



Defining School Safety and Security from the Inside-Out

We strongly believe that the most effective approach to achieving these all-important foundational goals requires an unwavering focus on and commitment to ***presence, process, and protocol.***

Our strongest currency as school leaders is our **presence**...for it is our presence that ultimately makes the most difference in creating a safe and secure campus, protecting the people in our care. Our schools are built on trust and connectivity, the very things that can hurt us in recognizing a potentially disastrous situation. We all become creatures of habit, walking our campuses with our eyes essentially closed. We know what we think is happening, but that rarely is the case. What subject matter experts remind us today is that the most important aspect of campus security is maximizing our awareness and presence during critical times of the day. Proper coverage at drop-off and pick-up. Teachers and administrators stationing themselves at gates and doorways on a consistent basis.

Without fully understanding the actual flow of students, staff, visitors and vehicles on our campuses, we are all too often lulled into a false sense of confidence that we are

being proactive and our school community is being protected.

Second, clear and sustainable **processes** really matter. These processes must be rooted in strong and understandable policies. For example, schools should require all visitors (including parents) to sign-in and out. They must wear large stickers or lanyards designating themselves as visitors to your campus. Vendors, college reps, and even the copy repair guy must be required to follow this process. There are very few exceptions and when one occurs, it must be addressed. Yes, some of your parents may complain. Not may, some will absolutely complain. It just takes time to help everyone understand. The only true cost for your school to have greater safety and security is some level of inconvenience. Lastly, faculty and staff need to be trained in how to greet those that have not followed the process...with a kind hello and a gentle reminder to sign into the front office. There are many other processes that have proven to be important in our quest for safer school communities.

Schools need to have clear **protocols** in place to respond to unwanted visitors or potentially dangerous situations. A few years back, we found ourselves dealing with an unwanted crew of skateboarders. Faculty and staff were directed to immediately dial 911. Of much greater importance, are clear and well-drilled protocols for an armed intruder situation. It is critical that you have multiple drills per year that are based on guidance and support from local law enforcement. Knowing what to do and staying calm and confident when something happens can only result from having such protocols in

place. Protocols and policies relating to these topics, once developed, must be non negotiable. We often call them *airplane rules*. Think about the instructions you get from flight staff on a plane. You may not smoke on a flight, period. There is no debate or room for negotiation in terms of execution.

The Four Touchstones

It's important to understand the four touchstones of school safety and security:

Safety is largely about managing RISKS, which are best defined as *unintentional* events or conditions that may injure people and damage property. Schools need to determine their appetite for risk and have a managed plan. You can use a slower communication strategy in responding.

Security is largely preparing for and being able to respond to THREATS, which are generally *intentional* events designed to hurt people or property. We tend to respond with implementing systems or technology. Faculty training and preparation (drills) are critical success strategies. It's important to have fast communication protocols in place to assess the threat, respond accordingly, and collect feedback.

Social-Emotional Health is a critical element in the equation and relates to the emotional & mental well-being of your people. The focus needs to be on relationship development and creating support systems. Schools need to have

multiple, constant communication channels in place.

Reducing stress and anxiety should be a constant goal to support a healthy **school climate & culture**.

Child Protection is a cornerstone of having a safe school. Along with social-emotional health the focus needs to be on *Caring, Listening, and Protecting*. Schools that are committed to be free from abuse and harassment and consider that calling when designing and implementing systems are going to be more successful.

An unapologetic emphasis on strong hiring practices, clear policies and guidelines, meaningful faculty training, a thoughtful approach to physical space and its use will all help you create a strong, inside-out approach to safety and security.

A comprehensive **School Safety and Security Program** includes equal focus on the following elements:

- Physical Campus Inspection**
- Environment & Proxemic Analysis**
- Threat Assessment**
- Information Security Review**
- Policy & Handbook Examination**
- School Climate Interviews**



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