for prevention and intervention / Judy M. Brunner,  
Dennis K. Lewis.

p. cm.

"A joint publication with the American Association of School Administrators (AASA)."

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4129-6298-8 (cloth)

ISBN 978-1-4129-6299-5 (pbk.)

1. Schools—Safety measures—Handbooks, manuals, etc. 2. Schools—Security  
measures—Handbooks, manuals, etc. I. Lewis, Dennis K. II. Title.

LB2864.5.B78 2009

363.11'9371—dc22

2008017909

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

08 09 10 11 12 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

---

*Acquisitions Editor:* Hudson Perigo  
*Editorial Assistant:* Lesley K. Blake  
*Production Editor:* Libby Larson  
*Copy Editor:* Alison Hope  
*Typesetter:* C&M Digitals (P) Ltd.  
*Proofreader:* Dorothy Hoffman  
*Indexer:* Sylvia Coates  
*Cover Designer:* Lisa Miller  
*Graphic Designer:* Karine Hovsepian

---

# Contents

<b>Foreword</b>	vii
<i>Dr. Gerald Tirozzi</i>	
<b>Acknowledgments</b>	ix
<b>About the Authors</b>	xi
<b>Introduction</b>	1
<b>1. Planning</b>	
Strategy 1 Starting the School Year: A Checklist for Safety and Security	6
Strategy 2 The Principal's Homework: What Does Your Teacher Handbook Say About Safety and Security?	9
Strategy 3 Strategic Supervision: The Foundation for School Safety	13
Strategy 4 A Safety Game Plan for Cocurricular Events	17
Strategy 5 On the Road Again: Discipline Investigations Away From School	20
Strategy 6 Visitor Check-in and Screening Procedures: It's More Than Just Signing the Visitor Log	23
Strategy 7 Ensuring the Safe Evacuation of Students With Physical Disabilities During an Emergency	26
Strategy 8 Invest in a Safety Committee: Creating Strategies You Can Bank On	30
Strategy 9 Speaking of School Safety: Creating a Conversation Within the School Community	33
Strategy 10 Closing Out the School Year	37
<b>2. Response Strategies</b>	
Strategy 11 Planning for School Emergencies: Part 1	42
Strategy 12 Planning for School Emergencies: Part 2	46

Strategy 13	Assessing Student Threats of Violence: A School’s Response to a Growing Problem	50
Strategy 14	De-escalating a Situation With an Angry Parent: You’ll Never Have to Answer for What You Don’t Say	54
Strategy 15	Fights at School: Breaking Up Is Hard to Do	58
Strategy 16	Head ‘Em Up! Move ‘Em Out!: Relocating Students During an Emergency Event	62
Strategy 17	Student Searches: A Practical Application	65
Strategy 18	Managing Electronic Devices: Sending the Right “Signals” to Parents and Students	69
Strategy 19	Full-Court Press: A Media Management Plan	72
<b>3.</b>	<b>Professional Development</b>	
Strategy 20	Is Your School Up to Speed on Safety?	76
Strategy 21	What Teachers Must Know About Safety	79
Strategy 22	Training Support Staff to Respond Appropriately	82
Strategy 23	Intimidation, Harassment, and Bullying: Fear Factors in the Twenty-First-Century School	85
Strategy 24	Holiday Blues: Responding to Seasonally Despondent Students	89
Strategy 25	Tabletop Exercises: The Ultimate Tool for School Safety Training	92
Strategy 26	There’s No “Substitute” for Good Safety	95
<b>4.</b>	<b>Top Ten</b>	
Strategy 27	School Safety’s Top Ten: The Top Ten Things to Remember When Creating a Safe School Environment	100
	<b>Resources</b>	105
	<b>Bibliography</b>	113
	<b>Index</b>	115

---

# Foreword

Nothing makes headlines more quickly than a school shooting. Such an event violates an iconic safe haven and prompts parents in every community to wonder, “Could it happen here?” Suddenly popular media outlets are activated, archived Columbine footage is flashed across TV screens, and school safety consultants are answering insistent questions: “Are schools safe? Are we investing enough in security personnel and equipment? Or—gasp—do we need a national policy?”

“These kinds of situations are just like terrorist situations,” National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) Specialist for School Safety Bill Bond said on the occasion of one school shooting. “When people have so much hate in them that they don’t mind dying, you don’t have any deterrents left. People want to have metal detectors and security guards and all of this, but the real thing that makes a difference is working with the kids and adjusting to the kids” (personal communication, October 12, 2005).

Bond’s comments strike a stark contrast between how school safety is considered by the general public and by school leaders. For school leaders, safety isn’t just about preventing a tragic event: It’s about maintaining a personalized environment in which every student is known and feels valued. It’s about providing opportunities for every student to be successful. It’s about modeling and fostering a pervasive attitude—on the part of every adult and student in the school—that threatening and belittling behaviors have no place in any school.

Not surprisingly, the conditions that mitigate school violence are the same conditions that promote high academic achievement. *Breaking Ranks II* and *Breaking Ranks in the Middle* (NASSP 2004, 2006), NASSP’s handbooks on reform in high schools and middle schools, respectively, call for a school culture centered around personalization because, to quote educational reformer Ted Sizer (1999), “We cannot teach students well if we do not know them well” (p. 6). And knowing every student well encourages educators to work through their frustrations so that, even if those frustrations have not been resolved, at least they have been aired constructively.

From 2004 to 2007, members of the NASSP were regularly reminded of these themes in the “Safety Tips for Principals” column in *Principal Leadership* magazine. To their credit, column authors Dennis Lewis and Judy Brunner address the spectrum of safety issues—from the day-to-day behaviors that foster a positive climate, to warning signs of violence, to the specifics of crisis preparedness and response.

I commend Dennis and Judy on their work to ensure safe environments in schools and further commend them for taking their guidance to a broader audience. While the principal can provide leadership, it is only with a cooperative effort on the part of all with a stake in school success that educators can create truly personalized environments and can anticipate a day when news of a school shooting no longer hits the headlines.

Dr. Gerald Tirozzi, Executive Director  
*National Association of Secondary School Principals*

---

# *Acknowledgments*

Since the conception in 1999 of Edu-Safe LLC, a school safety consulting firm, several individuals and organizations have made significant contributions to the growth of our business, as well as to our own professional development. We are very grateful to them for allowing us the opportunity to submit articles for publication, present papers at conferences, and provide staff development to education professionals across the United States.

Three individuals that have been especially helpful are Jan Umphrey, editor of NASSP's *Principal Leadership*; Jim King, executive director of Missouri Association of Secondary School Principals; and Elizabeth Brenkus, former acquisitions editor for Corwin Press. Jan was the first to give us a national forum for our ideas and suggestions related to school safety and security through the column "Safety Tips for Principals." Jim was always willing to provide ideas and suggestions for statewide professional opportunities, and Lizzie was never too busy to provide guidance and encouragement at times when we needed it most. We are very grateful for her professional demeanor, smiling face, and positive attitude.

We are also grateful to the following professional organizations:

National Association of Secondary School Principals

National Association of School Safety and Law Enforcement Officers

American Association of School Administrators

Missouri Association of Secondary School Principals

Springfield Missouri Public Schools

Last, but not least, we wish to thank our families and friends for being patient when our professional obligations and responsibilities took time, effort, and perseverance.



---

# *About the Authors*

**Judy M. Brunner** and **Dennis K. Lewis** are authors and consultants on a variety of topics related to school safety and security. They are cofounders of Edu-Safe LLC ([www.edu-safe.org](http://www.edu-safe.org)), a school safety and advisory organization providing professional development and resources to school personnel across the United States.



**Ms. Brunner** is a former high school, middle school, and elementary school principal, and is currently an adjunct instructor at Missouri State University. She is a nationally recognized authority and speaker on the topics of school safety and security, and prevention of bullying behaviors. She provides technical and training assistance for a number of state and national organizations.



**Mr. Lewis** is the past president and chairman of the Board of the National Association of School Safety and Law Enforcement Officers, and is a nationally recognized authority and speaker on the topics of school safety, site risk assessments, and bullying prevention. He is the former director of school police for the Springfield, Missouri Public Schools and provides technical and training assistance for a number of state and national organizations.

Judy Brunner and Dennis Lewis can be reached at [edusafe@edu-safe.org](mailto:edusafe@edu-safe.org).



---

# *Introduction*

Schools of the twenty-first century are expected to provide a level of security unprecedented in the history of education. With a backdrop of increasingly prevalent violent behavior in society that has spilled over into schools, there is often a clash between the need to secure campuses and the desire to maintain an open and welcoming environment. As schools have responded with a myriad of strategies designed to strengthen security in and around campuses, some individuals call for more drastic measures, claiming not enough is being done, while others say schools have already gone too far.

While academic achievement should always be the primary focus of all who work in the school, great school leaders recognize that for this to be accomplished, a number of support columns must be in place. School safety is one of the columns supporting this mission; its removal or damage can have negative and even devastating consequences on academic achievement.

Although acts of school violence resulting in loss of life are still rare, students, staff, and parents are well aware of the headlines. These headlines can erode the confidence of parents hundreds of miles away from a specific event. In the aftermath of any school tragedy, school personnel self-evaluate and consider whether or not they have done enough to prevent such an occurrence on their own campus.

Safe school planning must merge two important concepts if it is to truly make a difference. First, a physical environment must be created that is reasonably safe. Second, the environment must be perceived as safe by the entire school community. Both concepts are challenging but equally important. Planning should not only address concrete items such as locks, doors, windows, parking lots, and lighting, but should also include strategies on how to promote these to the school community, while giving everyone ownership in the process.

## THE GOAL OF THIS BOOK

The strategies in this book were originally written as columns for the NASSP's *Principal Leadership*. They have been edited to appeal to a wider audience, as well as to reflect the most up-to-date best practices. It is our intent to provide you, the reader, with the knowledge and tools to create and enhance a safe learning environment for students, staff, and the patrons who periodically visit your campus. We have attempted to do so by

- providing tips and strategies that have minimal or no associated cost;
- using strategies that blend with the educational atmosphere of most schools and are acceptable to most school communities;
- structuring the suggestions so implementation can be accomplished without major time commitments, while keeping the focus on academic achievement; and
- recommending methods of enhancing school safety we believe can make a difference in preventing or minimizing the opportunity for a tragedy to occur, facilitating a better response should such an event happen, and allowing a school to recover and return to normalcy in the aftermath of such an event.

*Safe & Secure Schools: 27 Strategies for Prevention and Intervention* provides a foundation for safe school planning. While not intended to address every security issue or problem faced by schools in the twenty-first century, the strategies provided in this book, when incorporated with systematic planning, ongoing discussion, and a review process, can make a positive difference.

## WHO THIS BOOK IS FOR

While the primary audience for this book is the school administrator, there are a number of other individuals that can benefit from the content. In fact, following the concept promoted by the authors that it is critical to make everyone in a school building “participatory to the process,” all staff members should read it. There are some groups and individuals that should be targeted specifically: Safety coordinators or individuals who, by job classification, have a specific responsibility for developing, planning, and implementing safe school strategies will find the book a valuable resource. Staff contemplating a future career move into administration will find the contents thought provoking. And, for schools that use safety committees, ad hoc groups, or other teams of individuals (such as counselors, school social workers, and lead teachers) to help guide safe school planning, the strategies and concepts contained in the following chapters will provide a starting point for discussion toward mapping out a course of

action. Regardless of the audience, there is something for everyone with a vested interest in enhancing school safety.

## **WHAT THIS BOOK IS NOT**

Without belaboring the point, this book is not a cure or magic pill that will somehow fix or prevent the negative events that occasionally happen at school. Utilizing some or all of the strategies contained within is much like taking a daily aspirin to help prevent a heart attack. Bad events may still occur, but great leaders using the right medicine and following the prescription label help to minimize the opportunity.

## **HOW THIS BOOK IS ORGANIZED**

The book is divided into four sections—planning, response strategies, professional development, and our recommended top ten strategies. While each chapter is related to these broad topics, some sections could easily be placed into more than one category. It was our intent to offer practical and cost-effective suggestions that principals could read “on the run.” It is our hope this goal has been accomplished.

The final section of the book is titled, “Top Ten School Safety Strategies.” Of all the ideas suggested within this text, we consider these to be the most important.



1

---

*Planning*

## STRATEGY 1

### Starting the School Year

#### *A Checklist for Safety and Security*

**C**reating 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