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Crisis Prevention Teams In High Schools

Jason M. Wanko
Seton Hall University

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CRISIS PREVENTION TEAMS IN HIGH SCHOOLS

BY

JASON M. WANKO

Thesis Advisor

Donald N. Lombardi, Ph.D., Fac.ACHE

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in Corporate and Public Communication
Seton Hall University**

2000

Author' Note

The author wishes to acknowledge the aid of his family, friends, and colleagues during his study. The author especially would like to thank his father, Dr. Michael A. Wanko, his mother Justine Wanko, and Dr. Don Lombardi for their tireless effort for this study to be successful.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

High schools today continue to play a crucial role in the development of youth. This is the environment where personal identities are nurtured, and adolescents set the framework for their future aspirations. Unfortunately, in society today high schools are, at times, not a safe and nurturing environment. The problems of the real world have crept into the hallways of a once safe haven. Nearly three million index crimes occur on or around American high school campuses which translates to 16,000 crimes per school day or about one occurrence in every 6 seconds when schools are in session (Stephens, 1998). These crimes are not specific to race, gender, teacher, or student. The Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence (CSPV as cited in Lorion, 1998) states "everyday approximately 100,000 children are assaulted at school. Additionally, 5,000 teachers are threatened with physical assault and 200 are actually attacked" (p. 4).

As a result of these issues, students may have an unsettling fear walking down the hallways of academia. The life of an adolescent is already brimming with turmoil, decisions, and pressures now they must deal with feelings of fear in the corridors. Studies indicate that 20% of students reported threats involving weapons or assaults in school; however the most frequent form of violence is pushing and shoving (Lorion, 1998). Violent crimes do occur on high school campuses each day and the effects of these crimes brand their images into students' minds. "Approximately one out of every eight students

has reported carrying some form of weapon to school" (Lorion, 1998, p. 5). Fear has burrowed its path implanting feelings of mistrust and trepidation.

Although violence has increased in high schools in recent years, it has not stopped educators and communities from reaching out to its youth. The problem of violence for the most part is internal, involving student altercations. According to the CSPV (as cited in Hamburg, 1998) "student assaults on other students are the most frequent type of violence reported in schools" (p. 7).

This issue is escalating with each passing year. A survey that questioned U.S. students from the 6th to 12th grade reported that 13% of the respondents said someone else had seriously threatened to shoot them (Mercy & Rosenberg, 1998). Action must be taken to attempt to alleviate the difficult scenarios high schools and their students are facing today.

The focus of this study is to emphasize that a crisis plan is vital to every high school across the nation. It is the author's contention that a school that has developed and implemented a crisis response will be able to return their school to normalcy more quickly than a high school that does not have a crisis plan. Order will be restored from disorder, and stability will replace chaos. In no way does this mean that a crisis plan will alleviate violence in high schools. This thinking merely suggests that a school that is better prepared will be better able to cope with the problems it must face and return to normalcy.

Research Question

Does the implementation of an effective crisis management program help to diminish the deleterious impact of violent episodes in high schools? This study focuses on the violent episodes that occur in American high schools and various crisis plans that are constructed to combat the violence evidenced in high schools today. The examples in the study will indicate that crisis plans are crucial to high schools dealing with violence issues.

Subsidiary Questions

While attempting to understand violence occurrences in high schools the study will also explore the following questions:

1. What are some examples of violence seen in high schools today?
2. Who needs to be involved in the high school community
3. What are some programs that may help to diminish violence in high schools?
4. What ideas or strategies can be utilized to decrease violence in high schools?
5. What are the components of a successful crisis plan?

Purpose of the Study

Schools today are plagued with violence and feelings of uneasiness. These emotions are not limited to the high school student. The same anxieties are shared with teachers and educators alike. A national survey in 1991 (as cited in Laub & Lauritsen,

1998) showed that 28% of public high school teachers were verbally abused, 15% were threatened with injury, and 3% were actually attacked physically by a student.

Schools are viewed as a community within a community. Teachers, staff, and students are all affected by violence in high schools. "Violent incidents and threats of violence at school negatively affect students, school staff, and the educational process" (Hamburg, 1998, p. 9). The CSPV points out that fear and feelings of being unsafe cause an increase in student absence for school and a decrease in student class participation.

Educators and the general public believe that they must fight violence with a rigid system of punishment so as to set an example to others that violence will not be tolerated in high schools. It has been noted that drugs and alcohol play an intricate role in violence in the school system. The 1997 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll (Rose & Gallup, 1999) asked the public how they would improve its schools. "The public continues to support zero tolerance policies with regard to drugs and alcohol. Ninety percent believe that violation of these policies should lead to automatic suspension" (Rose & Gallup, 1999, p. 12).

It has been noted that drugs and alcohol play an intricate role in violence in the school system. In addition, there is added component of weapons in schools.

Research suggests that the explanation that students carry handguns for protection is an oversimplification (Mercy & Rosenberg, 1998). This only scratches the surface as to why a student may carry a weapon. "Research suggests that this explanation is an oversimplification. Additional motivational factors for carrying a gun include involvement in delinquent activities, such as drug dealing, and a propensity for aggressive behavior"

(Mercy & Rosenberg, 1998, p. 13). This demonstrates that a student's behavior can be multifaceted. The addition of drugs and alcohol into the high school community can cause enormous negative effects on the normal everyday functions within the school. The decision making processes of students under the influence may be seriously flawed, thereby contributing to the inflated rate of violence in schools.

Communities must understand that the problem of violence is not the problem of educators alone, but rather the problem of the entire community. According to the Hamburg (1998) "research suggests that violence in schools derives mainly from factors external to schools but may be precipitated or aggravated by the school environment" (Hamburg, 1998, p. 6). This statement suggests that the active participation of the community in cooperation with the school system is fundamental in tackling the rising elements of violence present in our school.

There are two main categories to which a school may be assigned: the crisis-prone and the crisis-prepared. "The crisis-prone organization denies the possibility of crisis, such as outbreaks of violence, and does nothing to prevent or prepare for them..." (Denenberg, Denenberg, & Braverman, 1998, p. 6). This organization reacts to events rather than attempting to read the warning signs that might help avoid the tragedy (Denenberg, Denenberg, & Braverman, 1998).

The second category is the crisis-prepared organization. The school administration is proactive versus reactive. According to Denenberg, Denenberg, and Braverman (1998), the crisis-prepared organization will systematically collect and review early warning signs and will in turn respond effectively to the problem. The authors

expand on the subject by stating, "far from denying the possibility of crises, the organization determines in advance how to deal with them. Rather than hunting for a few supposed 'bad apples' in the barrel, it checks the barrel itself for defects" (p. 2).

The author believes that a set crisis plan implemented effectively and in a timely fashion causes a quicker return to normalcy and is a superior plan than that of a high school that merely reacts to a crisis. Denenberg, Denenberg, and Braverman (1998) believe that a high school should adopt a comprehensive violence reduction strategy, marrying the insights of conflict resolution and crisis management. With a concrete plan as part of the curriculum, a school would be more able to deal with a crisis when it surfaces.

"Violence is a human response to stress. Even 'normal' people can react violently when stress becomes unbearable. Symptoms and signals of individual and organizational breakdown typically precede every threat or act of violence" (Denenberg, Denenberg, & Braverman, 1998, p. 8). The author believes that consistent alertness in reading the warning signs will help to avert or deal with a potential crisis. Denenberg, Denenberg, and Braverman (1998) state that a good prevention program seeks to identify and relieve the sources of stress in the workplace and put in place mechanisms to deal with threats.

Objectives

In designing a study that examines high schools and crisis plans, the author identified two main objectives. The first is to examine whether or not high schools that utilized crisis plans were effective in helping deal with the situation that arose. Does a

crisis plan aid in averting or diminishing a potential crisis? The second objective of this research is to attempt to outline who should be involved in making high schools a safe place for learning and what tools are needed to implement a crisis plan. The author meets these two objectives through an extensive review of literature, suggestions from various organizations in place to combat crises and violence, interviews with professionals, and personal observation.

Definition of Terms

1. Crisis: The point of time when an affair has reached its height, and must soon terminate or suffer a material change; turning point.
2. Crisis response team: A team that is trained to deal with a crisis or violent behavior.
3. Public school: An elementary or secondary school established by state law in a district, county, or town, and maintained by taxes as part of a free education system for the children of the community.
4. Bully: A blustering, quarrelsome, overbearing fellow, more distinguished for insolence than for courage, a swaggerer, one who domineers or browbeats.
5. Drill: The act or method of training; any strict, methodical training, instruction, or exercise.
6. School crisis kit: A kit that contains the materials that are needed to deal with a crisis. Each kit can vary from school to school.

Limitations

A limitation of this study is that the information is directed towards high schools in the public sector that have a student body consisting of a minimum of 500 students. This by no means excludes private schools and smaller sized schools from violence and crises, but this limitation allows the author to focus on problems of a particular institution.

Another limitation deals specifically with crises in schools. A crisis in a public institution can range anywhere from a minor issue, such as a dog loose in the halls, to a major tragedy, as the murder of a student within the school complex. The study focuses on the more extreme crisis situations and what steps can be taken to deal with the problem at hand.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Perspectives on Problems Facing High Schools

High schools today are an ever-changing, living, breathing life form that need constant attention. In recent years, the society dwelling within the walls of this institution has changed dramatically. A school can no longer boast of being the last safe haven in the community. It has been poisoned by the ills of society just as many other parts of our culture have been affected.

NACRO's Committee on Children and Crime has identified four specific challenges that face high schools today: to encourage moral and pro-social behavior among pupils, to integrate less able children and tackle under achievement, to promote attendance and participation, and most importantly to reduce the number of children who are excluded (NACRO, 1998).

The research suggests that a school can no longer be reactive. The institution must take a proactive stance. The high school must act as a secondary parent that attempts to include all of its children.

NACRO (1998) concludes that there are four key links between schooling and crime which the Committee believes need attention. The first key link is that there is a problem of anti-social and criminal behavior within schools (NACRO, 1998). NACRO (1998) believes that levels of bullying and violence faced by teachers from pupils and parents continues to grow. The research demonstrates that children are most at risk for

becoming victims of crime and that most school-based crime is not reported to the proper authorities (NACRO, 1998).

The second problem is the question of attachment to achievement in school (NACRO, 1998). Studies suggest that low intelligence and low school attainment are major crime-risk factors (NACRO, 1998). The Home Office researchers study (as cited in NACRO, 1998) differed in that boys who disliked school were no more likely to offend than boys who enjoyed school. The same was found for the standard of school work where "boys who said they were doing badly at school compared to their peers were no more likely to report that they were offenders than those doing well, although girls were more likely to report this" (NACRO, 1998, p. 17).

NACRO (1998) found that the third problem deals with absenteeism. "The Home Office study found strong links between the onset of offending on the one hand and truancy on the other. Persistent truancy was one of three key factors most strongly associated with offending for both boys and girls" (NACRO, 1998, p. 18).

The fourth link demonstrates a stronger tie. This conclusion shows an attachment between children who are suspended, expelled, or excluded from school and their propensity to offend (NACRO, 1998). "In the Home Office study, a high proportion of those who had been temporarily excluded were offenders. As for children who had been permanently excluded, though absolute numbers in the study were small, the link was very strong. All 11 of the permanently excluded boys were offenders" (NACRO, 1998, p. 19).

A concern among people today is that violence is being normalized and is beginning to be accepted into the everyday happenings of the world. The fear is that the students in a school may adapt to violence and begin to take a callous approach to horrific happenings. "Ken Trump notes that a 'lockdown' does not necessarily imply violence (a dog could be loose in the halls, example), and that should be made explicit to students during any drill. But he admits that students will probably think first of a Columbine scenario if lockdowns are practiced" (Cosh & Colby, 2000, p. 2). This may eventually desensitize students to violence causing them to view it as a common everyday occurrence.

Trump (as cited in Cosh & Colby, 2000) adds that some will say that it normalizes violence by suggesting that the school expects the event to occur. His rebuttal to these individuals is: "But does locking your doors 'communicate' to burglars that you expect to be robbed? Ivory-tower theories have to be balanced by common sense" (p.7).

The old watch dog is no longer applicable. Reform is crucial to moving forward into the future. Gest, Hartigan, Lord, Wildavsky, and Marcus (2000) state "Nothing turns kids off more than studies that seem dull and irrelevant, so curriculum reform is crucial, too. Conversely, students seem to learn best when expectations are high and they are challenged to think-- and when the connections are clear between their studies and the real world" (p. 2). Youth should be sheltered but not oblivious to what is happening in the world around them.

Columbine and Related Incidents

“When Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold arrived at their 6:15 a.m. bowling class, there was no reason to suspect that the day would end in a horrific blood bath. By late afternoon, 15 were dead—12 students, a teacher and the gunmen. Then the questions began. Were there other conspirators? Could the attack have been prevented? And the big question: why?” (“Just Like a War Zone,” 1999, p. 1).

Educators feel that warning signs were apparent prior to the tragedy. The following items showed that the two gunmen were troubled individuals and signs were leaked:

January, 1998, Klebold and Harris, then 16, are caught breaking into a van to steal electronics. As first-time offenders, they are considered low risk and assigned to a county juvenile-division program.

July 4, 1998, the Trenchcoat Mafia runs into fellow Columbine student Peter Maher at 7-Eleven. After an exchange of words, Maher says Harris and Klebold wave a pistol at him from the window of Klebold’s BMW.

1998, Harris and Klebold make a video in which they pretend to shoot friends dressed as jocks.

1999, at least one teacher and two parents reportedly warn authorities that the two boys are violent.

Harris’s profile revealed on an America on-line web site includes the quote “Kill’em AALLL!!!”

April 20, 1999, Harris arrives at school wearing a T shirt that reads SERIAL KILLER. Later, after changing into all black, he tells a classmate that he likes him and advises him to go home immediately. ("Just Like a War Zone," 1999, pp. 24-29)

These are examples of blatant warning signs that educators feel should be dealt with early on to prevent a catastrophe.

Al Gore (as cited in Gold & Miller, 2000) when asked about the Columbine catastrophe said, "I think the most meaningful solution for what happened at Columbine is better parenting...and there has to be more meaning and purpose in the lives of all of our families and all of our children" (p. 7).

People are working together to formulating methods to prevent further tragedies from occurring. Winston (1999) states that the search for blame has identifies several potential causes that yield calls for their condemnation or prohibition. Some of these include: guns, rock music, the Internet, school cliques, role-playing video games, school official, a lack of school uniforms, and violence in movies and television.

These factors may or may not have a direct impact on the youth of today. Winston (1999) states "the fact is, while any of these things, in some fashion, may have contributed to warping the outlook of the two high school killers, there are many millions more people who have not been compelled to harm others by exposure to these products, services or information" (p. 7).

Researchers feel that clues are usually leaked before a tragedy such as this one actually happens. Savino (2000) states "in nearly all of the shootings or serious threats

of violence examined, investigators discovered that students had leaked clues of their plans to fellow students well ahead of time" (Savino, 2000, p.5).

The tragedy at Columbine has affected the entire nation. Georgia Senator Max Cleland changed his position and tipped the balance in favor of the gun control bill due to the shootings at Columbine (Branegan, Roche, & Roche, 1999). Cleland (as cited in Branegan, Roche & Roche, 1999)) states "I don't want my high schools, in my state, in this country, to turn into a miniature Vietnam" (p. 7). This does not suggest that this will alleviate the problem, but the Senate gave Americans the sense that this is one of the steps in working together to tackle violence (Branegan, Roche, & Roche, 1999).

Due to attacks such as the one in Columbine, copy cat behavior is imminent. According to an FBI report cited by Savino (2000), "copy cat behavior is very common...evidence strongly indicates that threats increase in schools nationwide after a shooting has occurred anywhere in the United States" (p. 19).

Unfortunately, some people want to mimic the horrific crimes people experience. A group of boys in South High School in Cleveland wanted to do just that. The four students laughed about the Columbine shootings and wanted to do the same thing at their own school (Jet, 1999). The four boys were white at a predominately black school and wanted to carry out the executions. "Authorities said a school map marked with shooting locations and comments reported by classmates convinced them that the threat was real. Police seized two guns from the home of one student" (White Teens Accused of Plotting Against Blacks at Cleveland High School, 1999, p. 3).

Similar reports are constantly coming up in the newspapers with each passing day. Barovick, Rivera, Laughlin, Morse/Trumbull, and Nordan (as cited in Barovick, Rivera, Laughlin, Morse and Nordan, 1999 state, "adolescents are psychologically fragile, and mistreatment from schoolmates leaves deep wounds" (p. 10). This is a consideration when dealing with the diverse student populations embodying each high school across the nation.

Adolescent Instability

Adolescence is one of the most fragile periods in a person's life. It is a time of great instability and turmoil and involves experimentation with life. The human mind is a delicate instrument especially at this trying time. The community must understand that this is a particularly arduous time of life, and therefore society should be embracing its youth. The most mundane instance to an adult may be the epitome of importance in an adolescent's mind. A minor incident can spark a deadly chain of events. The concern lies in the young adult's possible violent reaction.

James Garbarino (as cited in Dunne, 2000), a youth violence expert states:

I think about 90 percent of kids who kill seem 'easy to explain' in the sense that they come out of a background of abuse, neglect, community violence, and escalating social difficulties, all within the context of our socially toxic culture.

The other 10 percent seem to come out of nowhere. (p. 6)

Garbarino works closely with troubled youths in society today.

Even with evidence of why teenagers are capable of committing these acts, America cannot understand why teenagers whether lovesick or antisocial are capable of venting their anger by shooting up their schools (Branegan, Roche, & Roche, 1999).

Numerous studies have been conducted as to why the youth of today are capable of committing such acts of violence. One group researching this issue is the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence (CSPV). They have identified five goals that are important to teens that may result in violence: achieving and maintaining high status; materialism, status, and social identity; power, rough justice, social control, and self help; and defiance of authority (Fagan & Wilkinson, 1998).

Other studies reveal some startling facts about the tendencies of humans and how they function in society. Breaking down social cliques in high school is a way educators hope to prevent violence. However, their efforts are sometimes futile. Barovick, Rivera, Laughlin, Morse/Trumbull, and Nordan (1999) state:

There is probably no way to stop high schools from breaking down into cliques. We may be hardwired for it. As early as preschool, researchers have found, kids begin rejecting other kids, and even in kindergarten, children have a good idea which of their classmates are popular and which are not. (p. 11)

This demonstrates that early on in life children embrace or reject differences in peers.

Outside elements play a constant role in what affects the adolescent. Garbarino (as cited in Dunne, 2000) feels that the social dangers of society-- drugs, violence, delinquency, inequality-- are tolerable if the teen has everything else going for him or her. These factors are a healthy family, a positive temperament, a good education, and

spiritual grounding (Dunne, 2000). Garbarino (as cited in Dunne, 2000) goes on to state, "But if you are vulnerable, it is a dangerous society because you are likely to be 'infected' by the social toxicity and do harm to yourself or others or both" (p. 10).

The Federal Bureau of Investigation Report

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) studied 18 school shootings for two years and released a report on violence in schools. The final report noted:

At this time, there is no research that has identified traits and characteristics that can reliably distinguish school shooters from other students. Many students appear to have traits and characteristics similar to those observed in students who were involved in school shootings. (Savino, 2000)

Mary Ellen O'Toole (as cited in Savino, 2000) an FBI agent on the study team stated, "People don't wake up one morning and decide to be violent" (p. 6).

The FBI (as cited in Lichtblau, 2000) said educators must be in tune with clues, undercurrents, and incidents occurring in their schools. The FBI found that in most cases clues were leaked by the attackers that might signal an impending violent act.

Officials say that the key is to learn how to differentiate between legitimate threats and idle ones (Lichtblau, 2000). The FBI (as cited in Lichtblau, 2000) uses the example that one student telling another that he is a dead man may only be a low-level threat. The other example is an anonymous call to the principal's office that gives specific information about a pipe bomb scheduled to go off in the gym would be a high-level threat because it is direct and specific.

The FBI stressed that their report does not represent the next rampaging student, rather it should be utilized by educators to develop a systematic way of assessing how seriously to respond to threats and deal with them effectively.

There is however concern that the suggestions in the report will backfire in schools and would do more harm than good. The FBI (as cited in Lichtblau, 2000) stated, "At worst...there is a risk that school officials would use it to vilify kids experiencing nothing more than awkward adolescence" (p. 5).

Statistics on School Safety

The "White House Fact Sheet" (1998) on school safety noted that students are less likely to feel victimized but more likely to feel unsafe. This report went on to say that although the number of multiple homicide events at schools increased since 1993 (from two to six -- and with four times as many victims), the overall crime rate in schools has dropped from 164 crimes per 1,000 students in 1993 to about 128 such crimes in 1996 ("White House Fact Sheet," 1998).

The White House Safety Conference (as cited in "White House Fact Sheet, 1998) also reported that only 10 percent of public schools report serious or violent crimes to local law enforcement officials. It added that 47 percent of schools report less serious or non-violent crimes, and 43 percent do not report any crimes.

The 1997 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll (as cited in Rose & Gallup, 1999) of the public's attitudes toward public schools gave hope to the school systems of today. The report noted:

It is somewhat surprising, given the concern with student discipline and the recent shootings at Columbine High School, that 24 percent of the respondents still feel that the schools in their community are 'very safe and orderly,' while 62 percent believe they are 'somewhat safe and orderly. (p. 10)

The report went on to note that when public school parents were asked about the school their oldest child attends, the 'very safe and orderly' percentage rises to 42 percent (Rose & Gallup, 1999).

These statistics paint a brighter future for public high schools in America. The violence in high schools has to be tackled head on. Denenberg, Denenberg, and Braverman (1998) said, "this unprecedented eruption of mayhem demonstrates an urgent need for school districts to emulate private and public sector workplaces by adopting a comprehensive violence reduction strategy, marrying the insights of conflict resolution and crisis management (p. 3). They further go on to say that the strategy relies heavily on the concept of dispute resolution skills. Mediation, facilitation, and conciliation can ensure collaborative problem-solving by a violence prevention team and help to mobilize the vital school and community materials (Deneberg, Denenberg, & Braverman, 1998).

Hemming (2000) notes that many problems at school stem from social issues. The statistics show that nationally, 45 percent of problems were boyfriend/girlfriend conflicts. Hemming also found that the most common cause for conflict were 'stupid things' such as bumping into one another or giving a dirty look.

School Outreach

The CSPV researchers Laub and Lauristen (1998) state: "the most effective school responses to violence are those that develop the social resources of their students" (p. 12). Educators must exercise collaborative work with students and utilize them in their programs. Administrators cannot think like adolescents, and that is why young adults' input is vital to school success.

Gest, Hartigan, Lord, Wildavsky, and Marcus (2000) state, "Kids clearly benefit from strong bonds with caring advisors. So most of the schools whose stories follow make sure that all students have a close relationship with a teacher or counselor" (p. 2). Gest et al. also feel that a key to turning around a school is parent involvement (Gest, Hartigan, Lord, Wildavsky, & Marcus, 2000).

According to NACRO (1998), "schools have a part to play along with the police, social services and other organizations in identifying children and young people most at risk of offending and developing measures to divert them from crime" (p. 13).

Abramson (1999) stated that school administrators originally believed that installing office panic buttons and professional hall monitors, locking building doors, and implementing an identification card system would alleviate the problem of violence. These steps are now considered ill-effective since most cases of high school violence in the 1990's were caused by the students within the facility (Abramson, 1999). Abramson (1999) adds that school boards are now advised to formulate solutions that will aid to improve the cultural framework of the school in a way that promotes a better relationship between teachers and students.

The DARE program has been successful in improving the social contexts of students. Seventy-seven percent of DARE students that graduated the program are still not using drugs four years later (Rosenbaum, Flewelling, Baily, Faggianai, Ringwalt, Wilkinson, & Davis, 1995). In addition, 95 percent of DARE graduates have not been involved in criminal activity during the 4 years the DARE program existed (Rosenbaum, Flewelling, Baily, Faggianai, Ringwalt, Wilkinson, & Davis, 1995).

Crisis Plans

Crisis plans are being implemented in high schools across the nation. Educators are realizing the need for these plans to be part of the school processes. Stephens (1998), in an article for CSPV, states that the best safe school plans involve the entire community (Stephens, 1998). Stephens explains that making a planning team for crisis prevention to work effectively is difficult. The toughest challenge is to allay the resentments and fears that take place when formerly independent agencies are suddenly asked to work together on the same 'turf.'

Stephens (1998) states, "...diverse efforts from a multi-organizational and cultural planning team sends an important message to the community that school safety is not merely a social problem, but rather a community problem" (p. 21). Cleveland-based school security consultant Ken Trump states in a report by Cosh and Colby (2000):

Schools were approaching safety strictly from the prevention perspective. It wasn't politically correct to talk about violent behavior. But now people are realizing that you've got to develop crisis plans for violence as you do for fires

and tornadoes. We have to be prepared to manage those cases we can't prevent... and manage our losses as effectively as we possibly can. (p. 4)

Safety of schools must have the involvement, acceptance, and input of the entire community to be successful.

Comer et al. (1998) of the CSPV have outlined the components of a safe school plan. They are as follows: convene a safe school planning team, conduct a school site assessment, develop strategies and implement violence prevention programs to address school safety concerns, establish a social support team, and develop a crisis response plan. The authors state: "no two safe school plans are exactly the same. Each school community must identify its own needs and the strategies necessary to meet those needs" (p. 7).

In another article from the CSPV, Hamburg (1998) outlines a public health model. It includes five features: community-based methods for problem identification and developing solutions across the entire population groups; health-event surveillance for gathering data that will establish the nature of health problems and to track relevant risk factors and trends of its incidence and prevalence; epidemiological analysis to identify risk factors and associated co-factors that deal with health problems; intervention evaluations and design; and outreach, education, and information dissemination.

Deneberg, Deneberg, and Braverman (1998) report on board proposal in California to bring police sniffing dogs onto campuses. Hundreds of residents attended the meeting and were assured that the policy would be noninvasive, meaning that the dogs would search lockers and vehicles only for drugs and weapons. If something was found,

the student would be taken from class and his or her parents would be contacted. This policy would demonstrate to students that school is not a place to drink, smoke, or carry weapons (Deneberg, Denenberg, & Braverman, 1998).

DARE students have also been a success in relation to drug and alcohol regulation. The program has a positive effect on anti-drug attitudes and confidence in peer-pressure resistance skills (Rosenbaum, Flewelling, Baily, Faggianai, Ringwalt, Wilkinson, & Davis, 1995).

Administrators must also be prepared to deal with any situation that arises. East Knox High School in Ohio was faced with a teen suicide. The principal, Mike Warbel, had to deal with the dilemma of memorializing the students without glamorizing suicide (Crary, 2000). Warbel decided against a school wide assembly after learning the youths died by setting their car ablaze (Crary, 2000). Warbel asked the teachers to break the news to the students in their individual classrooms. Warbel (as cited in Crary, 2000) said:

You have the kids in a familiar setting, and then if you drop a bomb in their laps, it's a little easier for them to respond...you go through your daily routine...the bells still ring, but the students are free to go anytime to counselors, or just sit around in groups and talk. (p. 25)

Each situation is different and needs to be responded to in an appropriate fashion. No two situations are exactly alike in nature.

Schools Within Schools

Another idea that many high schools utilize is the school within school program. This is another way to help control and prevent violence in high schools. According to Gest, Hartignan, Lord, Wildavsky, and Marcus (2000), "a host of studies have shown that smaller schools and 'schools within schools' that allow students to focus on particular areas of interest...produce higher achievers who drop out at lower rates" (p. 2).

Abramson (1999) agrees with this notion and wrote in a column shortly after the Columbine shooting that minimizing school size and creating more contact between adults and students might be effective.

Abramson (1999) notes the Breaking Ranks report from a special commission of the National Association of Secondary School Principals. The study suggests breaking large high schools into houses of no more than 600 students each with its own faculty. This would help to improve the student and teacher relationship since the teacher has more of a chance to associate with each student.

Drills

Drills are another option for high schools to utilize in dealing with crisis situations. These drills that deal with various crisis problems are conducted similar to a fire drill. Schools are using these systems just as they would for any other drill in their school plans.

Calder (1999) points out a school in Waterville, Maine, that staged a crisis drill. Two gunmen walked into the high school and took the assistant principal hostage and fired shots into the school entrance. The police set up a command center and began to work with the students and the school staff. After a few hours, one gunman was pronounced dead and the other was captured. Everyone was safe and the emergency crisis drill proved to be a learning experience for all that were involved according to the Police Chief John Morris (Calder, 1999).

According to Calder (1999) the crisis plan was discussed and planned for 2 years before the actual event took place. The team consisted of 50 police officers, members of the State Police Tactical Team, teachers, and school administrators who all partook in the staged event.

According to Morris (as cited in Calder, 1999) "the exercise was a much better success than anybody expected...all our plans and protocols were more than satisfactory. We did discuss several weaknesses which we'll correct" (p. 19).

Morris (as cited in Calder, 1999) would not reveal tactical details, but he did say that part of the success of the drill was due to innovative measures on the part of teachers and administrators communicating with police in the command center.

Morris (as cited in Calder, 1999) commented that one of the learning experiences from the exercise was that the communications center in an actual event would receive more telephone calls than it could handle. This allows for mistakes in a staged event that could not happen in an actual event.

Atholton High School in Howard County produced a staged shooting. White (2000) points out that the drill helped to reveal flaws in the plan. A reporter from the sun and some parents got into the building after the shooting in a back window. Teachers were told not to leave their classrooms unless the principal or police ordered them to, but when a fire alarm was pulled, some teachers left the building. Communication was also not the best it could be (White, 2000).

The school's spokesperson, Patti Caplan (as cited in White, 2000) said, "I think we have some areas that we need to work on, but I'm glad that we found out about that in a drill and not in a real situation" (p. 8).

Cosh and Colby (2000) cite a school in the Ottawa-Carleton District that transformed the concept of a fire drill to a gunfire drill. A massive exercise was conducted in a rural school. The event utilized student volunteers and actors from a local community college. Teachers and police played out a staged gun rampage and as a result discovered problems that were not anticipated. The police were shocked to learn that the batteries in their walkie-talkies did not have sufficient life for an extended hostage crisis. They also realized that if the school's main office was captured or cut off by an armed maniac, it would be impossible to get the information there, the phones, or the intercom.

Summary

The author's review of literature related to crisis situations in high schools helps to provide possible answers to questions that were addressed in Chapter One. The author explored the perspectives of a safe school, the tragic events of Columbine and its effects on schools across the nation, adolescent instability in relation to school violence, FBI reports on violence in schools, school safety statistics, school outreach programs and participants, crisis plans, schools within schools, and staged drills against violence. While there is a plethora of information available on school violence and ways to combat it, no one can yet agree how to effectively deal with violence in high schools. Multiple schools are attempting many avenues of study and implementation. Numerous schools across the nation have come to the realization of the crucial need to adopt a proactive style rather than merely a reactive response to a violent situation.

Chapter III

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Population and Sample

Throughout the study, the author's purpose is to incorporate those elements that constitute an effective crisis preparedness plan. The author plans to determine those components which are extremely important and those which are nominally important.

The targeted audience for the survey was 60 elected representatives in the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association (NJPSA). This field survey was administered to a select group of practitioners. They are elected by their peers to represent the 21 counties in the state of New Jersey. Therefore, this sampling is reflective of administrators possessing vast field experience and knowledge in educational administration and supervision. Further, the author eliminated the problems of insufficient returns of surveys associated with bulk mailings. Approval was obtained from the executive director to administer the survey at the NJPSA Council Meeting in December, 2000.

The author felt that this New Jersey State meeting would encompass the finest representation of administrators in order to establish what schools required in a crisis plan. Since these men and women represent their individual counties, their responses would mirror the feelings of the schools directly under their leadership.

Survey

The survey was distributed on December 8, 2000, after a state meeting in Trenton. The survey contained an area for participants to insert their title, number of years as an administrator, number of years in education, age, sex, school, district, grade levels, enrollment, county, and their name (optional). The questionnaire also asked if there was a current crisis response team in place. The participants were directed to rate the enclosed 20 statements from 10, being extremely important, to 1, being nominally important. The parties were ensured that all the information and responses would be kept in the strictest confidence.

The survey was created by the author. After a field test with administrators at Bayonne High School, modifications were made with the help of the president-elect of the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association.

The author deems it necessary to explain each of the statements rated in the survey in order to fully explain the contents of the survey.

1. A working definition of what constitutes a crisis situation. The first item highlights the necessity of developing a working definition of crisis for your school. Remember, that the event is extraordinary and usually unpredictable. What could be considered a crisis situation in one school or district may not necessarily be classified as a crisis in another. Furthermore, the crisis can occur outside the school and carry over into the building.

2. Trained crisis team members with each member aware of everyone's responsibilities. Once a team has been selected, conduct training as soon as possible.

Since it is impossible to predict when a crisis will occur your school, speed in setting up your program is of the essence. It is imperative that each person not only understands their position, but should also be cognizant of the assigned duties of each team member.

3. Crisis teams meet at least once a year to review procedures. Just as the crisis management team needs to meet and review policy each year, the entire staff needs to be trained annually. Turnover in personnel and the amount of information that each staff member is required to retain necessitates this review. Naturally, this in-service needs to be conducted early in the year because a crisis can strike at any time. In addition to providing the necessary information to make the plan work, conduct an annual in-service that emphasis the importance of crisis preparedness.

4. Communication strategies are developed for staff and students. How you share information is crucial to maintaining control. Communication strategies are vital in effectively transmitting the proper message to the staff and students. A team should be set up to determine what should and should not be said to the school's population.

5. Principal in charge of the Crisis Response Team. The selection of the person to chair the operation during a crisis could be a very difficult task. This individual needs to have a working knowledge of the school and be able to maintain composure during difficult conditions. Also, it is a good practice for every member of the crisis team to be familiar with every duty. In this fashion of cross training, if an individual is absent or cannot rise to the occasion during the actual crisis, another trained person can assume the role.

6. Student programs dealing with conflict resolution plan. Programs should be developed so students can react in a crisis drill. They should be made aware of the procedure and what their responsibility is in a crisis situation. Drills for crisis situations should run like a fire drill.

7. Metal detector wands and/or walk-through detectors. Anti-violence devices are often utilized to help deter violent acts. It is up to the individual school whether or not metal detectors are necessary.

8. An evacuation plan in the possession of all staff members. The evacuation plan needs to address when and to where students and staff will be moved. Different situations need to be covered in the egress plan. For example, when conducting a fire drill, it is good practice to close a particular stairwell or exit as though the fire was in that area. In this manner, the students and staff will be able to practice utilizing the alternate egress plan. List the possible scenarios such as a gas leak, bomb threats, hostage situations, and so on, then map out the egress for that particular situation. Many times the egress will be the same or similar, however, particulars may dictate different plans for your school.

9. Written policies and procedures for handling a crisis. It is vital to develop a plan and commit it to paper. When in the midst of a crisis, it is too late to try to write out the marching orders. When there is a written policy adopted by the Board of Education, it not only provides the guidance necessary to implement the plan, it protects the members of the crisis team. A written policy also provides you with the perfect tool for training team members. Procedures can easily be reviewed and upgraded as needed.

10. Designated identified alternate sites for students during a crisis. Once the decision is made to move, everyone needs to know where they are moving to and what procedures to follow to arrive safely at the predetermined destination. Urban or densely populated districts can easily utilize other schools as the receiving areas. Since distance is a factor in suburban and rural districts, the transportation department must be involved when developing plans for re-location. Be creative in developing sites. Talk to business people as well as educators about possible locations for the students during an emergency.

11. Roster of community agencies to be utilized for response. A list of community agencies needs to be compiled and maintained. The contact people with their phone numbers, fax numbers, e-mail, and pager numbers should be included on this list. Therefore, when the crisis strikes, you will have a complete directory of resource people to contact and deploy as needed. It is also a good idea to meet with these people once a year to review their involvement in various crisis situations. These agencies should include organizations such as: community mental health, women's health, YMCA, YWCA, public health, family counseling, individual counselors, social workers, psychologists, and psychiatrists who are willing to serve during a crisis.

12. A method for sharing information during a crisis. How you share information is crucial to maintaining control and structure in the building. There will be occasions where a script is written and all homeroom teachers will read the message to their students simultaneously. Other occasions will dictate that a message be announced via the public address system. Still others will necessitate a letter to the home of every

student. Some situations might require a combination of notification procedures. It is suggested that when dealing with sensitive issues, the public address system should not be used since the people deem it an impersonal method of communication.

13. Printed forms to assist in crisis management such as scripts, checklists, and classroom activities. One of the tasks that helps to crystallize crisis management for your team is the construction of scripts, checklists, and classroom activities to be utilized as needed. Generic scripts regarding the loss of a student or staff member can be quickly tailored to meet individual situations. Checklists need to be developed so that items will not fall through the cracks. During a crisis it is very easy to forget a simple procedure that might cause the situation to escalate. By devising checklists for all members' responsibilities, you eliminate the guesswork. If a lead member is not available to perform assigned duties, replacement personnel will have a checklist to guide the efforts. Finally, packets of classroom activities to direct student attention in a positive vein are necessary. Careful selection of this material can assist students and teachers on the transitional road to normalcy.

14. Periodic site communication systems review to determine if up and running. In addition to the daily check of your communication systems, a complete and thorough review of all systems must be conducted annually. The public address system and intercom system should have maintenance or service contracts. Meet with the field representative and discuss the necessity for updates to the systems. Keeping these systems in good working order can prevent many problems. Be sure to have the phones, and walkie-talkies checked. Batteries for the walkie-talkies, while rechargeable, normally

last only two years. Make sure an adequate supply of extra batteries are on-hand and always keep at least one fully charged. Teachers should be encouraged to immediately report that the communication system in their room is not functioning properly. Finally, if your phone system requires that a nine be dialed first for an outside line, place stickers on all phones indicating that the emergency number is 9-9-1-1.

15. Procedures to identify at-risk students and staff during and after a crisis.

When a crisis strikes some students and staff will react in a manner that is considered excessive in nature. This could be due to many factors. For example, a similar crisis might have been experienced by those demonstrating the disproportionate behavior. The staff needs to be in-serviced regarding the warning signs that will normally be displayed by these individuals. It is good practice to develop a referral form that can be utilized by the staff. This will provide a record and serve as a tool for the counselors who will be working with students. The administration also needs training so they can identify staff members who might be in need of counseling.

16. A contingency action plan to deal with disruption and vandalism during a crisis. When in a crisis situation chaos can ensue if proper administrative action is not taken. The building administrator needs to be proactive in these situations. Contingency action plans need to be developed prior to the incident. Disruption can be caused by concerned parents arriving at the school, media personnel swarming around the campus, or students deciding to leave the building in droves. People will react differently in crisis situations, however, many human emotions are consistent and predictable for certain

situations. Develop plans for as many scenarios as possible that could happen in your school.

17. Designated counseling stations and referral process. When in a crisis situation, the need for a predetermined area to counsel students cannot be understated. First, review current counseling areas to determine if they would be suitable to handle what might be a large volume of students. Determine if private areas can be established to keep contagion at a minimum. Remember, the counseling conducted during a crisis will be done on a triage basis. Find areas that can be utilized as alternate sites in case the designated counseling areas are unavailable due to the crisis itself.

18. A plan for debriefing of staff and students. Early and proper notification to the staff is necessary to make your operation as smooth as possible. However, problems can arise. We certainly do not want the students to know all the nuances of the plan, but it is important for the staff to be knowledgeable. The type of crisis will determine how the staff is notified. Something that requires immediate evacuation must be done over the public address system since speed is essential. When speed of information is not crucial either written or verbal instructions via administrators or lead teachers can be effective.

19. An annual in-service for the entire staff on crisis management. Just as the crisis management team needs to meet and review policy each year, the entire staff need to be trained annually. Turnover in personnel and the amount of information that each staff member is required to retain necessitates this review. Naturally, this in-service needs to be conducted early in the year because a crisis can strike at any time. In addition

to providing the necessary information to make the plan work, conduct an annual in-service that emphasizes the importance of crisis preparedness.

20. A well-defined and implemented crisis response and management plan for the school's speedy return to normalcy. A well-defined plan is vital to return the school to its original state.

Securing the Data

The School Crisis Preparedness Survey was the instrument utilized to collect the information needed for this thesis. The survey was distributed to 60 officials at the New Jersey State Principals and Supervisors meeting on December 8, 2000. The participants were instructed to assign a number from 10 to 1 -- 10 being extremely important and 1 being nominally important -- to each of the 20 statements. The statements were carefully worded and designed to produce the clearest communication to the participants of the survey. Each participant assigned a number to the corresponding statement. The survey was distributed, filled out, and collected all in the same day.

All 60 participants opted to participate in the survey in the hopes that the information found would aid in a future crisis prevention plan. The return rate was 100 percent.

Each statement was then separated. The results from the first statement were added up and divided by 60. Each of the remaining statements' results were handled in the same fashion. After deciphering coefficients, the author then organized the statements

into the order of importance. The average number for each statement is shown in Chapter IV. The table presents the results of the collected data in a clear, organized fashion.

The author wanted to survey the population as a whole. However, specific information was requested so if additional questions arose, the author had the contact information available.

The author felt that this type of survey would produce the best results. A survey containing questions would not designate diversity between the items in question. All questions aimed at improving a crisis plan would produce overwhelming acceptance and no distinctions would be made on what is most important to nominally important. By rating each element, the author was better able to distinguish between the extremely important factors of a crisis plan versus the nominally important factors.

Chapter IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Introduction

The author's extensive review of the literature, matched with his experience in the field helped to predict the outcome of the survey that was distributed to the educators around the state of New Jersey. The author felt that the data collected would show that all of the items on the agenda would be closer to the "extremely important" criteria necessary to a successful crisis plan. The author assumed that the data collected by the survey would show that a working definition and specific policies and procedures are vital to have at the school's fingertips. A written document outlining exactly what needs to be done in a crisis will aid each district in diminishing the problems and confusion arising during a crisis. The crisis plan should be in place and readily available to teachers and administrators.

The statistical information provided was obtained during the New Jersey State Principals and Administrators meeting. The following counties and regions in New Jersey participated in the data collection: Atlantic, Bergen, Burlington, Cape May, Essex, Gloucester, Hudson, Hunterdon, Jersey Shore, Long Beach Island, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Morris, Ocean, Somerset, Sussex, and Union.

There were 45 participants that were polled in this survey. The average tenure as an administrator for this group was 15.7 years. The average number of time in education for the participants was 29.4 years. Among the 45 participants assessed, 36 of the

districts already have a crisis management response team in place. This will serve to verify the findings of the survey since these people can be viewed as experts in the field. They are cognizant of what works and what does not in a crisis plan. This data was accrued through meetings, trial and error, personal surveys, and community awareness. Each of these 45 people are also the representatives of their county or region, respectively. They are the voice of their particular district and reflect the feelings of their community.

While all of the elements incorporated in the survey are of importance to a crisis plan, the educators rated what is the most vital to their individual schools. A crisis plan needs to be well thought out and extremely organized. The results of the survey can be employed as a basis for a crisis plan. Yet, the leader of the crisis team must understand that while various schools will utilize many of the same ideas and plans, each school community must organize a plan that meets the specific needs of its district and be unique to its population.

Data Review

The data collected will help to organize a successful crisis plan. The statements are displayed with the mean answer of the 45 administrators surveyed. Respondents rated the ideas from 10, being extremely important, to 1, being nominally important. The rating scale was divided for analysis as follows: 10 to 9.5, 9.4 to 9.3, 9.2 to 9, 8.9 to 8.8, 8.7 to 8.5, 8.4 to 8, 7.9 and less. Statements from the survey were then placed in categories corresponding to their mean rating.

Table 1 shows that the most crucial elements of a successful crisis plan. The definition of a crisis rates the highest with a 9.8 out of a possible 10 among the 45 respondents polled. It must be stated clearly what constitutes a crisis before any action is taken. Written procedures should also be accompanied with the definition of what in deed constitutes a crisis situation. Surprisingly, many felt that each person in the institution should know every other person's job in addition to their own. This demonstrates that the school districts wish to act as one living, breathing unit if a crisis erupts.

Table 1 shows that each district feels that the basis for plans to effectively deal with a crisis must be well thought out before any action can be taken to alleviate the problem. Organization is key to dealing with a crisis situation.

Table 1

Survey Statements with Ratings Between 10 and 9.5

A working definition of what constitutes a crisis situation	9.8
Written policies and procedures for handling a crisis	9.6
Trained Crisis Team Members with each member aware of everyone's responsibilities	9.5

The survey statements from 9.4 to 9.3 (see Table 2) seem to deal with the action taken during a crisis situation. Of these elements, an evacuation plan proved most vital

scoring a 9.4. The table shows that communication is key to accompanying the action plan. An active exchange of information and ideas is crucial to averting a deadly situation. The safety of students and staff is highly significant to the districts in the physical portion of the crisis plan. The table also displays that a speedy return to normalcy is vital to the school.

Table 2

Survey Statements with Ratings Between 9.4 and 9.3

An evacuation plan in the possession of all staff members	9.4
A method for sharing information during a crisis	9.3
A well-defined and implemented crisis response and management plan for the school's speedy return to normalcy	9.3

The next area ranked in importance deals with community organization and review (see Table 3). Constant scrutiny and revisions are important for a successful plan. The statements in Table 3 emphasize the need for the involvement of the entire community. Positive actions of the school's administration are the basis for the support of other sectors of the community.

Table 3

Survey Statements with Ratings Between 9.2 and 9

Crisis Teams meet at least once a year to review procedures	9.2
Designated identified alternate sites for students during a crisis	9
Roster of community agencies to be utilized for response	9

After the planning, review and implementation of the crisis team the focus is then focused on the staff and students (see Table 4). Only after careful organization of the crisis plan can the elements in this table take place. The safety of staff and students is vital, but without the organization of a formal plan, this step cannot transpire. Those designated in charge must first have everything mapped out before information is brought to the masses.

Table 4

Survey Statements with Ratings Between 8.9 and 8.8

Communication strategies are developed for staff and students	8.8
Procedures to identify at-risk students and staff during and after a crisis	8.8
A plan for debriefing of staff and students	8.8

Table 5 shows that maintenance and periodic checks are next in the order of importance. It makes sense that once a plan is well in place that a periodic review audits and updates existing plans to deal with impending emergencies.

Table 5

Survey Statements with Ratings Between 8.7 and 8.5

Designated counseling stations and referral process	8.7
An annual in-service for the entire staff on crisis management	8.7
Periodic site communications systems" review to determine if up and running	8.5

Rated on the next order are statements that reflect more planning and practice for the general masses of the school community. Programs and literature are utilized after the foundation of the plan is in place.

Table 6

Survey Statements with Ratings Between 8.4 and 8

Printed forms to assist in crisis management such as scripts, checklists, classroom activities, etc...	8.4
Student programs dealing with conflict resolution plan	8

Table 7 deals with the items that are significant but are not vital in their ranking. The respondents feel that a contingency plan is important but not essential to the crisis plan. There is debate whether or not the principal should lead the crisis team. Most feel that since the principal is in charge of the school that he or she should pilot the school during a crisis. It can be inferred that some of the respondents felt that an independent person should be designated in charge when a crisis occurs since it is not a normal everyday situation. This is similar to a town or city having a chief of police and conversely a director of police who is usually a civilian. Lastly, most schools aware that a crisis can occur at any time still feel that their schools are safe as indicated by the low rating of the implementation of metal detector wands and/or walk-through detectors.

Table 7

Survey Statements with Ratings Between 7.9 and Less

A contingency action plan to deal with disruption and vandalism during a crisis	7.9
Principal in charge of the Crisis Response Team	7.8
Metal detector wands and/or walk-through detectors	4

The author was cognizant of how the statements would be categorized, but did not expect the numbers to be so high. This demonstrates that school administrators are conscious of what is happening in schools all over the country and are not adopting a

laissez-faire attitude to the crisis subject. The respondents understand that a crisis can occur in any place at any time. Those surveyed were candid with their answers.

Although these administrators envision their schools as safe, they have conveyed emphatically they are not about to be derelict in their duties concerning the protection of students and staff. Further, the respondents are acutely aware that an unforeseen crisis dictates a readiness plan must be in wait.

Chapter V

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

School safety and the prevention of crime within schools were the focus of the review of the literature and the collection of the data. Crisis prevention is a concern of anyone who has a son or daughter enrolled in high school as well as for the community at large. One of the initial steps of school planning and safety is to place school security on the educational agenda that assigns it as a priority making a personal and collective commitment toward creating a safe and welcoming school climate (Stephens, 1998).

Another area already implemented by high schools across America are new cutting edge programs that are combating school violence. One doctrine expoused was to ensure that larger schools remain able to provide individual and personal attention to each of its students. A very powerful message could be sent to the community if schools take a proactive role to introduce programs of a personal adult advocate, personal plan for progress, no more than 90 students per teacher, and breaking the scale of the school into houses (Abramson, 1999).

This study helps to bring about one of the most vital elements of a safe school, namely, the involvement of the entire community. School violence is not only the problem of educators and teachers but an issue affecting the entire community. True the physical violence occurs within the structure of the building, yet much of the violence arising in students is fueled by the troubles of the outside world in addition to the

problems within the high school community. Fighting violence in schools must be a collaborative effort rather than one for the school itself to solve. The community must work together with the school system in order to create a better place for learning and growing.

Winston (1999) states, "perhaps, rather than seeking quick and simple targets to blame for this violence, we should look for ways to prevent it from recurring" (p. 12). One way to decrease violence is be alert to the warning signs. The trick is not exploit it but rather help those students in need. Parents, teachers and law enforcement officials should practice more risk management by attempting to identify troubled teens with serious problems so they could get help before harming themselves or others.

"Anecdotal evidence suggests that many schools have clamped down on even the mildest hint of potential violence, disciplining or expelling any students who utter threats" (Lichtblau, 2000, p. 8). However, a happy medium must be reached. Schools should definitely be more cautious in this day and age as compared to years gone by, yet sending every student who voices a threat to the principal's office is overkill.

It is vital to have a clearly outlined crisis prevention program that is agreed on by educators and administrators. The review of literature and data collected points out that no two crisis plans will be the same but will contain numerous similar elements. Each plan should reflect the needs of the individual school and its surrounding community. There is no formula that guarantees success. No school is safe from an outbreak of violence. A utopian community is nonexistent.

Schools must be proactive rather than reactive regarding the safety of the populous. Acknowledging the presence of danger or creating a crisis plan does not make the school appear in a negative light. The old thought was that if any violent act occurred in a school the educational system in that area was poor. The thinking on school violence has changed. No longer do people associate school violence with large public high schools in poor urban areas. With the recent events in America, people now see that violence in schools is a national problem that does not discriminate by race, gender, or economic status. School violence can happen to any school at any time no matter how opulent of an area it is located in or how affluent the families in the surrounding community are.

The review of literature and data collected clearly demonstrates the vital necessity of involving the entire community in maintaining the stability of the schools. It is the job of every parent, teacher, law enforcement official, and other members of the community to share the burden of violence in schools. Only together can this behavior be curtailed.

The school must empower students to realize that this station in their lives is confusing, but also help them realize that everyone goes through a period of awkwardness. It is normal to feel isolated and removed from the popular group. Actually, there are more people that are not members of that inner click of popularity.

Denenberg, Denenberg, and Braverman (1998) state, "thus, the propensity for violence, both in school and in later life, can best be cured in the long run by enlarging students' understanding and self-confidence" (p. 69). Self-confidence is the key to curtailing school violence. High self-esteem will serve to dispel the ever-encompassing peer pressures as well as feelings of inferiority and displacement. This sense of self-

respect and high self-regard can serve to bolster the individual's personality and sense of self-worth throughout life.

Until confidence can be instilled within our students we must incorporate safety measures to ensure a secure and supportive learning environment. Until this goal is achieved, it is vital that schools insure safety with well drilled, consensus-based violence prevention and crisis response teams (Denenberg, Denenberg, & Braverman, 1998).

Future Study

The author feels that his contribution to the prevention of school violence is vital, helpful, and detailed, yet it only scratches the surface of combating this ever-growing problem. Crisis prevention teams incorporate the optimal modes to combat school violence at this point and time. Hopefully, one day they will be extinct, but until that time schools must strive to provide a safe haven where learning is fostered without fear of harm or intimidation.

The survey conducted, accompanied by the data collected, proves to be a good model to test in schools. Further research is needed to identify what elements work in a crisis plan and which ones are futile. Tests and crisis prevention drills should be practiced regularly as fire drills are so students, teachers, and administrators will be prepared in the event of a crisis.

Community involvement is crucial in attaining the goals of a safe school atmosphere. The more support a school captures, the less likely a crisis will occur. Research should be conducted on programs to involve the entire community and its role in

the prevention of violence. It is the duty of all to aid in creating an institution where there is a free exchange of knowledge and ideas, thus nourishing the growth and development of students. It is critical to maintain a safe environment, but the key phrase to remember is that these are schools, not prisons. Students should feel secure yet not incarcerated from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. each day in session.

Optimal safety is vital, but comfort is also a great concern. Future study should research ways of combating violence while simultaneously embodying a sense of solace, warmth, and camaraderie. Schools serve as surrogate parents whose ultimate goal is to provide their charges with the tools to create a fruitful future in a trusting, healthy, and sound atmosphere.

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Appendix A

Survey

School Crisis Preparedness Survey

Statistical Information

Name (optional) _____

Title _____

No. of Years as an Administrator _____

No. of Years in Education _____

Age _____

Circle one M or F

School _____

Grade levels _____

Enrollment _____

District _____

County _____

Do you currently have a Crisis Management Response Team in place?
Circle one Yes or No

Note- All information and responses will be kept in the strictest confidence.

Thank you kindly for taking the time to complete this survey.

The following statements are potential elements to establish a school crisis preparedness plan. Given that, assign a rating to each statement, using a 10 point scale, with "10" being extremely important and "1" being only nominally important.

10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Extremely Important									Nominally Important

1. A working definition of what constitutes a crisis situation _____

2. **Trained Crisis Team Members with each member aware of everyone's responsibilities** _____
3. **Crisis Teams meet at least once a year to review procedures** _____
4. **Communication strategies are developed for staff and students** _____
5. **Principal in charge of the Crisis Response Team** _____
6. **Student programs dealing with conflict resolution plan** _____
7. **Metal detector wands and/or walk-through detectors** _____
8. **An evacuation plan in the possession of all staff members** _____
9. **Written policies and procedures for handling a crisis** _____
10. **Identified alternate sites for students during a crisis** _____
11. **Roster of community agencies to be utilized for response** _____
12. **A method for sharing information during a crisis** _____
13. **Printed forms to assist in crisis management such as scripts, checklist, classroom activities, etc...** _____
14. **Periodic site communications systems up and running** _____
15. **Procedures to identify at-risk students and staff during and after a crisis** _____
16. **A contingency action plan to deal with disruption and vandalism during crisis** _____
17. **Designated counseling stations and referral processes** _____
18. **A plan for debriefing of staff and students** _____
19. **An annual in-service for the entire staff on crisis management** _____
20. **A well defined and implemented crisis response and management plan for the school's speedy return to normalcy** _____