

KEEPING TENNESSEE SCHOOLS SAFE



September 2009



STATE OF TENNESSEE

COMPTROLLER OF THE TREASURY

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Comptroller

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September 14, 2009

The Honorable Ron Ramsey
Speaker of the Senate
The Honorable Kent Williams
Speaker of the House of Representatives
and
Members of the General Assembly
State Capitol
Nashville, Tennessee 37243

Ladies and Gentlemen:

In 2008, a tragic, fatal shooting at a Tennessee high school prompted a legislative request for the Comptroller's Offices of Research and Education Accountability (OREA) to examine and evaluate what Tennessee is doing to ensure that its schools are safe. For this report, OREA compared state-level laws, policies, and requirements against accepted best practices for keeping schools safe from violence. The report also includes background on measures of school violence and Tennessee laws and programs promoting school safety. This report provides information that may be useful to policymakers in ongoing efforts to ensure the safety of Tennessee's elementary and secondary schools.

Sincerely,

Justin P. Wilson
Comptroller of the Treasury

KEEPING TENNESSEE SCHOOLS SAFE



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2008, a tragic, fatal shooting at a Tennessee high school prompted a legislative request for the Comptroller's Offices of Research and Education Accountability (OREA) to examine and evaluate what Tennessee is doing to ensure that its schools are safe. This report reviews state-level laws, policies, and requirements, and compares them with accepted best practices for keeping schools safe from violence.

Tennessee has made significant progress since the mid-1990s toward ensuring the safety of its students and school personnel. The Tennessee Department of Education's (TDOE) School Safety Center provides technical assistance, training, and grants to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and schools to assist in creating individual school comprehensive safety programs. The Schools Against Violence in Education (SAVE) Act of 2007 establishes state-level comprehensive planning and accountability requirements to ensure that LEAs are addressing school safety and violence prevention efforts.

The SAVE Act includes specific requirements for emergency response plans, violence prevention training, and data collection to assess school safety. The Act also incorporates other state requirements toward addressing school violence, such as written codes of conduct and discipline, prohibition of guns and drugs, character education, and conflict resolution programs.

Conclusions

Tennessee's statewide statutes, policies, and requirements for violence prevention and intervention are comprehensive, and address most of the identified best practices for safe and secure learning environments. The General Assembly's passage of the 2007 SAVE Act marked a significant milestone in Tennessee's ongoing

efforts to assess and improve school safety. The SAVE Act incorporated many of the state's existing laws and policies within a new planning and accountability system to form a single, comprehensive school safety framework. Many of the SAVE Act's planning and accountability requirements align with best practices for ensuring safer schools.

The SAVE Act is in the early stages of implementation, however, and its ultimate success will require TDOE officials to:

1. Ensure that districts and schools have sufficiently funded and implemented the policies and requirements,
2. Monitor trends in violent incidents and school climate, and
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of programs and policies.

Staff and funding to implement the requirements of the SAVE Act are limited and decreasing. A TDOE staff position that was funded to assist in implementing the SAVE Act was eliminated as part of the state government budget reductions in August 2008. State and federal designated funding for violence prevention has also decreased from \$12.1 million in 2004 to \$9.7 million in 2008. Proposals to further reduce both federal and state funds for school safety for FY 2009-10 are pending, as of August 2009.

Current Tennessee data on school violence is limited, but measurement is improving. The absence of this data impedes the state's ability to guide its safety policies and programs. TDOE is expanding its data collection to provide better and more precise measures of incidents of school violence. The federal government requires states to define and identify "persistently dangerous schools" (PDS). No Tennessee school has ever

met the state’s criteria for this classification, which may raise questions about data reporting and how the state defines a PDS, or it may speak to state and local efforts to maintain safe school environments. Because few schools nationwide meet their PDS criteria, some researchers argue that states have set the criteria too high and schools commonly underreport violent incidents.

Schools are required to collect community data and conduct school climate assessments as they develop school-level safety plans and violence prevention programs. However, the climate assessments are not standardized, and TDOE does not plan to use the information to monitor school safety issues across the state over time.

State level guidance related to school building security is lacking. School building security includes school resource officers, metal detectors, video surveillance systems, and random searches. Best practices indicate a need for schools to ensure that their buildings are secure and allow for easy supervision of students. Although required in the SAVE Act, the state level safety team did not include policies and procedures relating to building security in its LEA self-assessment framework. A 2009 framework revision requires districts to report on school security strategies and procedures in place, but does not require assessment of their appropriateness or effectiveness.

Many school administrators have directed substantial funds toward ensuring the security of their schools. Although it is intuitive that such efforts enhance building security, OREA analysts found little research evaluating security measures as a means to deter or prevent violent incidents. Schools need additional guidance and tools to determine the appropriate balance between security and prevention methods to most effectively address the potential for violent incidents in their particular circumstances.

Policy Considerations

Policy considerations for this issue might include how best to allocate the limited and decreasing designated state funds for school safety. Possible options include:

- Continuing small grants to all school districts,
- Targeting grants to specific purposes,
- Targeting grants to districts and schools with greater needs, or
- Requiring a more comprehensive planning and fund allocation process.

A policy option that would allow a statewide assessment of overall safety in schools over time requires, at a minimum:

- Development of basic measures of school climate by the Department of Education, and
- Regular reports and analyses of these basic measures.

Administrative Policy Considerations

TDOE and LEAs should continue to research and evaluate the appropriate use and effectiveness of school building security measures such as school resource officers, metal detectors, random searches, and surveillance cameras. The state-level SAVE Act safety team should use this information to provide guidance and tools to schools on the appropriate use of these methods and the optimum balance between security and prevention methods.

The state-level SAVE Act safety team should consider incorporating additional requirements and measures into the SAVE Act framework that more specifically address the following accepted best practices in violence prevention:

- Fostering positive adult-child relationships,
- Increasing student engagement in class and other school activities, and
- Assessing physical environment and security protocols.

The Department of Education should inform the General Assembly in the mandated SAVE Act annual reports how the accountability and technical assistance components of the Act are met.

The State Board of Education should re-examine the state's Unsafe School Choice Policy (4.202) definition for "persistently dangerous school."

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INTRODUCTION

Schools must use a comprehensive approach to address the complex blend of individual, institutional, and community risk factors associated with violence. Although there is no exact formula to achieve school safety, schools should seek the most effective balance between security and prevention programs to provide secure, safe, and supportive environments for students. Educators should focus on research-supported best practices in developing strategies to prevent violent incidents in schools. Schools and communities must make safety a top priority in order to maintain and enhance safe learning environments for students.

Directive and Scope

In 2008, a tragic, fatal shooting at a Tennessee high school prompted a legislative request for the Comptroller's Offices of Research and Education Accountability to examine and evaluate what Tennessee is doing to ensure that its schools are safe.

This report provides:

- A review of available indicators on violent acts in schools;
- A summary of best practices for school safety and violence prevention; and
- A description and evaluation of state-level requirements and accountability systems to promote school safety, with primary emphasis on violence prevention and intervention programs.

This report focuses on a review of state-level laws, policies, and requirements for school safety. Local education agencies (LEAs) and individual schools are ultimately responsible for implementing safety programs, within state guidelines, based on each school's unique needs and circumstances. Further review or evaluation of the sufficiency, implementation, and effectiveness of violence prevention and intervention programs by individual schools may be warranted.

Evaluating the safety of schools is difficult given the absence of a consistent definition for "safe schools." Researchers note: "Despite unanimous agreement on the importance of school safety, there is little consensus around what 'safe' actually means."¹ This report focuses on serious violent incidents, such as shootings, serious assaults, and weapons, while also considering lesser acts of school violence, such as fighting, assaults, and bullying. Development of a positive school climate and learning environment is also considered.

BACKGROUND

Violence and aggression in schools are problematic for several reasons, including most obviously the potential for injury and death. However, in a school setting, violence affects not only victims and perpetrators, but everyone present. According to the Hamilton Fish Institute, violence competes with the instructional mission of schools and lowers academic achievement and quality of life at school.² Because the presence of violence impedes the learning process, efforts to improve safety and prevent violence support the fundamental mission of schools: to educate students.

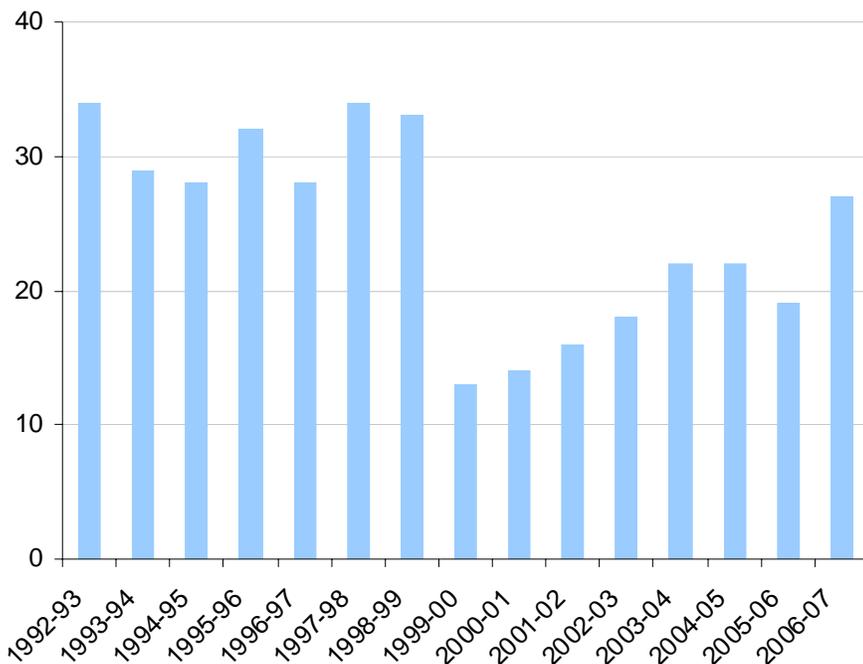
EXTENT OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE AND MEASUREMENT

Numerous school safety-related laws, programs, and organizations have developed over the last three decades in response to high profile incidents of school violence and concerns from parents,

school officials, policymakers, and the general public. Research on this issue has also increased and produced an abundance of related data and statistics. Though plentiful, school violence-related data and statistics suffer from several shortcomings. Experts question the quality of much of the available data and the methodologies by which it is developed. Some express concerns that schools might underreport acts of violence to avoid negative repercussions. Others point out problems associated with measures that are based on self-reported surveys by students and teachers. In addition, although some studies look at trends, most do not appear to make a judgment on whether the measures indicate an unacceptable level of violence in schools.

Given these limitations, school violence-related data and statistics should be interpreted with caution. Mindful of these limitations, OREA

Exhibit 1: Number of Homicides in U.S. Schools, by School Year



Source: Rachel Dinkes, Jana Kemp, Katrina Baum, and Thomas D. Snyder, *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2008*, NCES 2009-022: NCJ 226343, National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, and Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, D.C., April 2009, p.7.

examined the best available data from nationally recognized sources to assess trends in school-related violence. One overall conclusion is that serious violent incidents involving children and youth are more likely to happen away from school than at school. Many school safety experts cite such statistics to support the conclusion that schools remain relatively safe, while acknowledging that any amount of violence in schools is unacceptable. Also, several measures show improvements in school safety since the 1990s, with rates stabilizing in recent years. However, other indicators suggest that problems may still exist.³

Violent Deaths

The most serious type of violent incident that can occur on school grounds is homicide. Fortunately, homicides in schools are extremely rare. (See Exhibit 1.) Nationwide, 27 homicides occurred in U.S. schools for school year 2006-07.⁴ Although the loss of even one child's life in a school setting is tragic, data indicate that youth are over 50 times more likely to be murdered away from school.⁵

The National School Safety Center reports 266 violent deaths on school properties in the U.S. between September 1992 and November 2008.⁶ In Tennessee, nine violent incidents resulting in 10 deaths have occurred on school property since 1994.⁷ (See Exhibit 2.)

Although high profile school shootings, such as Columbine in 1999, are far less common than other less serious threats to school safety (e.g., fights, bullying), these violent events have a profound impact on the individuals involved, the affected school and district, the broader community, and public perceptions of the safety of the nation's schools.

Weapons

School shootings bring considerable attention to the issue of weapons on school property. According to data from the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (YRBSS), which is conducted every two years by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the national incidence of students bringing a weapon to school or being threatened or harmed by a weapon was less than 10 percent between 1997 and 2007.⁸ (See Exhibit 3.)

The prevalence of students reporting that they carried weapons in Tennessee schools has decreased from 18.2 percent in 1993 to 5.6 percent in 2007.⁹ The prevalence of Tennessee students reporting being threatened or injured with a weapon at school has also decreased, from 8.7 percent in 1993 to 7.3 percent in 2007.¹⁰

Under Tennessee's zero tolerance law, students who bring guns or weapons onto school grounds are subject to expulsion.¹¹ Gun and other weapons incidents reported by Tennessee schools have increased since the 2002-03 school year. (See Exhibit 4.)

Exhibit 2: Violent Incidents on School Property Resulting in Death(s), Tennessee, 1994 – 2008

1994	John Trotwood Moore Middle School (Nashville, TN)	Student accidentally shot by another student in class
1995	Cypress Junior High School (Memphis, TN)	Student shot another student in hallway
1995	Richland High School (Lynnville, TN / Giles County)	Student shot a teacher and student in hallway
1996	East High School (Memphis, TN)	Student shot another student in school parking lot after a game
1998	Lincoln County High School (Fayetteville, TN)	Student shot a student in school parking lot
2004	Westside High School (Memphis, TN)	Six students beat a student
2005	Stewart County Schools	Student shot a school bus driver at bus stop
2006	Campbell County High School (Jacksboro, TN)	Student shot an assistant principal Two other administrators seriously wounded
2008	Central High School (Knoxville, TN)	Student shot another student in school cafeteria

Note: Includes violent deaths on school property. NSSC bases its report on newspaper accounts, and notes that the information may be incomplete. OREA excluded four NSSC-reported school-associated violent deaths that reportedly occurred away from school property.

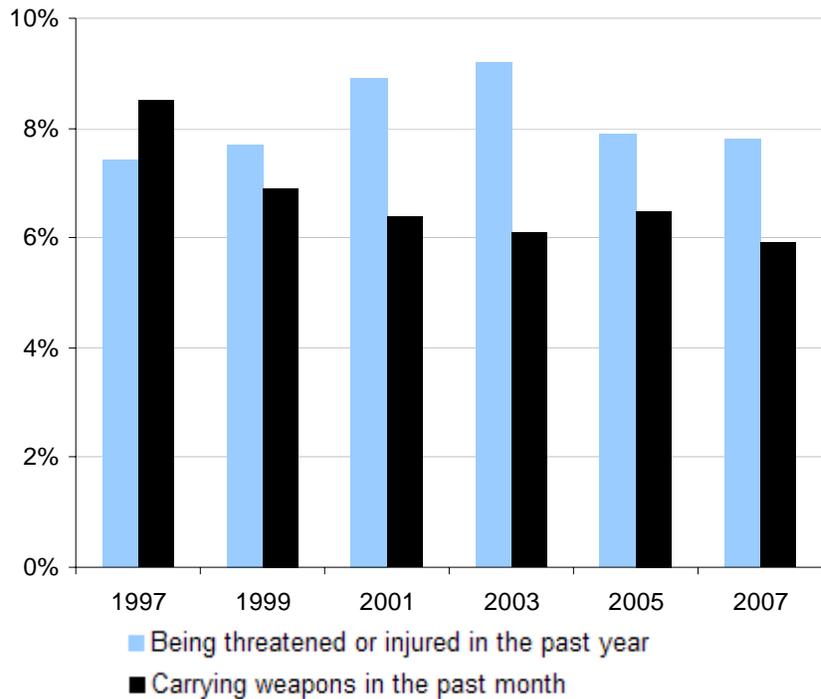
Source: National School Safety Center (NSSC), Report on School Associated Violent Deaths, <http://www.schoolsafety.us/pubfiles/savd.pdf> (accessed June 23, 2009).

For the 2006-07 school year, Tennessee schools reported 134 gun and 879 other weapon incidents that resulted in expulsion. As a point of comparison, there were approximately 943,000 students enrolled in Tennessee schools in 2006-07.¹²

Under the federal No Child Left Behind law, states are required to develop criteria defining a “persistently dangerous school” (PDS). Students at a PDS have the right to transfer to another school.¹³ In FY2004-05, only six states reported PDS; consequently, only 28 of the nation’s 95,000 schools were defined as persistently dangerous. Some argue that very few schools receive this designation because the criteria states have set are too high and schools commonly underreport incidents of violence.¹⁴

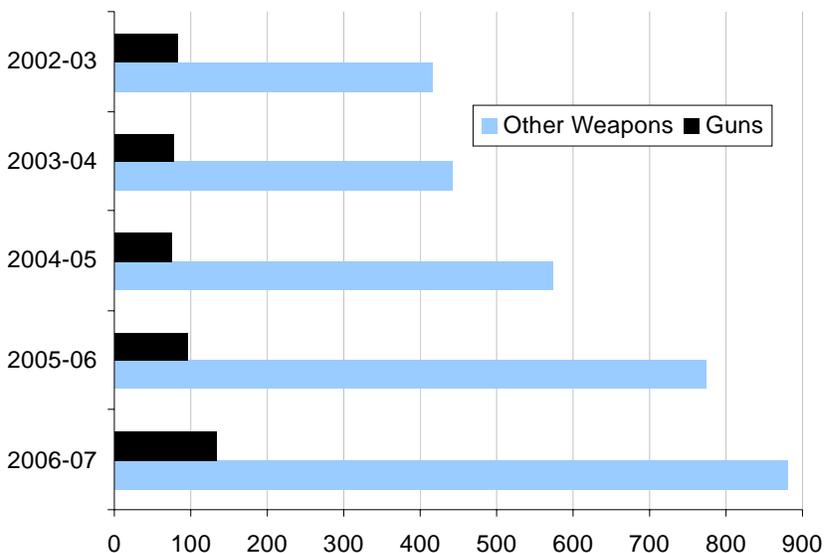
In Tennessee a school is designated as persistently dangerous when certain serious violent incidents exceed three percent of its school population for three consecutive years. Serious violent incidents include zero tolerance disciplinary actions for guns and other weapons and teacher and staff battery, and other violent crimes with student victims.^{15,16} No Tennessee schools have ever met the criteria for persistently dangerous as established by the

Exhibit 3: Student Reports of Weapons on School Property in the U.S., 1997-2007



Source: Center for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, “Trends in the Prevalence of Behaviors that Contribute to Violence on School Property National YRBS: 1993-2007,” <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs> (accessed June 8, 2009).

Exhibit 4: Gun and Weapon Incidents Resulting in Expulsion from Tennessee Schools, FY 2002-03 to 2006-07



Source: Tennessee Department of Education, Office of Safety and Learning Support, Annual Zero Tolerance Databases, 2002-03, 2003-04, 2004-05, 2005-06, and 2006-07.

Tennessee Definition of Persistently Dangerous School

Persistently Dangerous School (PDS): Serious violent incidents (overall percentage) > 3 percent for 3 consecutive years

Serious Violent Incidents (overall percentage) = Serious Incidents per Student Population X 100

Serious Violent Incidents at a school per Student Population =

Violence-related Zero Tolerance Disciplinary Actions (possession/use of firearm or other weapon + battery of teacher or school employee) + Student Victims of Violent Crime as defined in T.C.A. 40-38-111(g)

School Student Population (ADM)

Notes: Alternative learning programs are exempt from the criteria.

Source: Tennessee State Board of Education, "4.202 Unsafe School Choice Policy." August 22, 2003.

New Tennessee Study of School Crime

In May 2009, the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation published its first school crime study for public and private school systems, excluding colleges/universities and technical schools.* The study presents data on 46 offense categories in schools as well as characteristics of offenders, arrestees, and victims as reported by law enforcement to the Tennessee Incident Based Reporting System for the years 2006 through 2008.

The study provides a much more comprehensive and longitudinal analysis of crimes at Tennessee schools than had been available previously. However, its accuracy relies on the extent to which schools report crimes to law enforcement. Principals are statutorily required to report to law enforcement only reasonable suspicions of drug or weapons charges on school grounds** and knowledge of an assault and battery or vandalism endangering life, health, or safety committed by a student on school property. The statute allows teachers and principals to report only fights not involving prohibited weapons or serious bodily injury to the school administrator. ***

Significant information from this initial study includes:

- About two percent of all offenses statewide reported between 2006 and 2008 occurred at a school.
- Reported offenses at schools averaged about 12,500 annually over the three-year period.
- In 2008, 41 percent of school crimes reported were crimes against persons, 42 percent were crimes against property, and 17 percent were crimes against society.
- The most common offense in 2008 was simple assault (29 percent), followed by theft from the building (15 percent) and drug/narcotic violations (11 percent).
- Over the three-year period, offenses against persons increased seven percent; property and society offenses decreased about five percent each.
- Over the three-year period, 153 offenses (0.4 percent) involved a firearm.
- Gang-related offenses represented 1.3 percent of the total offenses at school in the three-year period.

Notes:

* The study was not able to exclude about three to four percent of offenses reported by law enforcement that appear to have occurred on a college or university campus.

** T.C.A. 49-6-4209

*** T.C.A. 49-6-4301

Source: Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, School Crimes Study, <http://www.tbi.state.tn.us> (accessed May 19, 2009).

State Board of Education in 2003.¹⁷ In 2006-07, no schools exceeded the three percent level and only five of the state's 1,709 schools¹⁸ exceeded a two percent level. Seventy-two percent of schools reported no serious incidents, and 25 percent of schools had a rate greater than zero but less than one percent of their student population.¹⁹

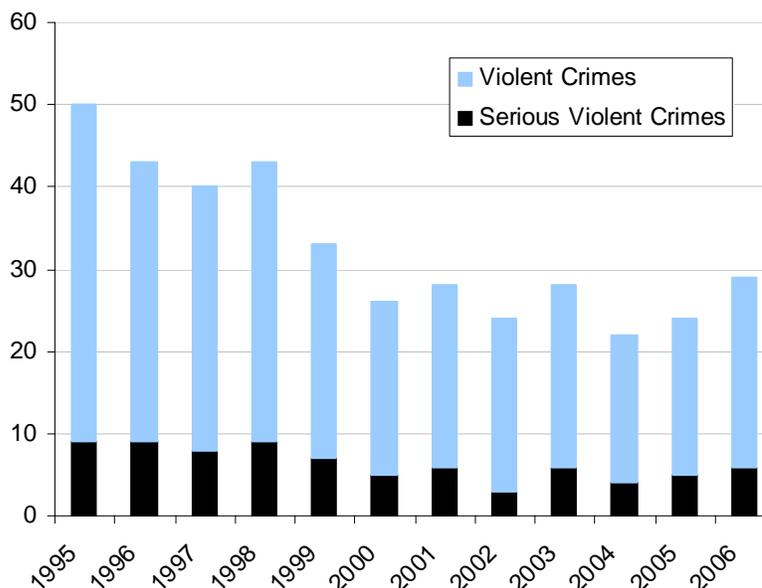
Other Indicators

The rate of student-reported nonfatal crimes decreased between 1995 and 2006, but the rate increased in 2005 and 2006.²⁰ (See Exhibit 5.) This data should be interpreted carefully because it is based on student self-reports, which are likely to be less reliable than counts of substantiated crimes.

The prevalence of physical fights among students is another measure of school violence. The nationwide incidence of physical fights has remained relatively stable since the late 1990s. In 2007, 12 percent of students in grades 9 through 12 said they had been in a fight on school property, slightly lower than the 15 percent of students who reported they had been in a fight in 1997.²¹ In Tennessee, the number of students reporting they had been in a physical fight decreased from 15 percent in 1993 to 12 percent in 2007.²²

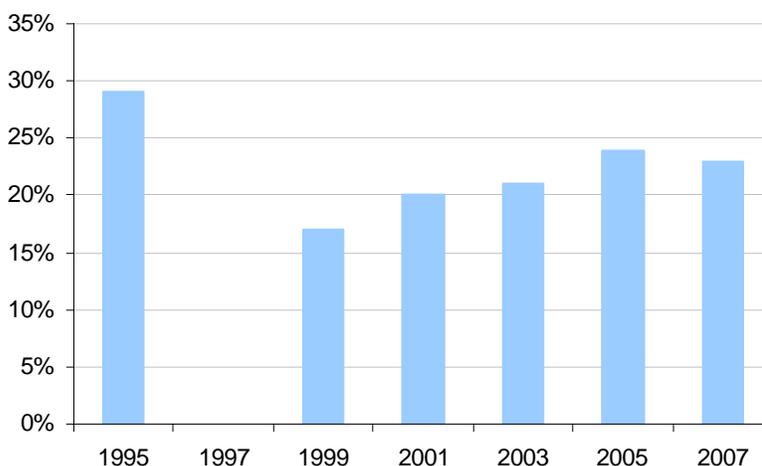
School violence is often attributed to the presence of youth gangs in schools. In 2007, 23 percent of students reported that there were gangs at their schools. (See Exhibit

Exhibit 5: Student Reports of Non-Fatal Crimes Against Students 1995-2005 in U.S. Schools



Notes: Includes students age 12 to 18 reporting a nonfatal violent crime on school property. Simple assaults are classified as violent crimes. Serious violent crime includes rape, sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault. Source: Rachel Dinkes, Jana Kemp, Katrina Baum, and Thomas D. Snyder, *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2008*, NCES 2009-022/ NCJ 226343, National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, and Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, D.C., 2009, p. 76.

Exhibit 6: Percentage of Students Reporting the Presence of Gangs at School, 1995-2007



Note: The survey was not conducted in 1997. Sources : Rachel Dinkes, Jana Kemp, Katrina Baum, and Thomas D. Snyder, *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2008*, National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, and Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, D.C., 2009, p.100; and Phillip Kaufman, Xianglei Chen, Susan P. Choy, Sally A. Ruddy, Amanda K. Miller, Jill K. Fleury, Kathryn A. Chandler, Michael R. Rand, Patsy Klaus, and Michael G. Planty, *Indicators of School Crime and Safety, 2000*, U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, Washington, D.C., Oct. 2000, pp. 83, 151.

6.) This represents a decrease from the 1995 level of 29 percent, but it also represents an increase from 17 percent in 1999.²³ Currently, no statewide data is available on the presence of gangs and related violent incidents in Tennessee schools.

RISK FACTORS FOR VIOLENT BEHAVIOR

Various individual, institutional, and community factors increase a student's propensity for violence. Preventive measures may counteract the risks associated with some or all of these factors.

BEST PRACTICES FOR SCHOOL SAFETY AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Although there is no exact formula to achieve school safety, research-supported best practices identify certain elements likely to prevent violence and promote safe school environments. OREA assembled the best practices outlined in Exhibit 7 by identifying common recurring themes in significant pieces of school safety literature. (See Appendix C for a more specific chart indicating the sources for these best practices.)

Three Levels of Risk Factors

Individual risk factors

- A history of aggression
- Beliefs that support the use of violence
- Social or cognitive problems
- The use of alcohol or drugs
- Parental use of alcohol or drugs
- Lack of parental supervision or discipline
- Spousal abuse or child abuse in the family
- Poor emotional attachment between parent and child
- Access to firearms
- Divorce, relocation or family disruption
- Chronic discipline problems
- Association with violent peers^a

Institutional risk factors

- Ineffective instruction that results in academic failure
- Failure to individualize instruction to adapt to individual differences
- Unclear rules and expectations regarding appropriate behavior
- Failure to teach positive interpersonal and self-management skills
- Failure to effectively correct rule violations and reward adherence to them
- Failure to adequately supervise and monitor student behavior in classrooms and common areas
- Inconsistent and punitive school and classroom behavior management practices
- Failure to assist students from at-risk backgrounds in bonding with the schooling process^b

Community risk factors

- Social disorganization caused by economic and social flux
- High turnover of residents
- Large proportion of disrupted or single-parent families
- High neighborhood crime rates
- Lack of job opportunities
- Lack of afterschool opportunities
- Presence of gangs
- Presence of drug trafficking
- For urban areas, a high proportion of low-income families^c

^a Center for Disease Control and Prevention, *Best Practices of Youth Violence Prevention: A Sourcebook for Community Action*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, June 2002, Ch. 1 and p. 8, <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/bestpractices.htm> (accessed May 12, 2009).

^b Jeffrey Sprague, *Creating Schoolwide Prevention and Intervention Strategies*, The Hamilton Fish Institute on School and Community Violence and Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Washington, D.C., rev. Sept. 2007, Section 1, pp. 10-11, <http://www.hamfish.org/> (accessed May 12, 2009).

^c Office of the Surgeon General, *Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Jan. 2001, <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/> (accessed July 15, 2009).

These best practices are based on general principles for promoting school safety and do not suggest the statewide implementation of specific programs. Best practices are most effective when local school districts and schools tailor specific programs to individual circumstances.

Exhibit 7: OREA-Identified Best Practices for School Safety and Violence Prevention

Safe schools:

- Use a comprehensive approach to school safety and violence prevention to address the root causes of violence, which derive from the risk factors discussed above.
- Strive to collaborate and communicate with students, parents, law enforcement, mental health agencies, nonprofit organizations, and local businesses to mobilize resources and address the broad needs of students.
- Train staff to manage classrooms and implement violence prevention programs.
- Adopt written policies and procedures that outline expected behaviors, unacceptable behaviors, and consequences for unacceptable behaviors.
- Regularly assess school climate through surveys of students, teachers, and/or parents, and ensure that buildings are secure, well maintained, and allow easy supervision of students.
- Collect data to develop school safety policies and evaluate programs for effectiveness.
- Understand the value of academic engagement and encourage all students to excel.
- Develop healthy social skills of students.
- Intervene on behalf of students who exhibit risk factors for violence before they commit violent acts.
- Foster positive adult-student relationships to ensure that all students have an adult they feel comfortable enough to confide in.
- Take all threats seriously and use a threat assessment procedure to determine which are likely to be carried out.

Note: See Appendix C for a more specific chart indicating the sources for these best practices.

VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAMS AND BUILDING SECURITY: A BALANCING ACT

Most safety measures in schools are either preventive or security-related. Prevention measures deal primarily with the risk factors linked to violence, whereas security measures discourage actual criminal acts. Violence prevention measures include:

- A supportive school climate,
- Pro-social skills development,
- Student engagement in academics and school activities,
- Early intervention programs,
- Positive adult-student relationships, and
- Threat assessments.

Building security measures include:

- School Resource Officers (SROs),
- Security cameras,
- Random searches, and
- Access control.

While all schools need to use some combination of security and preventive strategies, the most effective balance may vary from school to school, and should be determined by identifying risk factors. Exhibit 8 illustrates the relationship among the elements for balanced and effective school safety strategies based on OREA's analysis.

The foundation of any school safety framework is a comprehensive and collaborative approach. Comprehensiveness refers to the use of a variety of strategies to address underlying safety issues within the school environment. Collaboration with students, parents, law enforcement, mental health agencies, nonprofit organizations, and local businesses enables schools to mobilize outside resources to better address the particular needs of its students. Collaboration may also result in a strengthened sense of commitment by members outside of the school staff.

Methods used to promote school safety include adequate training for staff, written policies and procedures, as well as data collection and evaluation of outcomes.

LAWS AND PROGRAMS PROMOTING SCHOOL SAFETY

Both federal and Tennessee laws address the need for LEAs and schools to plan and implement programs to promote school safety and prevent violent incidents. Tennessee law also requires some specific programs to address school safety concerns. In addition, the state’s new comprehensive school safety accountability system requires LEAs to regularly assess whether schools are meeting established school safety and violence prevention requirements.

Federal Laws

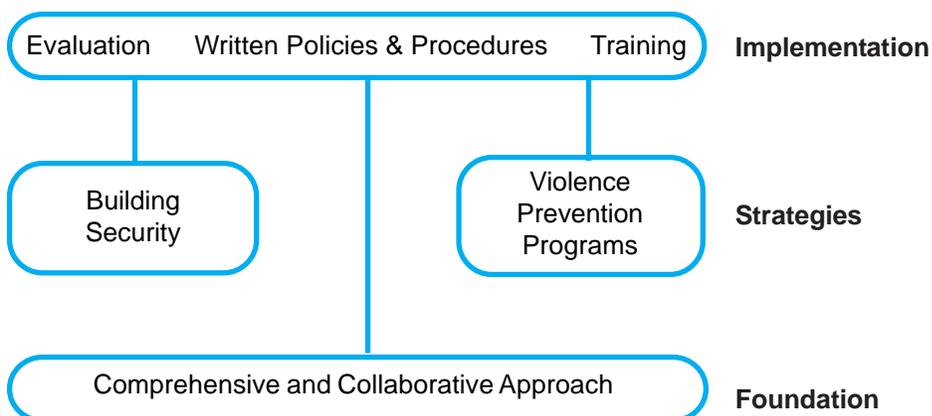
In 1994, Congress passed the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994, mandating that each state receiving federal funds require local education agencies (LEAs) to expel for at least one year any student who brought a firearm to school. In 2001, federal lawmakers incorporated the Gun-Free Schools law within the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act.²⁴

Title IV-A of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* provides funds to LEAs for drug and violence prevention activities.²⁵ States and LEAs that receive these funds must meet certain requirements including:

- Allowing students who attend a “persistently dangerous school,” or who become victims of a violent crime at school, to transfer to a safe school,
- Reporting on school safety to the public, including violent and drug-related

- offenses, and
- Having a plan for keeping schools safe and drug-free, which includes appropriate and effective discipline policies, security procedures, prevention activities, a student code of conduct, and a crisis management plan for responding to violent or traumatic incidents on school grounds.

Exhibit 8: Balancing Strategies for School Safety



Tennessee Laws

Exhibit 9 lists Tennessee laws related to school safety and violence prevention.

Tennessee has made significant progress since the mid-1990s toward ensuring the safety of its students and school personnel. Two significant actions include:

1. The establishment of a School Safety Center and grants in 1996 to assist schools and local communities in establishing safe and disciplined learning environments,²⁶ and
2. The passage of the Tennessee SAVE Act in 2007.²⁷

School Safety Center

As required by TCA 49-6-4302, the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) established a

Tennessee School Safety Center (the Center) in 1996 to assist schools and districts in creating comprehensive safety programs. The Center develops and evaluates training materials and guidelines on school safety issues, including behavior, discipline, and violence prevention. Center activities include training and technical assistance, grants administration, and data collection and analysis on violence in schools. The

Center is part of TDOE's Office of School Safety and Learning Support, which coordinates training and program development activities related to school safety, afterschool programming, and alternative education.²⁸

SAVE Act of 2007

The Save Act of 2007 establishes state-level comprehensive planning and accountability

Exhibit 9: Tennessee Laws Related to School Safety and Violence Prevention

Schools Against Violence in Education Act (SAVE) (2007) - TCA 49-6-801, et seq., and 49-6-4301

Requires a state-level safety team to develop comprehensive minimum requirements and an accountability system for schools' safety plans addressing emergency response, school building security, appropriate violence prevention and intervention strategies, and training. Adds uniform reporting of violent incidents. Requires annual report to General Assembly and Governor.

Safety and Civility (2005) - TCA 49-6-1014 to 1016

Requires districts to adopt a policy prohibiting harassment, intimidation, or bullying. Policy must include a description of the type of behavior expected from each student and statement of consequences and appropriate remedial action. Districts must allow anonymous reporting.

Conflict resolution intervention programs (1999) - TCA 49-2-118

Requires conflict resolution programs in grades 1-6. Requires annual report to DOE by LEAs beginning in 2005.

Safe Schools Act (1996) - TCA 49-1-214

Requires TDOE to develop advisory guidelines for LEAs to use in developing safe and secure learning environments. Emphasizes consultation with local law enforcement.

Notice to School of Child's Criminal Offense (1999 and as amended) - TCA 49-6-3051

Requires parents, guardians, or custodians to notify schools when a student has been adjudicated delinquent for certain violent or weapon offenses.

Tennessee School Safety Center (1996) and Safe School Act of 1998 (1998) - TCA 49-6-4302

Requires TDOE to develop and evaluate training materials and guidelines on school safety issues, including behavior, discipline, and violence prevention. Requires collection and analysis of data related to school safety. Authorizes grants to LEAs to fund innovative programs related to school safety.

Student and Employee Safe Environment Act (1996) - TCA 49-6-4011—49-6-4017

Requires LEAs to formulate acceptable behavior and discipline codes, including expected behavior, consequences of failure to adhere to codes, and importance of standards to maintain safe learning environment. Codes must address appropriate language, respect, fighting, threats, weapons, damage to person or property, drugs, alcohol, conduct. Schools must post codes and distribute to teachers, administrative staff, and parents.

Zero Tolerance (1995 as amended) - TCA 49-6-3401(g) and 49-6-4216

Establishes a zero tolerance policy for drugs, dangerous weapons, and assaults in schools.

Character Education (1985) - TCA 49-6-1007

Requires LEAs to help students develop positive values and improve student conduct. TDOE to provide appropriate method of instruction. TDOE to report annually to joint education oversight.

School Security Act of 1981 (1981 and as amended) - TCA 49-6-4201, et seq.

Prohibits weapons and drugs in schools. Allows searches of property and persons upon reasonable suspicion, use of metal detectors and police dogs. Prohibits gang paraphernalia. Includes employment standards for school resource officers.

requirements to ensure that LEAs and schools are addressing school safety and violence prevention. The SAVE Act requires a state-level safety team, including members from several different disciplines, to develop a framework for building safe and supportive learning environments. LEAs must use this framework to assess the safety of their schools. The framework incorporates many existing state and federal requirements as well as best practices related to school safety. LEAs are responsible for developing schools' specific emergency plans and prevention programs within the more general requirements of the state framework.

The SAVE Act framework requires districts to:

1) Develop detailed emergency response plans that:

- Address a list of 25 specific requirements
- Are created in coordination with local emergency response agencies
- Are reviewed annually by both the district and the school

2) Create safe and supportive learning environments by:

- Providing staff training on threat assessment, crisis intervention, early warning signs, teaching positive social skills, and violence prevention techniques
- Developing linkages with mental health agencies
- Conducting annual climate assessments
- Providing students with access to licensed school counselors
- Providing alternative education programs
- Involving students, parents, and their communities
- Providing before and after school activities

3) Institute policies and procedures that address:

- Expected behaviors
- Discipline

- Anti-bullying
- Harassment
- Guns and weapons
- Threat assessment protocols
- School access control
- Staff criminal history and background checks²⁹

4) Inventory strategies and procedures in place (added to framework in November, 2009) that address:

- School security
- Preparedness to respond to threatening situations
- Academic and behavior support/ intervention programs
- School climate
- Social emotional learning

(See Appendix D: SAVE Act Compliance Instrument / Self-Assessment.)

Each school district must complete an annual self-assessment and provide TDOE with specific action plans for any indicators not met. The first SAVE plans were due October 1, 2008; however, TDOE waived required filings for the first year, as allowed by the SAVE Act, for more than half of the districts that requested a waiver. To acquire a waiver, systems had to show they were in substantial compliance with requirements of the SAVE Act. All districts will be required to complete self-assessments and inventories and to submit corrective plans of action by November 15, 2009.³⁰

Other Tennessee Laws

Exhibit 9 lists several other Tennessee laws, many of which are incorporated in the SAVE Act assessment, that address school safety and violence prevention. These requirements for LEAs and schools include:

- A written code of conduct and discipline,
- Character education programs,

- Conflict resolution programs,
- Anti-bullying policies, and
- Zero tolerance policies for drugs, dangerous weapons, and assaults on staff.

Tennessee law also dictates some specific security requirements for schools:

- Prohibition on weapons and drugs in any educational facility, including public notification and posted signs in each facility;³¹
- Procedures for responding to reports of a firearm on campus and notification to law enforcement agencies;³² and
- Criminal history and background checks of all school employees and vendors with access to children.³³

Tennessee law allows, but does not require, other security methods. The School Security Act allows searches of property and persons on school property based on reasonable suspicion of weapons or drugs, permits the use of metal detectors and police dogs, and prohibits criminal gang activities.³⁴

Tennessee Safety Programs and Initiatives

School Resource Officers

Although not required by statute, many schools utilize school resource officers (SROs). Tennessee schools reported 558 SRO assignments in school year 2006-07. SROs were most heavily concentrated in high schools, though officers are present in some middle and elementary schools.³⁵

According to the Tennessee Department of Education website, SROs are “uniformed, duly sworn, post-certified officers who are regularly assigned to a school setting. SROs are employed by local law enforcement agencies and act as liaisons between the police, the school, and the

community.”³⁶ Several school districts use state Safe Schools grants to cover part of the cost of SROs.³⁷

The roles and responsibilities of SROs vary among school districts. In 2007, TDOE, in consultation with the Department of Safety and several other organizations, issued recommended standards for the eligibility, qualifications, and training of SROs, as well as guidelines for successful partnerships between school districts and law enforcement agencies. TDOE notes that SRO programs vary in the extent to which the officers engage in educational and mentoring activities. TDOE recommends the establishment of written roles and responsibilities for the SRO program, as well as the establishment of funding, qualifications, and training requirements for SROs.³⁸ The SAVE Act self-assessment requires a memorandum of understanding between the LEA and the local law enforcement agency that describes the SRO’s role within the school environment and responsibilities during an emergency.³⁹

While there is little evaluative research on the use of school resource officers, the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) has endorsed their use as a promising safety strategy. According to NCSL, SROs have positive impacts on school climate, provide needed support to at-risk students, and reduce the number of firearms reported at schools.⁴⁰ State education officials believe that SROs are an important component in promoting school safety, principally in creating a relationship between law enforcement and schools. SROs help maintain order in larger schools and may help demystify the law enforcement process for children. SROs also provide valuable input and technical assistance for safety planning and security vulnerabilities.^{41,42}

Safety and Violence Prevention Training

Training programs for school personnel and students are a major component of the school safety plans required under the SAVE Act. Schools must conduct regular training and drills in emergency procedures for administrators, staff, and students. In-service training for administrators, staff, and transportation personnel should focus on teaching positive social skills and violence prevention and incorporate these topics into the curriculum. Suggested topics include: alcohol, drugs, suicide, conflict resolution, character education, and communication/decision-making. School staff must also receive training on assessing threats and identifying students who pose a potential threat to others or themselves.⁴³

For FY 2008-09, TDOE's Office of School Safety and Learning Support provided the following in-service trainings across the state:

- Threat assessment,
- Incorporation of alcohol and drug prevention into curriculums.
- Bullying prevention, including the Olweus Bullying Prevention Train-the-Trainer Project,
- "After the crisis" response plans, including establishing a Trauma Support Team in partnership with Vanderbilt Mental Health,
- Proactive student discipline,
- Alternative education,
- Methamphetamine awareness,
- SRO/Administrator Training in collaboration with the Tennessee SRO Association,
- Life Skills, and
- Social Skills for early childhood settings.⁴⁴

TDOE contracted with a consultant to provide seminars to educators on school climate assessment, social-emotional learning (e.g., character education and conflict resolution), and assessment and training for bullying prevention programs.⁴⁵

Tennessee law requires conflict resolution and decision-making intervention programs in grades 1 through 6.⁴⁶ Based on a survey of LEAs for school year 2006-07, TDOE reported that schools appear to be complying with the legislative requirement for conflict resolution programs, and that school officials believe these programs are effective in reducing problem behaviors and improving overall school climate.⁴⁷

Tennessee law also requires that the curriculum in public schools include character education to help each student develop positive values and improve student conduct.⁴⁸ TDOE's School Year 2006-07 report concluded that students in all grade levels were participating in character education activities across the state. Many systems focus on developing positive character traits in students through cooperative learning, role-play, literature/stories, class discussions, journal writing, and the arts. The department is providing teachers with technical assistance on how to incorporate character education into the daily curriculum. Many districts reportedly credit character education programs with improving school climate and student behavior, as well as increasing parental involvement.⁴⁹

Alternative Education

An ongoing component of Tennessee's school safety agenda is alternative education. According to the TDOE, "alternative education programs in Tennessee attempt to meet student's educational, behavioral, and social needs, while addressing the negative behaviors and attitudes that serve as a barrier of learning."⁵⁰ LEAs must establish at least one alternative school serving students in grades 7 through 12 who have been suspended or expelled.⁵¹ In 2007-08, most students attended alternative schools as a result of a culmination of disruptive behavior(s) (66 percent) or for committing a zero tolerance offense (26 percent).

In August 2008, the Governor's Advisory Council for Alternative Education, working with TDOE, and in conjunction with the State Board of Education released "Alternative Education Program Standards" (Policy 2.302) to provide guidance to LEAs in developing exemplary alternative education programs.⁵²

Other TDOE School Safety Initiatives

Other TDOE initiatives related to school safety include the Coordinated School Health Program, mental health integration grants, and Positive Behavioral Supports. These initiatives address violence prevention and the need for early identification and intervention with troubled students.

Through the Coordinated School Health program, the Tennessee State Board of Education requires schools to build the capacity to provide mental health services through counselors, psychologists, social workers, and school nurses. The services provided by these individuals may include:

- The administration and interpretation of psychometric and psycho-educational tests,
- Observational assessments,
- Individual and group counseling sessions,
- Crisis intervention for emergency mental health needs,
- Family/home consultation, and
- Referrals to outside community-based agencies when appropriate⁵³

In 2008, the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) granted Tennessee \$301,010 to enhance mental health infrastructure in schools.⁵⁴ The funding supports school systems in identifying students' social-behavioral, emotional, and mental health issues as early as possible. TDOE is collaborating with Vanderbilt University in developing protocols for identifying conditions, training staff on how to use these protocols, and

providing resource-linking services to districts that do not have in-house mental health capabilities.⁵⁵

Positive Behavioral Supports (PBS) is another TDOE initiative related to school safety. PBS is a school-wide approach to student discipline centered on increasing positive behavior and thus, improving academic achievement. The PBS approach proactively addresses individual students' needs using evidence-based practices. TDOE distributes federal funds (\$1.7 million is budgeted for FY 2009-10) to several universities across the state to offer technical assistance, training, and evaluation services to LEAs and schools to implement PBS.⁵⁶

School Violence Hotline

To ensure that all threats of violence can be reported confidentially, the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation operates a toll-free full-time school violence hotline for persons to report information pertaining to school violence or threats of violence.⁵⁷

School Safety Funding

While information on total spending for school safety is not available, there are some limited designated state and federal grants. Designated funds for school safety programs include Tennessee Safe Schools grants and federal Title IV Safe and Drug Free Schools funds. Many elements that promote school safety are incorporated within instruction, building, or support services and are not funded separately. In addition, school resource officers, if used by LEAs or schools, are primarily funded through local law enforcement agencies.⁵⁸

State Grants

The Tennessee Safe Schools Act of 1998⁵⁹ allows the Tennessee School Safety Center to establish grants, within appropriation limits, for LEAs to develop programs to improve school safety. LEAs can spend these funds on:

- Innovative violence prevention programs,
- Conflict resolution programs,
- Disruptive or assaultive behavior management,
- Improved school security,
- Peer mediation, and
- Training for employees on the identification of possible perpetrators of school related violence.

The General Assembly appropriated \$10 million for the 1998-99 initial-year grants. Grants totaled \$5.6 million annually from 1999-2000 through 2001-02, and have totaled \$4.8 million annually since 2002-03.⁶⁰

The available funds are divided among the state's 136 LEAs based on the Basic Education Program (BEP) formula used to distribute state funds for education.⁶¹ The BEP distribution is primarily determined by student enrollment and is equalized based on the taxable resources of local governments.⁶² A 25 percent local match, adjusted according to the BEP fiscal capacity formula, is required for Safe Schools funds. The match may be satisfied by in-kind expenses assumed by the LEA.⁶³

Federal Grants

In 2008, Tennessee received \$4.8 million in federal funding for school safety and violence prevention activities under Title IV-A of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*. These funds decreased from \$7.3 million in 2004, a 34 percent decrease.⁶⁴ Funds are allocated on a formula basis to LEAs based on student enrollment and the percentage of students below the poverty level.⁶⁵

CONCLUSIONS

Tennessee's statewide statutes, policies, and requirements for violence prevention and intervention are comprehensive and address most of the identified best practices for safe and secure learning environments. The General Assembly's passage of the 2007 SAVE Act marked a significant milestone in Tennessee's ongoing efforts to assess and improve school safety. The SAVE Act incorporated many of the state's existing laws and policies within a new planning and accountability system to form a single, comprehensive school safety framework. Many of the SAVE Act's planning and accountability requirements align with established best practices for ensuring safer schools.

Before the SAVE Act's passage, school districts were not required to judge their school safety efforts against a set of state-determined standards. The SAVE Act requires districts and schools to regularly self-assess their school safety and violence prevention efforts in several key areas (e.g., staff training, written policies and procedures, early identification of potentially violent students, and threat assessments).

The SAVE assessment for LEAs does not include the following areas identified in best practices: requirements and measures for fostering positive adult-student relationships, increasing student engagement in classes and activities, and assessing a school's physical environment and security protocols.

The SAVE Act is in its first year of implementation; requirements for the first year focus on emergency response. The Director of the Office of School Safety and Learning Support expects more emphasis and specific requirements in the areas of prevention and intervention as well as policies and procedures over time.⁶⁶ Revisions to the SAVE framework in 2009 require LEAs to report on the various strategies used to ensure a safe and disciplined learning environment.

The SAVE Act's ultimate success will require state education department officials to:

1. Ensure that districts and schools have sufficiently funded and implemented the policies and requirements,

2. Monitor trends in violent incidents and school climate, and
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of programs and policies.

Staff and funding to implement the requirements of the SAVE Act are limited and decreasing. A TDOE staff position that was funded to assist in implementing the SAVE Act was eliminated as part of the state government budget reduction in August 2008.⁶⁷ Duties of the position were related to accountability and included reviewing submitted safety plans, providing consultation to LEAs, collecting and assembling violent incident data, and preparing reports.⁶⁸ TDOE is currently trying to distribute some of the safety accountability functions to other positions.⁶⁹

SAVE Act Reporting Requirements

The 2007 SAVE Act requires the Commissioner of Education to report to the Governor and the General Assembly the prevalence of violent and disruptive incidents in public schools, including specifically identifying schools and school districts with the greatest and least violent incidents. The Act requires the Department of Education (TDOE), in conjunction with the Department of Safety, to establish a statewide uniform violent incident reporting system. Beginning in school year 2008-09, TDOE has expanded data collection regarding serious incidents that occur during school. The expanded reporting system unifies zero tolerance offenses with other serious incidents into a single reporting method.

The new system will collect data on the following incident types:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Possession, Use, or Distribution of Illegal Drugs | 12. Other Type of Threat |
| 2. Possession of Handgun | 13. Bullying |
| 3. Possession of Rifle or Shotgun | 14. Fighting |
| 4. Possession of Explosive or Incendiary Device | 15. Sexual Harassment |
| 5. Non-Lethal Firearm | 16. Assault of Teacher or Staff |
| 6. Possession of a Weapon Other than Firearm | 17. Assault of Student |
| 7. Possession, Use, or Distribution of Alcohol | 18. Sexual Assault |
| 8. Violation of School Rules | 19. Aggravated Assault of Teacher or Staff |
| 9. Theft of Property | 20. Aggravated Assault of Student |
| 10. Vandalism/ Damage of Property | 21. Attempted Homicide |
| 11. Bomb Threat | 22. Homicide |

TDOE requires additional data for each incident including: grade of offender, the school and district where the offense occurred, and the action taken by the district. Districts will continue to collect and report information on victims of violent crime according to the State Board of Education's Unsafe School Choice Policy.

Source: Tennessee Department of Education, *Safe and Supportive Schools: An Annual Report for the Tennessee General Assembly from the Department of Education*, Feb. 2008, App. 2, <http://www.state.tn.us/education/learningsupport/schsafetyctr/> (accessed Nov. 21, 2008).

State and federal designated funding for violence prevention has also dropped in recent years. Designated funds for school safety programs, including the Tennessee Safe Schools grants and federal Title IV Safe and Drug Free Schools funds, totaled about \$9.7 million in 2008, a decrease from \$12.1 million in 2004.⁷⁰

Proposals to further reduce both state and federal funding are pending. The federal budget proposal would eliminate Title IV funds allocated to states.⁷¹ In addition to grants provided to the LEAs, Title IV funds two TDOE staff positions and the training provided via the Tennessee School Safety Center.⁷² The state FY 2009-10 budget shifts \$3.1 million in recurring Safe Schools funds to a non-recurring appropriation. The budget limits recurring funds to: 1) districts currently using funds to employ school resource officers, and 2) the four urban school districts, each of which will receive 50 percent of their normal grant allocation.⁷³ The TDOE Budget office notes that the \$1.7 million in recurring state funds for the Safe Schools grants may be eliminated to meet statewide agency FY 2009-10 budget reversion requirements built into the Appropriations Act, although a final decision had not been made as of August 2009.⁷⁴

Current Tennessee data on school violence is limited, but measurement is improving. TDOE is expanding data collection to provide better and more precise measures of incidents of school violence. Also, in May 2009, TBI published its first report on offenses occurring on school property reported to law enforcement.⁷⁵ Schools are required to collect community data and conduct climate assessments as they develop school-level safety plans and violence prevention programs. However, the climate assessments are not standardized and TDOE does not plan to use the information to monitor selected school safety issues across the state over time.⁷⁶

Current data on violent incidents in Tennessee schools is limited. Schools report serious incidents that require expulsion under the zero tolerance laws. School-level data exists on student expulsions and suspensions, with general categories indicating cause.⁷⁷ TDOE uses this information and the definition established by the State Board of Education to determine if any schools are persistently dangerous, as required by federal law.

Federal law requires all states to identify a “persistently dangerous school” (PDS), but gives states the authority to determine the qualifying criteria. Thus, the definition of a PDS varies from state to state. Since school year 2002-03, the first year of the Unsafe School Choice Option Policy’s implementation, fewer than 50 of the nation’s 94,000 public schools have been identified as a PDS each year.⁷⁸ Most states, including Tennessee, have never identified a school as “persistently dangerous” based on their own definitions, which may raise questions about data reporting and how the state defines a PDS or it may speak to state and local efforts to maintain safe school environments.

The variance in definitions among states and the low number of identified schools has led to criticisms of the federal law from several researchers. The USDOE’s Office of Inspector General examined the issue in 2007, and concluded that states are not effectively identifying PDSs. Common trends of noncompliance related to state PDS policies included: (1) exclusion of common violent offenses from PDS determination, (2) measuring disciplinary outcomes rather than the occurrence of violent incidents, and (3) requiring thresholds to be met for two to three consecutive years before identifying a school as persistently dangerous.⁷⁹

Legislation over the last two years adds reporting requirements:

- The 2007 SAVE Act⁸⁰ adds a broader violent incident reporting system and annual reporting to the General Assembly.
- Public Chapter 916 of 2008 added semiannual reporting by TDOE to the General Assembly on all disciplinary actions taken by LEAs, the number of students expelled, suspended, or placed in an alternative education setting, and the reason for the action reported by the school.

According to TDOE, more comprehensive data should be available beginning with school year 2008-09.⁸¹ The revised reporting system will track specific incidents, not just those resulting in disciplinary action. The revised system includes more specific offenses and student characteristics, which educators can use to analyze incident trends and evaluate the effectiveness of disciplinary actions. The Department’s new data collection system will enable the development of a Serious

Incident Index for every Tennessee public school. The index is the total number of serious incidents reported divided by the school’s average daily membership. The data will be included in the Department’s annual reports to the General Assembly, as required under the SAVE Act.

The recently published TBI data reported through the Tennessee Incident Based Reporting System (TIBRS) should also assist in analyzing trends and characteristics of school crimes. Over time, this information may assist school administrators and policymakers in deterring and preventing crimes in schools.

TDOE, the Department of Safety’s Office of Homeland Security, and the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation are also working together to provide schools access to the newly created Tennessee Fusion Center, a centralized repository of crime and incident data.⁸² Schools will be able to access the data repository to review criminal incidents and generate and analyze statistical information about crime in the vicinity of their schools.⁸³

Exhibit 10: LEAs’ Uses of Tennessee Safe Schools Funds, School Year 2006-07

Use of Funds	% of LEAs
Purchase/install monitoring equipment	46%
Provide School Resource Officers	33%
Purchase/install communications equipment	26%
Provide training and professional development	21%
Facility improvements to enhance campus security	17%
Implement violence prevention programs	16%
Provide counseling services	7%
Provide security personnel	5%
Provide alternative education services	4%
Implement photo identification system	4%

Note: Many of the 136 LEAs use funds for multiple purposes.
 Source: OREA analysis of data included in Tennessee Department of Education, *Safe and Supportive Schools: An Annual Report for the Tennessee General Assembly*, Appendix 3, Feb. 2008, <http://www.tennessee.gov/education/learningsupport/schsafetyctr/> (accessed Oct. 21, 2008).

Tennessee’s commitment to better capturing violent incident data is vital. However, TDOE does not plan to use the required district and school-level climate assessments to compile statewide measures of school climate.⁸⁴ Such statewide information could provide trend data on student, parent, and school staff perceptions of school safety; the prevalence of weapons, drugs, or violent acts; the consistency of disciplinary actions; and the support of the school community. Statewide data could also provide an additional means to measure changes in school safety and identify areas for improvement.

State level guidance related to school building security is lacking.

School building security includes school resource officers, metal detectors, video surveillance systems, and random searches. Best practices indicate a need for schools to ensure that buildings are secure and allow for easy supervision of students. Many school administrators have directed substantial funds to building security programs. Although it is intuitive that such programs enhance building safety, there is little research defining the appropriate use or supporting the effectiveness of security measures in preventing or reducing violent incidents in schools. Some studies conclude that stringent security measures, such as the use of metal detectors, security guards, camera surveillance, drug-sniffing dogs, and searches, undermine the establishment of positive school climates.⁸⁵ Schools need additional guidance and tools to assess security risks and needs and to determine the optimum balance between security and prevention methods.

The SAVE Act requires an LEA self-assessment of policies and procedures relating to building security;⁸⁶ however, this is not included in the framework. Although the SAVE Act framework (see Appendix D) requires LEAs to control access to education facilities and develop memoranda of understanding with local law enforcement agencies specifically outlining the SRO's role, it does not address how to assess security risk factors or what specific circumstances indicate the use of SROs, surveillance cameras, metal detectors, or searches. A 2009 framework revision requires districts to report on school security strategies and procedures in place, but does not require assessment of their appropriateness or effectiveness. However, the SAVE Act is in its first year of implementation, and the Director of the Office of School Safety and Learning Support expects continued development of the framework over time.⁸⁷

State law requires the allocation of state Safe Schools funds among all districts primarily based on student enrollment, which results in fairly small grants for most districts. Because funds are limited, LEAs tend to direct them toward security measures rather than prevention activities.⁸⁸ In FY 2006-07 \$4.8 million was available; 65 percent of districts received grants of \$25,000 or less, 26 percent received \$10,000 or less, and only 13 percent received \$100,000 or more.⁸⁹ The grant applications tend to focus on needs that the level of available funding can address, such as surveillance cameras and partial funding of SROs, rather than more expensive prevention programs, such as counseling, mental health services, and training. (See Exhibit 10.)

LEAs have broad flexibility in how the state Safe Schools funds are used, whereas the use of Title IV-A Safe and Drug Free Schools grants for school security are subject to federal government restrictions. Districts can never use more than 20 percent of the Title IV grant award for security equipment, e.g. surveillance cameras or metal detectors. However, the federal government increases the security-related spending cap to 40 percent if LEAs use grant funds to hire and train school security personnel. Districts must target the remaining federal grant funds to violence prevention and intervention programs such as mental health services, conflict resolution programs, alternative education, or training for school personnel.⁹⁰

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Policy considerations for this issue might include how best to allocate the limited designated state funds for school safety. A review of the planning requirements and allocation method of school safety funds could guide LEAs toward more effective methods and programs to address school violence. Such consideration is especially important in light of significant Safe Schools fund reductions proposed for future years in the Governor's FY 2009-10 State Budget.⁹¹ The FY 2009-10 budget converts \$3.1 million in Safe Schools funds (65 percent of the FY 2008-09 appropriation) from a recurring to a non-recurring appropriation.

Possible options and their potential benefits and weaknesses include:

Continuing small grants to all school districts

Small grants to districts recognize that all districts have needs to address in violence prevention and building security. Tennessee is currently providing Safe Schools grants to all districts primarily based on school enrollment and other BEP factors.

Because the state allocates a total of only \$4.8 million to Tennessee's 136 LEAs, grant amounts tend to be small, limiting actions schools can take to ensure safety and security. As a result, LEAs tend to use the smaller grants to address lower cost needs. LEAs have primarily used Safe Schools grants on building security needs rather than more research-supported, but costly, prevention and intervention programs. Prevention programs usually require additional staffing that smaller grants cannot sustain.

Targeting grants to specific purposes

Targeting grants to specific purposes would give greater priority to particular needs or to programs that are more effective. TDOE could require LEAs to target funds to deficiencies identified as best

practices in the SAVE Act assessments. TDOE could limit funds to particular program types, as occurs with the federal Title IV funds, to encourage a balance between building security needs and violence prevention needs. TDOE could limit spending to research-supported programs or practices. However, the security focus could be lost because of the lack of research demonstrating its effectiveness. LEAs would still have some discretion in the particular programs or methods used within general categories of use to address particular circumstances and needs.

Targeting grants to districts and schools with greater needs

Targeting grant funds to districts or schools with higher rates of violent incidents would provide larger grants to fewer schools. The additional funds would allow schools with high violent incident rates or risk factors to provide additional prevention and intervention services. This could reduce the high rates in some districts, but could possibly result in increased violent incidents in schools receiving less or no funding.

Requiring a more comprehensive planning and fund allocation process

A more comprehensive school safety planning approach would require LEAs to conduct and regularly update a broad risk and needs assessment to prevent violent incidents. The LEAs would then develop overall plans to address their needs. The SAVE Act assessment could serve as a planning guide for the necessary elements for an effective plan. The plan should include overall cost estimates and incorporate research-supported strategies to address identified risks and needs. Each district would then allocate available funds from all sources to develop a balanced safety program including both building security and violence prevention programs.

Any policy option that would allow a statewide assessment of overall safety in schools over time requires, at a minimum:

- Development of basic measures of school climate by the Department of Education, and
- Regular reports and analyses of these basic measures.

Such information, in conjunction with data on violent incidents, would provide a means to determine and monitor the safety of schools. It would also enhance efforts to determine the effectiveness of existing violence prevention efforts and the need for additional resources overall or in particular schools or districts. Schools could incorporate statewide standardized questions into the climate assessments required for schools by the SAVE Act and School Improvement Plans.

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

TDOE and LEAs should continue to research and evaluate the appropriate use and effectiveness of school building security measures such as school resource officers, metal detectors, random searches, and surveillance cameras. This information should be used by the state-level SAVE Act safety team to provide LEAs and schools with guidance and tools on the appropriate use of these methods and the optimum balance between security and prevention methods.

The state-level SAVE Act safety team should incorporate additional requirements and measures that address the following identified best practices currently missing from the framework:

- Fostering positive adult-child relationships, such as providing adequate supervision of students and meeting the goals of mutual trust and respect between students and staff;
- Increasing student engagement in classes and other school activities; and
- Assessing physical environment and security protocols such as adequate visibility of all areas of the school used by students and appropriate maintenance of buildings.

The Department of Education should inform the General Assembly in the mandated SAVE Act annual reports how the accountability and technical assistance components are being met, given the elimination of the dedicated position funded when the Act was passed in 2007.

The State Board of Education should reexamine the state's Unsafe School Choice Policy (4.202) definition for "persistently dangerous school." No Tennessee school has ever met the state's criteria for this classification, which may raise questions about data reporting and how the state defines a PDS or it may speak to state and local efforts to maintain safe school environments. Because few schools nationwide meet their PDS criteria, some researchers argue that states have set the criteria too high and schools commonly underreport violent incidents.

OREA shared a draft copy of this report with the Department of Education and the State Board of Education. See Appendix A for the Department's response. Gary Nixon, Executive Director of the State Board of Education, indicated that the board would confer with TDOE, the Tennessee Organization of School Superintendents, and the Tennessee School Boards Association on the need to revise the Unsafe School Choice School Policy.

ENDNOTES

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APPENDIX A: RESPONSE LETTER FROM TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



PHIL BREDESEN
GOVERNOR

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
6th FLOOR, ANDREW JOHNSON TOWER
710 JAMES ROBERTSON PARKWAY
NASHVILLE, TN 37243-0375

TIMOTHY K. WEBB, Ed.D
COMMISSIONER

August 17, 2009

Mr. Russell Moore
Assistant Director
Office of Research and Education Accountability
Suite 1700
505 Deaderick Street
Nashville, TN 37243-0268

Dear Mr. Moore:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Office of Research and Education Accountability report "Keeping Tennessee Schools Safe". The Department concurs with the administrative policy recommendations presented in the report and will work with the State Level Safety Team to address the areas identified as lacking in the current planning template.

We believe that the work done to date has laid a solid foundation for continued improvements. At a time of unprecedented financial strain, the loss of federal Safe and Drug Free Schools funds will be difficult to manage; however, the Department is committed to a safe and supportive learning environment for all students. We will be exploring a variety of options in order to insure that progress continues in this fundamentally important area.

Thank you again for the opportunity to review and respond to your report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy K. Webb".

Timothy K. Webb

TKW/mh

APPENDIX B: PERSONS CONTACTED

Keith Brewer, Executive Director, Tennessee Organization of School Superintendents

Linda W. Copas, Director of Behavioral and Autism Services, Tennessee Department of Education

Roger Dinwiddie, Executive Director, Center for Youth Issues, Inc., Students Taking a Right Stand (S.T.A.R.S.)

Mike Herrmann, Executive Director, School Safety and Learning Support, Tennessee Department of Education

Joel Moseley, Director of Policy, Tennessee School Board Association

David Sevier, Deputy Executive Director, Tennessee State Board of Education

Sara Smith, Coordinated School Health, Tennessee Department of Education

Nancy Stetten, Educational Consultant, Office of School Approval, Tennessee Department of Education

Gwen Watson, Urban Education Specialist, Tennessee Department of Education

James Vince Witty, Educational Consultant, Office of School Safety and Learning Support, Tennessee Department of Education

Mike Zelnik, State Coordinator, Critical Infrastructure Protection, Office of Homeland Security, Department of Safety

APPENDIX C: BEST PRACTICES FOR SCHOOL SAFETY AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION BY ENDORSING ORGANIZATIONS

Best Practices	Endorsing Organizations									
	HF	US DOE	GAO	SREB	NASP	CDC	NIJ	NCSL	SS	FBI
Comprehensive Approach	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		
Collaboration	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Staff Training	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓
Clear Expectations	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓			✓
Climate & Environment	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Using Data to Evaluate	✓			✓		✓	✓			
Academic Engagement	✓				✓					
Positive Adult-Student Relationships	✓	✓				✓		✓	✓	
Prosocial Skills Development	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Early Identification		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Threat Assessments		✓			✓				✓	✓

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APPENDIX D: A FRAMEWORK FOR BUILDING AND PRESERVING SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS



Tennessee School Safety Center
 Department of Education, Office of School Safety and Learning Support
 SAVE Act Compliance/Self-Assessment Instrument

1.0: EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

A district and school level emergency response plan (ERP) has been developed in conjunction with local emergency response agencies. The ERP is fluid and integrates a multi-hazard approach to planning, involvement from appropriate stakeholders and establishes an incident command structure synchronized with both district and school level safety teams.

	Indicators of Success	Met	Not Met/ Action Plan Required	In Progress/ Action Plan Required	Not Applicable/ Explanation Required
1.1	A district and school level emergency response plan (ERP) has been developed in coordination with local emergency response agencies and other appropriate stakeholders including the following: police and fire departments, EMS, local medical facilities, administrators, staff, parents and students, school nurse(s), school resource officer(s), mental health agencies, school transportation personnel and other appropriate community representatives.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.2	Mutual aid agreements exist with local response agencies that outline the type of assistance, and identify a chain of command for activating the agreement, define a common language for communicating before, during and after an emergency, and include response agencies when conducting functional exercises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.3	The district and schools have readily available and provided a current copy of the ERP, floor plans/blueprints, schematics, and maps of the school interior and grounds to local emergency response agencies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.4	The ERP has identified district and school safety teams with roles and responsibilities aimed at preventing, responding to and recovering from emergencies. Members include but not limited to the following individuals: director of schools, administrators, staff, parents, school bus personnel and local emergency response agencies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.5	The ERP designates district and school-level safety coordinators. The names of these individuals has been communicated to local emergency response agencies, administrators, staff and students, the Department of Education, and other appropriate individuals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.6	The district and school ERP has designated a first responder team of individuals trained in CPR, bloodborne pathogens, first aid, general emergency management and the use of an AED (automated external defibrillator). The first responder team is readily available to manage and care for students, administrators, staff, and visitors in the absence of or while awaiting local emergency response agencies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Indicators of Success	Met	Not Met/ Action Plan Required	In Progress/ Action Plan Required	Not Applicable/ Explanation Required
1.7	The district ERP has integrated a recovery strategy into the plan that coordinates a postvention team available to each school. The team is accessible to provide counseling and other support for students, staff, and parents following an emergency or other traumatic event.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.8	District and school ERPs follow FEMA's (Federal Emergency Management Agency) emergency management cycling including the following stages in planning: mitigation and prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery. Furthermore, the school district is working towards voluntary compliance of <i>NIMS Implementation Matrix for State and Territories</i> .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.9	District and school ERPs integrate a multi-hazard approach to planning and annually assesses the following hazards: classrooms, community, structural and non-structural. When present, the SRO (School Resource Officer) conducts /or assists schools in these assessments.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.10	The district and school ERPs included an emergency transportation plan for moving students to an off-site location including at least two alternative sites (one of which is outside the local community).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.11	The district ERP has addressed any potential emergencies that might take place while transporting students and staff (a separate emergency plan for school buses is developed and reviewed annually and revised as needed).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.12	An Incident Command System (ICS) for the district and school integrates a chain of command (outlined in an organizational chart) with a single incident commander and alternates to carry out the ERP. ICS utilizes FEMA's five functional areas including: command, operations, planning, logistics and finance/administration.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.13	Each individual falling under the Incident Command System (ICS) has assigned and designated responsibilities during an emergency and received training accordingly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.14	All district and school ERPs include the following elements: concept of operations, first responder team, postvention team, parent notification plan, plan for relocating and releasing students, designated primary and alternate evacuation routes, planning for school-sponsored events, field trips, bus emergencies and on-site and off-site command posts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.15	An internal and external communication plan is developed to ensure contact is established in a way that facilitates rapid and secure distribution of critical emergency information. Furthermore, plain language is developed and used for commands that alert administrators, staff, students and local emergency response agencies to the appropriate emergency response(s).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.16	The district ERP has outlined a media response/communication plan. At minimum the plan includes the following: a designated public information officer (PIO), the establishment of one unified message, plan for communicating information to parents and the community, identified and separate staging areas for the media, and guidelines on how to respond to media questioning during an emergency.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.17	District, school, classroom, and bus emergency kits are on hand and include (when appropriate): specific emergency response plans (flip charts, crisis cards, etc.), staff and student emergency contact and medical information, bus route information, student release information, phone trees and emergency numbers, first aid kits and other appropriate items.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Indicators of Success	Met	Not Met/ Action Plan Required	In Progress/ Action Plan Required	Not Applicable/ Explanation Required
1.18	District and school ERPs address and plan for the distinct needs of special populations during an emergency such as disabled and/or non-English-speaking students and staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.19	The district and school ERPs have included plans for the documentation of administrative actions during an emergency. Such records might include the following: telephone logs, detailed description of events and actions taken, records of injuries and follow-up actions, accounting for administrators, staff and students, notification of parents and parent pick up documentation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.20	In coordination with local emergency response agencies, the district and school has developed, disseminated and implemented emergency drills/procedures for the following: evacuation, reverse evacuation, lockdown, shelter-in-place, and drop, cover and hold. Administrators, staff, and students have been trained in these procedures.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.21	The school district has explored the issues associated with a continuity of operations plan (COOP) that would allow the district to continue mission-critical operations following an event that results in significant loss of personnel and/or extended school closing (pandemic flu).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.22	All components of the district and school ERP are reviewed and revised annually based on deficiencies identified through drills, exercises, and actual implementation. Any new potential hazards, safety issues, and/or threats (based on yearly assessments) are accounted for in the ERP. Revisions to the ERP are made in coordination with all appropriate stakeholders and delivered to local emergency response agencies ensuring that a current plan resides with these agencies at all times.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.23	Consistent with <i>Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-801</i> the district has made available a summary of the system-wide ERP for public comment at least (30) days prior to its adoption.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.24	As outlined in <i>Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-801</i> , the district level ERP has been submitted to the Tennessee Department of Education. Supplemental materials include contact information for the following individuals: director of schools, emergency coordinator, crisis intervention/postvention coordinator, PIO, school-level emergency coordinators, and the transportation supervisor.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.25	The district has delivered a copy of the system-level ERP and all school-level ERPs to local law enforcement and emergency management agencies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

ACTION PLAN (INDICATOR 1.0: EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT)

Indicator	Target Date for Completion	Strategies for Implementation	Stakeholders to Assist with Implementation

2.0: PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

Some emergencies can be prevented and/or mitigated. School safety planning includes taking appropriate steps to prevent problems from developing in the first place. Districts should attempt to defuse a crisis before it occurs by creating supportive learning environments that strive to reduce potential risks to the greatest extent possible. This includes training administrators and staff to identify students who exhibit early warning signs for the potential use of violence.

	Indicators of Success	Met	Not Met/ Action Plan Required	In Progress/ Action Plan Required	Not Applicable/ Explanation Required
2.1	The guiding philosophy and mission of the district and schools is central to student success, invokes high levels of staff support, and fosters a safe and supportive school climate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.2	Administrators, staff and transportation personnel are trained to identify the early-warning signs associated with students who pose a potential threat to others or themselves including training in threat assessment and crisis intervention.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.3	The school district has established linkages to local mental health agencies, including a mobile crisis team/postvention team that will support schools during the recovery phase of a crisis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.4	Administrators, staff, and transportation personnel are provided in-service training to teach positive social skills, healthy lifestyles, and violence prevention and fuse these topics into the curriculum. Topics might include the following: alcohol, drugs, suicide, tobacco, violence prevention, conflict resolution, character education, communication/decision making, health and wellness education, internet safety, problem solving, sexual harassment, social skills, teamwork, and other appropriate training events.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.5	Students have access to licensed school counselors who are implementing the <i>Tennessee Comprehensive School Counseling Model</i> and are empowered to make recommendations to outside social service agencies that can assist the student with his or her particular needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.6	Parents, students and the community are partners with the district and school and take an active role in the collective responsibility for the safety of the schools.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.7	Schools annually conduct climate assessments. Assessments cover topics such as the following: student discipline, gangs, violence, bullying (including cyber bullying), threats perceived by students, and other safety concerns. The results of the assessments are used to develop a plan of action.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.8	Alternatives to suspension and expulsion have been built into the disciplinary policy and are appropriately and consistently used. Alternative education programs utilize best practices in the field as outlined in <i>Tennessee’s Model for Alternative Education</i> .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.9	Students have opportunities before and after school to participate in extended learning and recreational activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

ACTION PLAN (INDICATOR 2.0: PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION)

Indicator	Target Date for Completion	Strategies for Implementation	Stakeholders to Assist with Implementation

3.0: POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Carefully developed policies and procedures can help to reduce emergencies and compliment your existing emergency response plan (ERP). Effective policies and procedures outlining specific actions regarding day-to-day operations can help prevent, or reduce the chances of an emergency and/or crisis.

	Indicators of Success	Met	Not Met/ Action Plan Required	In Progress/ Action Plan Required	Not Applicable/ Explanation Required
3.1	The district and all schools have a written code of conduct based on stakeholder input that is revised annually, ensures safe and disciplined classrooms, avoids technical jargon, and is clearly communicated to staff, students and parents. (i.e. commonly found in the student handbook)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2	Consistent with <i>Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-1016</i> , the school district has implemented a policy prohibiting and responding to an incident of harassment, intimidation, and bullying. This policy should be included in the code of conduct.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.3	The district has a formal procedure to receive, investigate, and respond to threats, an actual incident of violence, or other misconduct by students or staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.4	The State Board of Education's <i>Unsafe School Choice Policy</i> is implemented and regularly communicated to administrators, teachers, staff and students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.5	A memorandum of understanding exists when a school resource officer is assigned to a particular school building. The MOU designates the SRO's role within the school environment and their responsibilities during an emergency. Furthermore, a MOU exists between the district and a local mental health agency.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.6	The district has formal procedures in place that limit access to each educational facility to authorized students, administrators and staff. Procedures include a clearly marked and centralized point for screening all visitors. Each facility also has procedures for securing the school after hours and/or when unoccupied.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.7	Consistent with <i>Tenn. Code Ann. §. 49-5-413</i> the school district has conducted criminal history/background checks of all teachers and other employees working in close proximity to school children or children in a child care program. Pursuant to the legislation cited above, history/background checks are conducted on all vendors having direct contact or access to the grounds of a school or child care center when children are present.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.8	The district has a policy that prohibits weapons on or in any educational facility. This policy has been communicated to administrators, staff, transportation personnel, students, parents and the community. Signs are posted in each facility that indicates the existence of this policy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.9	The district has an approved Safe and Drug Free Schools plan that is based on an annual needs assessment involving all appropriate stakeholders and includes the mandated advisory council or committee. The district annually reviews and revises programs funded under SDFS based on the needs of that particular district and in coordination with school climate assessments.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.10	A certified fire marshal inspector has conducted an annual fire safety assessment of all educational facilities to ensure compliance with the guidelines set forth. Deficiencies are immediately addressed and remedied based on the inspector's findings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.11	The district has developed and implemented procedures for verifying that required and planned emergency drills have been conducted at each school. Furthermore, the district has participated in functional exercises that help assess emergency readiness.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Indicators of Success	Met	Not Met/ Action Plan Required	In Progress/ Action Plan Required	Not Applicable/ Explanation Required
3.12	The district has adopted procedures for responding to reports of a firearm on campus. Procedures include the immediate notification of local law enforcement as required by <i>Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-4209</i> . Furthermore, the procedure is communicated to administrators, staff, and transportation personnel.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.13	When the school district negotiates contracts with outside agencies, the district specifies appropriate measures to ensure the safety and general well being of students benefiting from those services (i.e. requiring an emergency response plan, training, drills, etc.).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.14	The district has procedures in place that designate when and who has the authority to activate the district and school-level emergency response plan (ERP).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

ACTION PLAN (INDICATOR 3.0: POLICIES AND PROCEEDURES)

Indicator	Target Date for Completion	Strategies for Implementation	Stakeholders to Assist with Implementation

4.0: EVIDENCE INVENTORY

The Evidence Inventory provides a snapshot view of strategies and procedures that the district has in place to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment. Not all of the strategies and procedures listed below are appropriate or necessary for all schools. It is important, however, to periodically assess each of the broad areas identified. "Broadly Used" indicates that most schools in the district use this practice; "Limited Use" indicates some but less than half of schools in the district use this practice. "Initial/Trial Use" indicates new use of the practice in the district.

School Security: School security is broadly defined as protection from danger or loss. Sometimes referred to as "target-hardening," security strategies generally focus on access control and supervision.	Broadly Used	Limited Use	Initial/Trial Use	Not Used
Access Control	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Anonymous reporting procedures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bus monitors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contract security	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Strategies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Detection dogs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hall monitors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Locked doors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Metal detectors, hand-held	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Metal detectors, walk-thru	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Panic button or silent alarm	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Periodic security audits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Resource Officers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student release procedures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vehicle screening	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Video/electronic surveillance (building/campus)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Video/electronic surveillance (busses)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Visitor screening, sign-in	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Preparedness: Adequate preparedness helps ensure a timely and effective response to threatening situations, reducing loss and a speeding recovery.	Broadly Used	Limited Use	Initial/Trial Use	Not Used
Community Emergency Response Training (CERT)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Emergency communications procedures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
First Aid/CPR training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Frequent and varied drills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Multi-hazard emergency management training for all staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participation in community-wide exercises	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Preparedness teams	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Postvention Teams	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Restraint training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trauma support teams	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academic and Behavior Support/Intervention Programs: Some students need additional attention/services in order to develop pro-social behaviors and/or reduce barriers to learning.	Broadly Used	Limited Use	Initial/Trial Use	Not Used
Afternoon/Saturday detention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Alternative education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Alcohol/drug assessment services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Anger management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coordinated School Health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Credit Recovery	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day treatment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Extended learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
For-cause drug testing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Freshman Academies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify and support students who live in neglectful or violent situations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In-school suspension/alternatives to suspension and expulsion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mentoring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent/family support services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Random drug testing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School-based mental health services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School counseling Number of counselors in district using <i>Tennessee Comprehensive School Counseling Model</i> : <input type="text"/> Total number of counselors employed in district: <input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Severely Emotionally Disturbed (SED) classrooms, services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Short-term counseling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Small Learning Communities (SLC)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student assistance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Substance abuse/smoking cessation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Systems of care (district participates in community wide mental health program)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Therapeutic classrooms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Threat assessment process	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Truancy intervention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transition services (for students returning from an out-of-school placement)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth suicide prevention/intervention:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Violence prevention:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

School Climate: One of the single most important building blocks of a safe school and a crucial element of school improvement planning, school climate reflects how it "feels" to be a student at the school.	Broadly Used	Limited Use	Initial/Trial Use	Not Used
Bullying/harassment prevention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bus monitors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Classroom management training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hall monitors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mentoring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Olweus Bullying Prevention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent involvement programs:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent volunteers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prejudice reduction/tolerance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School-wide positive behavior support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School-wide discipline	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student code of conduct	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Surveys on climate and culture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Uniform dress code policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social-Emotional Learning: Caring, capable and responsible students perform better academically and behaviorally. Self-management, relationship and decision-making skills are critical elements of social-emotional learning.	Broadly Used	Limited Use	Initial/Trial Use	Not Used
Anger management/impulse control	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Alcohol/drug abuse prevention curriculum:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conflict resolution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evidence-based character education:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gang awareness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leadership development programs/opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relationship violence (Ex: Safe Dates)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Service learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social skills training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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