

APPENDIX

ADDITIONAL APPENDIX MATERIAL
SUBMITTED TO THE
JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
for the
November 1, 2024 Meeting

Submitted by

New Jersey School Boards Association

Kimberly A. Gatti, "Preventing School Violence: The Behavioral Threat Assessment Team Model,"
School Leader Magazine, c 2024, New Jersey School Boards Association.

NJASA

School Safety & Security Report

May 17, 2023



NJ  Association of
School Administrators
Education &
Research Foundation

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Executive Summary

According to the most recent 2022 Gallup Poll regarding America's Public Schools adults and public school parents agree that measures to enhance school safety, security, and mental health are of utmost importance. In the aftermath of the May 24, 2022, school shooting in Uvalde, Texas, Americans expressed broad, continued support for enhancements to school security measures. Specifically, 80% of poll takers support placing armed police officers on duty when classes are in session and screening all students for mental health problems; and, as many as 78%, express support for placing metal detectors at all school entrances. That said, data from the same poll indicates that poll takers do not favor teachers and staff arming themselves to enhance security within schools. In fact, support falls to 45% of arming staff, with a noteworthy 55% in opposition of such measures.

This report is one of many that informs the need for further, equitable enhancements of school security and mental health supports. In New Jersey, the threat of targeted violence within public schools remains a real, yet ominous concern for school district leaders. Data from the 2022 Gallup Poll helps to inform the need for school district leaders to have critical training on school safety and security as well as resources to address security needs and deficiencies. As a result, the NJASA School Safety and Security Subcommittee has solicited input from school leaders in the State of New Jersey about their district's current security and mental health resources for purposes of identifying priority needs and systemic inequities. Data collected from school leaders was then compiled and used to inform recommendations to NJASA for the enhancement of school safety and security in New Jersey public schools. Admittedly, while no amount of preparedness can ever eliminate the threat of school violence entirely, there are several actions that can potentially further mitigate incidents of school violence. This report shall serve as a footprint from which NJASA can coordinate resources, training, and legislative advocacy with the overarching goal of further securing all New Jersey Public Schools.

Key Findings and Implications

School districts have disparate access to specific school security measures across New Jersey. In New Jersey, survey results indicated sharp distinctions in access to specific security protections such as armed officers and other security personnel, web enabled alarm systems, and mental health supports. Results also suggested a lack of resources and funding are contributing factors for disparities among school districts. As a result, the entitlement to a thorough and efficient education is compromised in that not all students have equitable security measures in place to mitigate acts of violence in the school setting.

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The vast majority of Chief School Administrators and Superintendents cited safety and security as their most pressing priority regarding training. The majority of Chief School Administrators and Superintendents who responded to the survey distinctly expressed an essential need for increased, recurring training opportunities for school security. In a post-pandemic era that continues to see exiting and turnover of school leaders, regular and embedded professional training is critical to strengthening comprehensive expertise.

A more comprehensive and exhaustive guide is needed to replace the 2015 school security task force report. The last comprehensive examination of school safety and security needs from the Department of Education is now dated. As the landscape of school security shifts, a new commission is required and should be convened. A current report requires input and expertise from school safety and security experts as well as perspectives of school leaders. This should not be a political document.

Legislative support for school safety and security infrastructure and personnel upgrades is needed. A sustainable commitment from local and state legislators for funding is critical to support the operations, infrastructure, and personnel needs of modern schoolhouses - inclusive of school security. Legislative support for school funding will minimize the need for school leaders to compromise within their annual budgets to ensure that their students and staff have equitable access to safe learning environments.

This **FINAL REPORT** of the NJASA School Safety and Security Sub-Committee is respectfully submitted to the Executive Board of the New Jersey Association of School Administrators. This Final Report contains information about the purpose of the committee, the methods used to collect data used to inform recommendations for school safety and security in New Jersey, and results from the 2022 School Safety and Security Survey that were distributed to all Chief Executive Officers in New Jersey. This Final Report also contains recommendations to inform NJASA's response to the blatant inequities that exist across the State of New Jersey in security and mental health resources.



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Acknowledgements:

With gratitude, the Co-Chairs of the School Safety and Security Subcommittee would like to acknowledge the contributions of the following school leaders as members of the School Safety and Security Committee:

Paul Amoroso, Superintendent - Pompton Lakes School District
Sarah Bilotti, Superintendent - Pascack Valley Regional High School District
Dr. Richard Bozza, Executive Director - NJASA
Dr. Brian Brotschul, Superintendent - Delran Township school District
Christopher Carrubba, Superintendent - Belvidere School District
David Cittadino, Superintendent - Old Bridge Township Public Schools
Dr. Steve Forte, Superintendent, Denville Township School
Dr. Janet Fike, Superintendent - Morris-Union Jointure Commission
Deborah Harvest, Assistant Superintendent for Operations - East Orange School District
John K. Kummings, Superintendent - Wildwood City School District
Maria M. Lepore, Esq., Chief Association Counsel - NJASA
Gary Lubisco, Jr., Superintendent - PC Manchester Regional School District
Damion Macioci, Superintendent - West Essex Regional School District
Diane Mandry, Superintendent - Pohatcong Township School District
Dr. James McLaughlin, Superintendent, Dover Public Schools
Dr. Christopher Metrick, Superintendent - Woodstown-Pilesgrove Regional School District
Dr. David Micelli, Superintendent - New Providence School District
Judith Rattner, Director of Special Projects - NJASA
Melanie Schulz, Director of Governmental Relations - NJASA
Dr. Richard Spirito, Superintendent - Hawthorne Public Schools
Kristin Williams, Chief School Administrator - Manning Township School District
Tony Tongrone, Superintendent - Millville Public Schools

The Committee would like to extend its sincerest appreciation to the NJASA Executive Board for commissioning the School Safety and Security Ad Hoc Committee and affording school leaders an opportunity to contribute to a process designed to enhance the safety and security of our schools.

Respectfully submitted,

NJASA School Safety and Security Committee Co-Chairs,
Dr. MaryJane Garibay, Superintendent - Colts Neck Township Schools and
Dr. Charles B. Sampson, Superintendent - Freehold Regional High School District

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**The NJASA School Safety & Security Committee's
FINAL REPORT
Presented to the NJASA Executive Committee**

Context

The New Jersey Association of School Administrators (NJASA) School Safety & Security Sub-Committee was formed in August 2022. This sub-committee was assembled for purposes of identifying and proposing actionable steps to NJASA in response to evolving concerns of school leaders for the continually expanding work of ensuring safe and orderly school environments. The tragic events that occurred on May 24, 2022, at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas only escalated the urgency of school leaders to further address safety and security preparedness. To further assess and understand the needs of school leaders in New Jersey, the NJASA School Safety & Security Committee was established.

School leaders have grappled for decades with the residual security impacts from the horrific shootings at Columbine, Sandy Hook, Parkland, and, most recently, Uvalde. The mass school shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas received national attention and, once again, laid bare the vulnerability of students and staff to gun violence. Despite the fact that school leaders across the nation implement policies and practices designed to mitigate continual acts of gun violence on school campuses, the "K-12 School Shooting Database" (<https://k12ssdb.org/>) identifies over three hundred (300) shooting incidents on United States school grounds in 2022, a dramatic increase from previous years. While Uvalde and now Nashville serve as the most recent catalyst in the media to spur a national discussion on school safety since the 1999 mass school shooting at Columbine High School, hundreds of thousands of students, staff, and families have been directly impacted by the escalating mental health crisis and surge in gun violence ([School Shootings Database](#)). Sadly, the historical and recent data related to school shootings clearly depicts the rationale for school officials to prepare for incidents of violence. The sheer volume of incidents of gun violence and other attacks perpetrated against students on school grounds should serve as a call for advocacy in support of school safety and security that will effectuate positive change in New Jersey and the nation at large.

The number of school shootings occurring throughout our nation's schools have motivated legislators in New Jersey to propose laws that require school leaders to enact policies and protocols intended to promote the safety and well-being of students and staff. As per the NJDOE:

On August 1, 2022, Governor Phil Murphy signed into legislation, N.J.S.A. 18A:17-43.4, requiring the establishment of threat assessment teams in public, charter, and renaissance school projects. The purpose of a threat assessment team is to provide school teachers, administrators, and other staff with assistance in

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identifying students with behaviors of concern, assessing those students' risk for engaging in violence or other harmful activities, and delivering intervention strategies to manage the risk of harm for students who pose a potential safety risk. Threat assessment teams' purpose is also to prevent targeted violence in the school and to ensure a safe and secure school environment that enhances the learning experience for all members of the school community. Accordingly, the board of education of each school district and the board of trustees of each charter school or renaissance school project must develop and adopt a policy for the establishment of a multi-disciplinary threat assessment team at each school (NJDOE, 2022)

N.J.S.A. 18A:17-43.4 mandates the establishment of Threat Assessment Teams in all public, charter, and renaissance school projects by the start of the 23-24 school year.

In an effort to expand school district leaders' understanding, preparedness, and capacity to proactively prepare for threats of violence, members of the NJASA School Safety and Security Subcommittee commenced an investigation and inquiry into state-wide school security measures as well as mental health resources. The Committee sought to gauge explicit needs from New Jersey's Superintendents. The method used for the collection of information was a survey developed by the subcommittee. Results from this survey were used to inform these recommendations to NJASA for the enhancement of school safety and security. It should be noted that mass school shootings occurred at a rate that outstripped the Committee work -- in short, more have occurred while we have finalized our report making our school shooting references difficult to keep current. A grim fact.

Committee Process

The NJASA School Safety and Security Committee held its initial meeting on August 17, 2022. The initial meeting served as a conduit to allow members to express what they believed to be the most pressing safety and security needs facing NJASA members. Though a wide range of issues was brought forth by members of the committee, the consensus focused on a notion that school staff are more likely to react, rather than prevent threats, security breaches, and/or acts of violence. Additionally, the committee was in complete agreement for addressing the need for quality, sustained professional development and training for school staff on topics and procedures related to crisis situations, school violence, and gun violence.

The Committee supports all efforts for NJASA to communicate and collaborate with other statewide organizations, including the New Jersey School Boards Association and New Jersey Education Association, as well as state legislators and parent groups to present a unified position for positive changes in school safety and security. The most recent results presented from the

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2022 Gallup Poll support the work of the committee through the lens of broad community support for security measures in schools. Members of the committee recognize that philosophical differences related to armed security and law enforcement personnel in schools may exist throughout school communities; however, anecdotal feedback received from members of the committee and results from the survey express a clear desire among most participants to prioritize armed security personnel within all schools.

Conclusions made from the initial meeting of the Committee were separated into three categories. These three categories were as follows:

- (A) Advocacy**
- (B) School Leader Training**
- (C) Community Outreach & Partnerships**

The Committee was then divided into three sub-committees to fully explore and vet the aforementioned categories into specific recommendations and or concerns. On October 17, 2022, three (3) individual sub-committee meetings took place. During these meetings, committee members provided additional input and desired direction for their assigned category. Additionally, all subcommittees were charged with responding to the following question:

- For what specifically will we recommend NJASA advocate?

Subcommittee questions by category:

The **Advocacy** Sub-Committee was asked to respond to the following questions:

- *What existing legislation and/or future legislation fits with our needs?*
- *What legislative barriers prohibit continuation of knowledge regarding student needs after the K-12 spectrum is complete-are there exceptions to be made in identified threats? How do we connect what is known about the select number of students post K-12? (NJSMART-Threat assessment tools).*
- *Who should we seek an audience with-joint committee? Senate/Assembly ed? Other? Timelines for our group?*
- *Should we request legislation that calls for an update NJASA's 2015 Recommendations. Does our group simply propose updates to the 2015 document? Document attached here: [NJDOE 2015 school security task force report](#)*
- *Where are additional entry points to partner with other organizations in this work?*

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Meeting outcomes for the Advocacy Sub-Committee included:

- Develop a goal to request similar/same levels of security personnel expertise and support across districts while remaining wary of creating our own unfunded mandates.
- Survey of security personnel needs and work across NJ districts would be helpful to identify gaps and starting points for legislative change and funding.
- School Safety Specialist roles vary across districts. One-off training for these individuals does not lend to ensuring anticipated district needs regarding support/training.
- Continuation of juvenile records into adulthood is a topic of interest. Is there a way to advocate for sharing of information through legislation? Recognition of civil rights concerns; however, could there be built in safeguards?
- Must advocate for expansion not elimination of mental health safeguards. 90 districts potentially losing in-school resources for 16 county hubs. There was sharp concern regarding the proposed county hub model as being inadequate to meet school district mental health needs.
- Conceal carry advocacy for school safe zones is at the top of the list. Is there pending legislation?
- Role of gun purchase age limit was a divisive topic as many viewed New Jersey's gun control law as among the strongest in the nation.

Specific Action Step: Develop survey based on today; feedback-can also create a checklist of security measures to be completed within survey for more accurate information.

The **School Leader** Sub-Committee was asked to respond to the following questions:

- *Should we consider an annual security & safety update/training for school leaders facilitated by NJASA? When is the most opportune time(s) to offer this training? What will be the most effective means to deliver on-going and real-time training for school leaders?*
- *How do we embed safety and security training into NJASA's New Superintendent Academy? What are best practices in safety and security for new superintendents? Where and from whom may we acquire the most effective resources for superintendents?*
- *What are recommended topics for training? Should there be a standing NJASA committee to provide recommendations and oversight of training?*
- *What recommendations are there for combining security resources across districts?*
- *What annual outreach should be performed to understand needs of NJASA members from the field? Should a survey be administered each year to assess and evaluate the needs of school leaders relating to school safety and security?*

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Resources: <https://www.njsba.org/news-publications/school-leader/may-june-2018-vol-48-no-6/school-security-redefined/>

Secret Service Report Averting Targeted School Violence

Meeting outcomes included:

- Consider an annual safety and security symposium. Spring Conference - what worked/what questions remain? Reflect & look to Strauss Esmay one-day model of PD.
- Refresher quick hitter in August-what school leaders need to know as it pertains to safety and security.
- Repository of resources for members can be developed in conjunction with on-going training and information from the Department of Emergency Preparedness.
- Utilization of case studies in at least one of the NJASA One-day seminars each year.
- Develop a list of mentors for emergency situations/sample correspondence.
- Consider recording specific presentations on dealing with emergency situations.

The **Community Outreach and Partnerships** Sub-Committee was asked to respond to the following questions:

- *How do we develop a state-wide directory of mental health resources that are available to school districts?*
- *Are there mental health organizations that NJASA can partner with to connect school districts with necessary mental health resources and supports?*
- *Are there exemplars from which school leaders can design programs for parents/guardians?*
- *What does a Parent/Guardian Academy look like related to Safety and Security?*
- *Regionalized evenings/events to share resources?*

Meeting outcomes included:

- Monmouth County Schools Partnership for Wellness is a model for larger scale parent/guardian/community events designed to promote awareness and access to mental health resources.
- A desire exists for more focused and public partnerships/relations with law enforcement. Perhaps an NJASA endorsement of statements to ensure/inspire confidence with what we say and do as it relates to safety and security. We must also understand what is available in divergent law enforcement modalities (this will come out and may be included in membership survey).

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- Have other organizations sign on any position statements regarding school security and safety.
- Use each county meeting to collect and collate information regarding resources used around mental health and other needs.

School Safety & Security Survey:

The larger Committee reconvened electronically to develop an extensive survey designed to collect information on security and mental health resources being utilized by school leaders in the state of New Jersey. For efficiency, the final survey combined the efforts of the Safety & Security Committee and the School Staff Shortage Committee.

In an effort to collect the information on both topics of interest from school leaders, the following survey was distributed to all public and charter school leaders on December 1, 2022: [survey](#)

The Committee received 262 responses from school leaders. On January 9, 2023, committee members received aggregated results from the survey and were then asked to review the results and provide targeted feedback and observations on results.

Critical Survey Findings

- 42% of the 262 respondents reported having armed security personnel. The number draws a clear line between the have and have-nots across the state as it relates to having an armed presence in schools to address armed intruders. Many superintendents noted the escalating hourly costs for SCLEO are driving this lack of access. Many districts that do not have specific municipal police departments but are utilizing State Police may not have the same access to armed staff. Almost 20% of districts in NJ have NO security personnel - either armed or unarmed. The responses point toward a scattershot approach to securing many of our schools that would, sadly, only be brought to light during an emergent situation. Respondents noted that once in place however, the costs will only continue to increase for districts to employ armed security as removing these individuals will most likely not be publicly possible regardless of financial circumstances. One respondent noted: *In many instances our schools, specifically local high schools, are the largest gathering of citizens/taxpayer offspring of the township during any calendar day, often from as early as 7AM to as late as 10PM. Why are the school districts solely financially responsible for protecting them?*
- 65% of respondents stated that annual school safety training was of the highest priority for their needs. This reinforces the shifting landscape of school safety and security and how administrators understand it is, at times, difficult to remain current with the other

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demands of running a school system. A component of this need is demonstrating model partnerships between law enforcement and school systems for superintendents.

- 70% of respondents are contracting with providers beyond their own staff to attempt to meet rising mental health challenges. Only 33% of respondents make use of the School Based Youth Services Program. There has been a sharp increase in the mental health needs of the New Jersey student population. This has resulted in many districts reporting hiring additional staff such as counselors and therapists in conjunction with the rising security needs. Districts are struggling to find the resources to meet student mental health needs. This is both a crisis and a potential root cause to compromise school safety. This is not sustainable.
- 47% of districts reported that they utilize a specific web enabled panic system, there were general questions of what sort of systems are available.
- 45% of respondents have upgraded individual classroom locks to deny a point of entry from an armed intruder more effectively.
- Less than 50% of districts have a daily presence of armed law enforcement in all schools.
- 99.2% have security cameras.
- 52.3% have shatterproof or ballistic glass employed in some manner.
- 65% have hired external security experts in some capacity.
- 65% of school leaders identified annual safety and security training as their highest priority.
- 77% have installed some form of security vestibules.

Open-Ended Responses: "Voices from the Field"

I am not sure how we would proceed in this national reality of school targeted violence without armed SLEOs. My question would be, what resources do the schools without armed resources rely upon to protect their schools, staff, and students?

Given the competing demands for funding and lack of any targeted funds toward armed security for schools, it creates a true challenge for districts - many of whom are struggling to keep specials (art, music, library). This should not be the case - when SRO programs first came about there was grant level support. Currently, we are paying \$35 per hour for Class III's but the field is competitive, and we are fortunate to have some increased aid to cover these expenditures, but many districts are seeing cuts.

Unarmed security provides minimal defense against a school shooter. SRO's are often borrowed from the school when there is a need by the Police Department(s) outside of school and SRO's in other cases are officers the PD does not want in the field. Class III's are the best option since

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they can only work in the school.

The varied responses (regarding security personnel) to this question are a bit scary - 2 sheriff officers assigned to 15 locations - unarmed retired police - check-ins as they can occur. This does not present a very secure picture.

Even though these contracts are typically 1 year, I believe once a district starts the SLEO program, it will be difficult to stop or reduce. This means that the costs will continue to rise. Maybe we can advocate for some additional security funding to help cover costs.

Given the competing demands for funding and lack of any targeted funds toward armed security for schools, it creates a true challenge for districts - many of whom are struggling to keep specials (art, music, library). This should not be the case - when SRO programs first came about there was grant level support. Currently we are paying \$35 per hour for Class III's but the field is competitive, and we are fortunate to have some increased aid to cover these expenditures, but many districts are seeing cuts. This may be an area of advocacy for our group - to lobby for state funding for either armed security or Class III officers for every school district.

Our schools, more specifically the HS, is the largest gathering of citizens/taxpayer offspring of the township during any calendar day. Why are the school districts solely financially responsible for protecting them? I like the concept of advocacy to direct state funds to municipalities that must be used to offset or initiate school security costs.

Any assistance with funding would be appreciated, especially when districts will be adding more security to cover after-hours too. Many of our buildings are operational until 10-11 pm every night and weekends. (MS/HS).

I think this needs to be one of our strongest recommendations - funding for either Class III's or Armed Retired Officers.

This is another area where the costs are increasing and cutting back is not an option. Our three school K-8 district now has 5.0 FTE counselors and 2.0 FTE therapists from St Clare's Behavioral Health. These costs have increased dramatically.

I support all the comments here - mental health costs are high, are critically needed, and we struggle to provide what is needed.

As an S2 district new funds for unfunded resources are next to impossible. However, the mental health needs we are facing for students and staff are a real concern. Additionally, finding providers is another challenge.

50% of our school respondents do not see a daily (armed) presence - again, that is a three alarm fire.

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Any assistance with funding would be appreciated, especially when districts will be adding more security to cover after-hours too. Many of our buildings are operational until 10-11 pm every night and weekends.

We need resources to lower the counselor to student ratios in our district. Mental health costs are high, are critically needed, and we struggle to provide what is needed.

Targeted Advocacy for increased funding for school safety and security is needed to ensure all schools have the school security resources needed.

Committee Recommendations:

- Work in conjunction with the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) and state legislators to conduct a deeper analysis to understand the root causes of wide ranging disparities regarding the employment of armed and other security personnel in schools. Targeted advocacy should be pursued regarding several security needs for explicit funding for personnel, tools, and additional protective security measures.
- Identify pooled/shared services amongst districts, particularly smaller and more rural areas. This should be spearheaded at the county level.
- Lobby for targeted funds to increase armed and other protection (web enabled, etc.) made available from the state legislature. A statewide bond or other measure might be appropriately placed on the November ballot.
- Include annual training within the framework of NJASA's Professional Development planning. This training may include a large-scale session that could incorporate experts from Law Enforcement and the Department of Education at either the Spring Conference or during the start of the school year. This training may also include periodic one day seminars using relevant case studies from the field. The New Superintendent Academy should be updated to reflect mandated school safety and security training for all new superintendents.
- Annual safety and security training should be demonstrations of the most recent tools utilized by districts to promote safety, e.g, web enabled systems, human resource deployment, and effective shared service models.
- Mental health funding should be expanded for local districts that can exemplify effective practices. For instance, recovery high schools, alternative schools operated within districts, and mental health clinical support models. The Youth Based Programs are limited to a fraction for the total districts in NJ. Efforts to lobby/advocate for a more comprehensive state-wide approach to student mental health needs that recognizes local expertise and

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effective programs and assists in the financial support of such models should be pursued by NJASA and in conjunction with other educational entities.

- Utilize county affiliates to share resources related to mental health services, safety and security best practices and other shared resources. Affiliate sub-committees at the county level can implement, grow, and help maintain an infrastructure for NJASA. The county expectations can effectively be established through the NJASA Executive Committee and dispersed statewide.
- Update the NJDOE 2015 school security task force report. This document was pulled together quickly and did not fully represent voices from those in the field. The document was largely a political creation and lacked involvement from several major organizations, including NJASA. Request that the NJDOE bring together a committee of safety and security experts as well as school leaders to update this report to more accurately reflect the current landscape in schools as it relates to safety and security.
- There was noted appreciation for New Jersey's stringent gun laws in promoting a safer environment for schools. There was general agreement that legislative action limiting gun access has had a positive impact on overall school security in NJ. These laws should continue to be supported.

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Appendix A

District Respondents' Demographics

DEMOGRAPHICS BREAKDOWN OF SURVEY RESPONSES (262 Responses)

| District Configuration | Number of Responses | % of Total Responses |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| K-12 | 102 | 38.9% |
| K-8 | 90 | 34.4% |
| K-6 | 19 | 7.3% |
| 9-12 | 16 | 6.1% |
| 9-12 Vocational School Districts | 9 | 3.4% |
| Other | 9 | 3.4% |
| 7-12 | 7 | 2.7% |
| Education Services Commission | 7 | 2.7% |
| K-5 | 2 | .8% |
| Charter School | 1 | .4% |

Number of Schools in District Configuration:

| Number of School Buildings in District | Number of Responses | Percentage of Total Responses |
|--|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 school | 56 | 21.5% |
| 2 - 4 schools | 115 | 44.1% |
| 5 - 7 schools | 48 | 18.4% |
| 8-12 schools | 31 | 11.9% |
| 13+ schools | 11 | 4.2% |

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New Jersey County Participation:
(% are rounded)

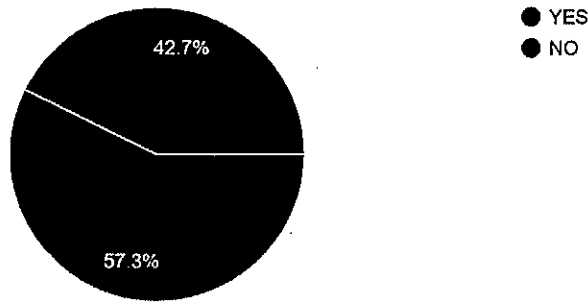
| County | # of Responses | % of Total Responses |
|------------|----------------|----------------------|
| Atlantic | 10 | 3.8% |
| Bergen | 26 | 9.9% |
| Burlington | 33 | 12.6% |
| Camden | 8 | 3.1% |
| Cape May | 10 | 3.8% |
| Cumberland | 10 | 3.8% |
| Essex | 12 | 4.6% |
| Gloucester | 5 | 1.9% |
| Hudson | 4 | 1.5% |
| Hunterdon | 12 | 4.6% |
| Mercer | 7 | 2.7% |
| Middlesex | 15 | 5.7% |
| Monmouth | 34 | 13% |
| Morris | 32 | 12.2% |
| Ocean | 10 | 3.8% |
| Passaic | 8 | 3.1% |
| Salem | 3 | 1.1% |
| Somerset | 7 | 2.7% |
| Sussex | 3 | 1.1% |
| Union | 9 | 3.4% |
| Warren | 3 | 1.1% |

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Appendix B
Survey Results

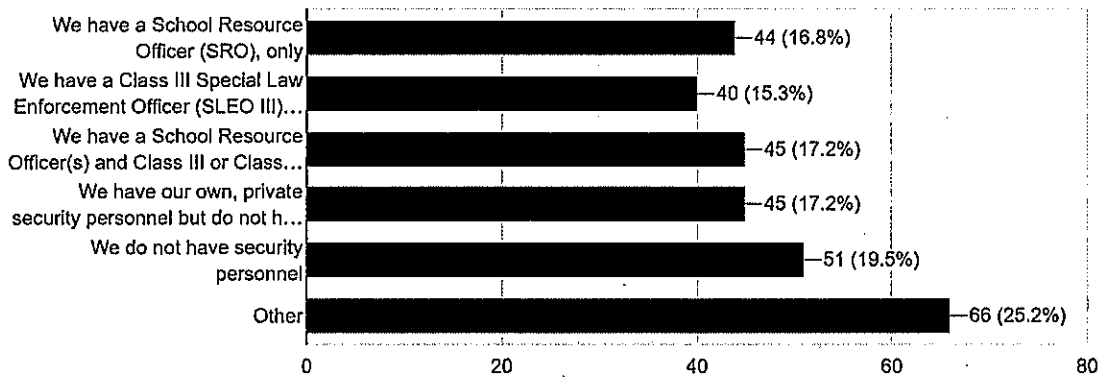
My district has armed security personnel (please note, this would be either private armed security or an SLEO III or SLEO II).

262 responses



Please check the statement(s) that best describes the security personnel in your school district:

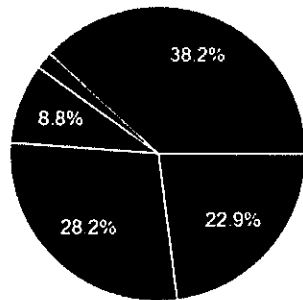
262 responses



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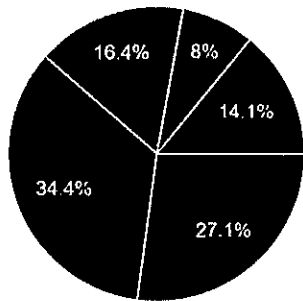
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If you have either SRO or SLEO or both how are those individuals funded:
262 responses



- School district/LEA funds
- Shared service agreement between LEA and municipality
- Municipality/police department funds
- Other
- Not Applicable - My district does not have an SRO or SLEO

The total number of full time security personnel within our district is:
262 responses



- 0
- 1-3
- 4-6
- 7-10
- More than 10

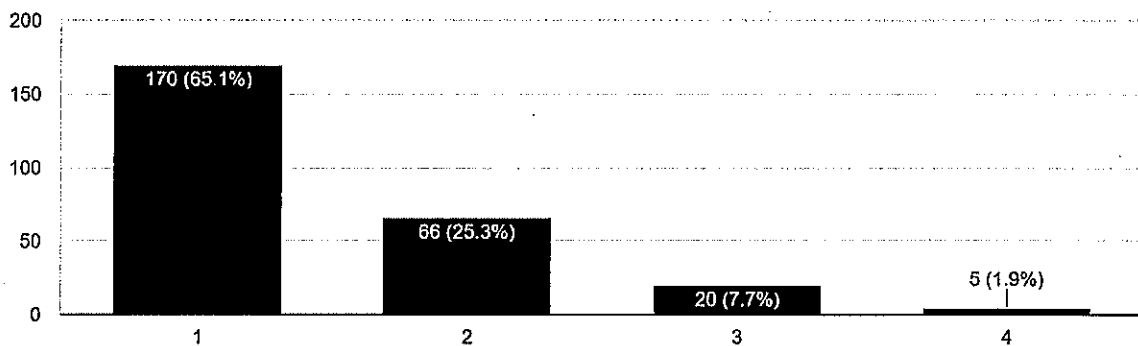
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QUESTIONS #6-10: Ranking of Security Issues / Priorities (1=Highest Priority to 4=Not A PRIORITY)

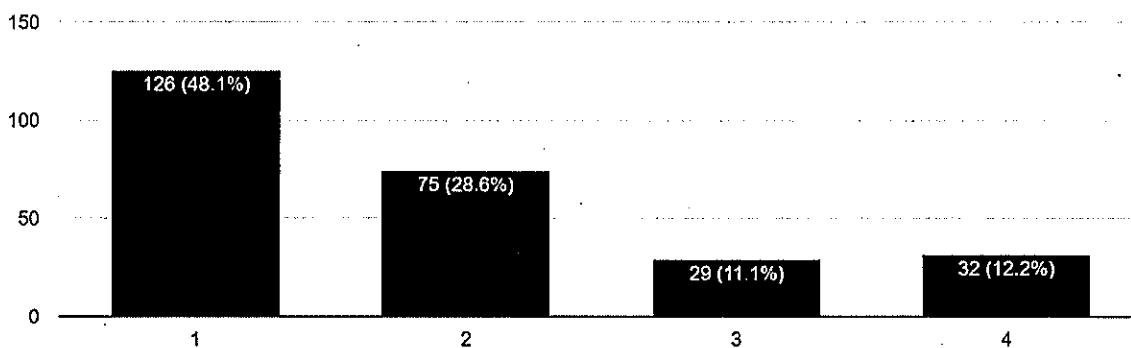
6. Annual safety and security training for administrators/school community members.

261 responses



8. Improved partnerships with local law enforcement.

262 responses

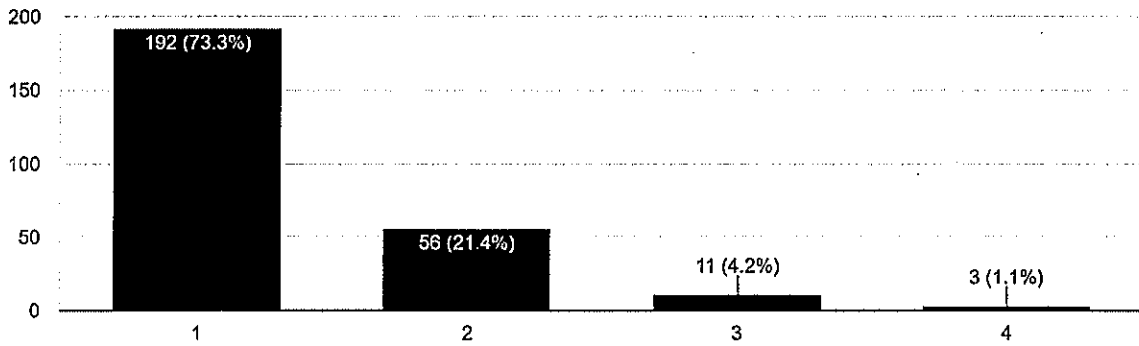


19x

School Safety and Security Sub-Committee
Final Report
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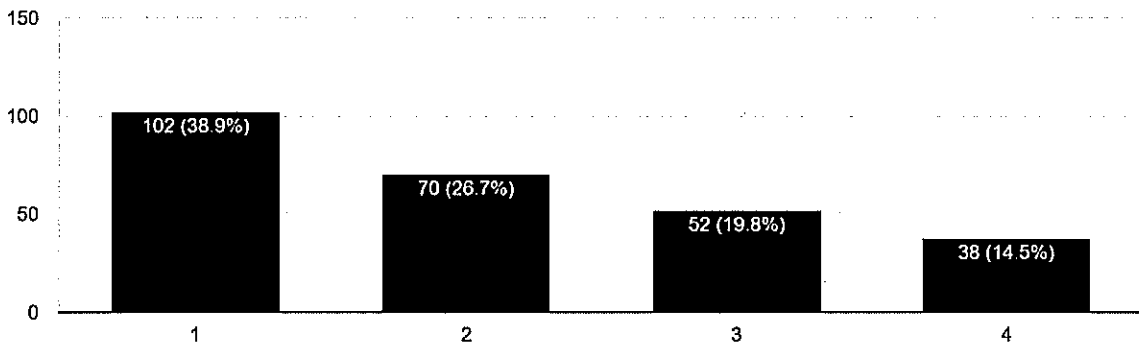
9. Availability of resources related to mental health and other needs of students.

262 responses



10. Legislative changes related to gun control and other measures of managing weapons in N.J..

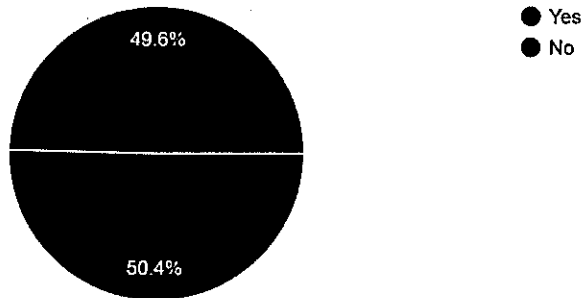
262 responses



School Safety and Security Sub-Committee
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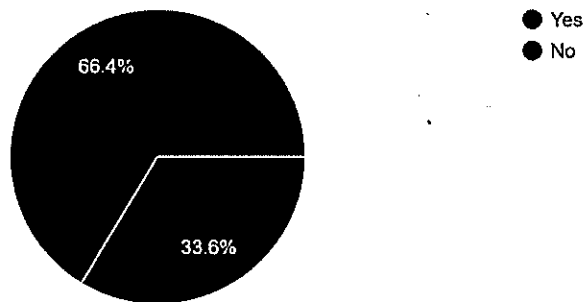
11. My district has daily presence of school-assigned armed law enforcement in every school.

262 responses



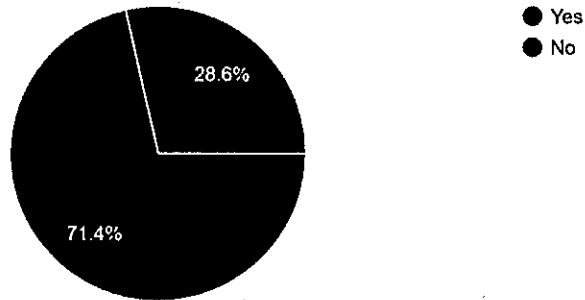
12. My district has armed law enforcement shared among school buildings.

262 responses

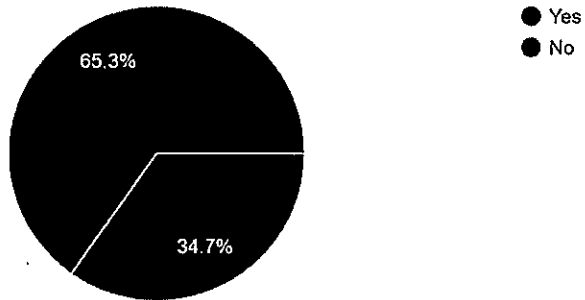


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13. My district has digital mapping of infrastructure(s)
262 responses

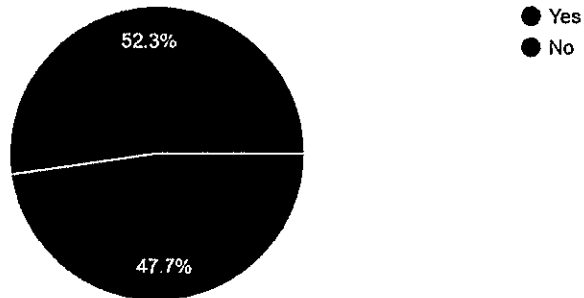


14. My district has external experts/consultants in security on staff (other than local law enforcement)
262 responses

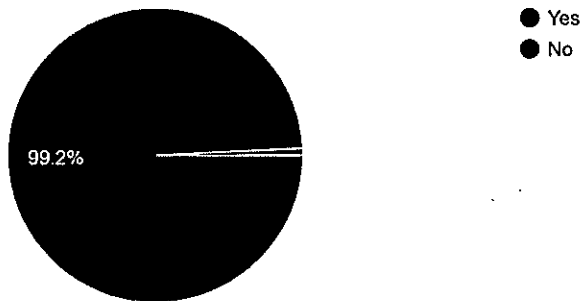


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15. My district has ballistic glass or shatterproof glass ("bullet proof")/ bullet resistant glass.
262 responses

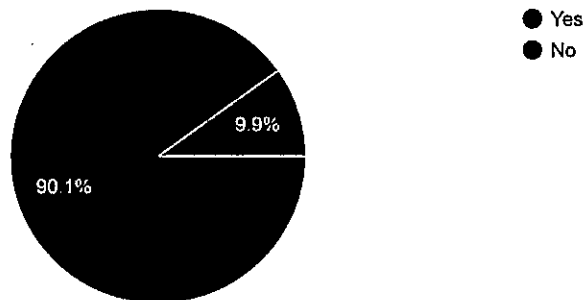


16. My district has security cameras.
262 responses

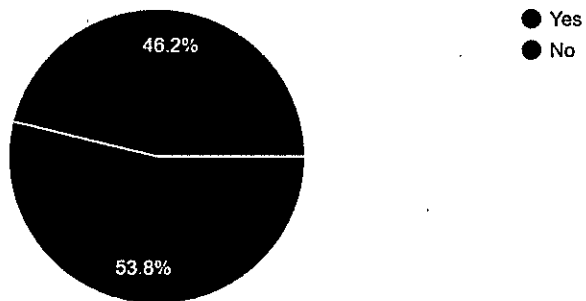


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17. My district has panic buttons/remote lockdown mechanisms.
262 responses

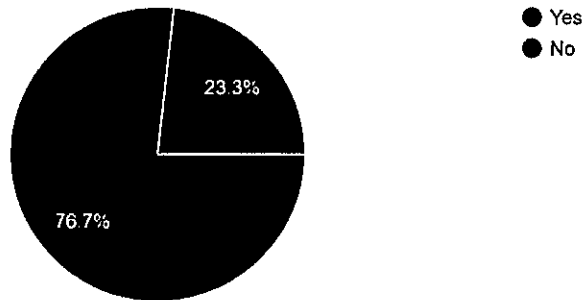


18. My district has web enabled emergency systems i.e. Crisis Go.
262 responses

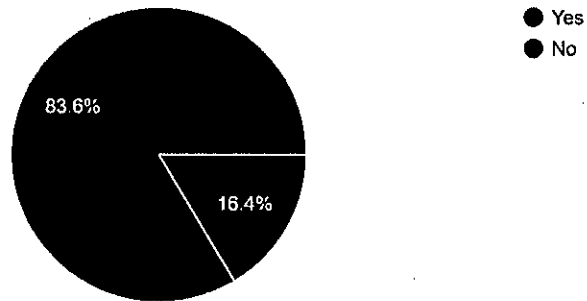


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19. My district has security vestibule(s) at school/ office buildings.
262 responses

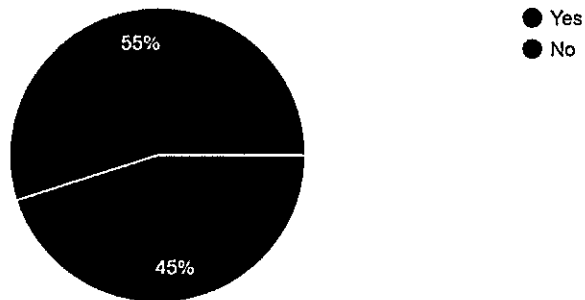


20. My district allows weapon(s) stored for SRO/SLEO III or other officers within school buildings.
262 responses

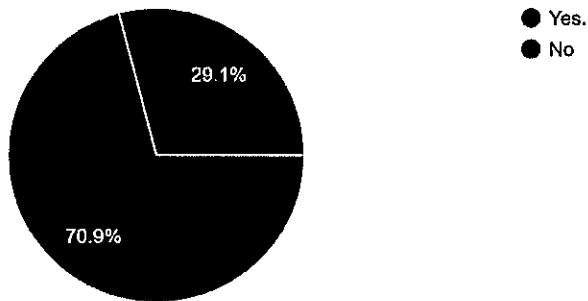


School Safety and Security Sub-Committee
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21. My district has upgraded door security lock for individual classrooms.
262 responses



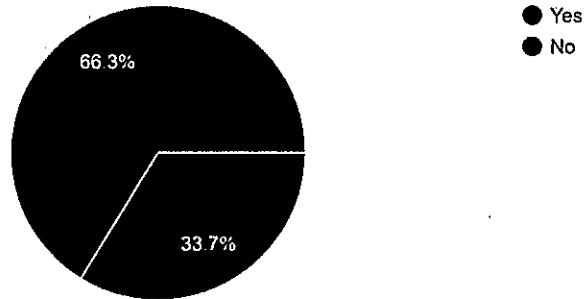
22. Our district contracts with/utilizes additional clinicians dedicated to providing mental health supports to students
261 responses



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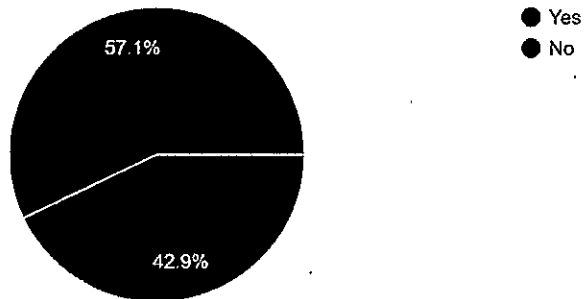
23. Our district utilizes School Based Youth Health Services Program

261 responses



24. Our district utilizes district personnel only to provide mental health supports to students

261 responses



School Safety and Security Sub-Committee
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April 2023

Appendix C
Additional Resources & Miscellaneous Information

- "Protecting America's Schools - A U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Targeted School Violence"
- "The School Shooter: A Threat Assessment Perspective"
- "Indicators of School Crime and Safety" (2018) - IES
- National Institute of Justice - The Comprehensive School Safety Initiative: 2015 Report to Congress"
- 'This Is Not the Job We Signed Up to Do': Teachers Speak Out Against School Shootings <https://www.njspotlightnews.org/2023/01/pediatric-psychiatry-children-teens-youths-mental-health-issues-suicidal-ideation-depression-autism-self-harm-eating-disorders-psychosis/>
- <https://www.njsba.org/news-publications/school-leader/may-june-2018-vol-48-no-6/school-security-redefined/> Chuck Sampson

Resources that address gun legislation:

- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6137781/>
- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/local/school-shootings-database/>
- <https://www.chds.us/ssdb/data-map/>

Background Checks: <https://www.everytown.org/solutions/background-checks/>

- Other Resources
 - US Secret Services 2021 Report
 - Popular Mechanics 2018 Guide to Making Schools Safer
 - Must Watch YouTube I Was Almost a School Shooter
- Secure Firearms Policies: <https://www.everytown.org/press/more-than-8-5-million-students-nationwide-will-attend-schools-with-secure-firearm-storage-policies-during-next-school-year-following-passage-of-orange-county-florida-resolution/>
- Background Checks: <https://www.everytown.org/solutions/background-checks/>
- Student Awareness: <https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/our-programs/program-overview/>

**New Jersey Joint Committee on Public Schools
November 1, 2024**

My name is Dr. Amy Klinger. I am the founder and Director of Programs for the Educator's School Safety Network (www.eSchoolSafety.org).

The Educator's School Safety Network is a national nonprofit organization with the simple mission of providing education-centered violence prevention and crisis response resources and support to educators in the field.

First some background to make you aware of the educational perspective I bring to this critical work.

My background and experience is first and foremost as an educator with more than 38 years in the field. I have experience as a teacher, building principal, and professor. I recently retired from Ashland University in Ohio where I was the department chair and Director of the Educational Leadership program.

Since 2006, I have conducted extensive research in the area of school safety and crisis planning and have developed lockdown enhancement, threat assessment, and parent reunification courses for school administrators, school staff members, and law enforcement officials. I have been a certified DHS instructor and course developer as well as a vetted member of the Association of Threat Assessment Professionals.

Along with my co-founder (and daughter) Amanda Klinger, Esq. I authored the book *Keeping Students Safe Every Day* along with other articles on school safety featured in national publications. In addition to direct training with educators, parents, and students, we frequently present at regional, national, and international education and law enforcement conferences on school safety and security issues, and are often sought out by journalists as experts in this field.

Today I would like to focus on a single question - What are the issues and critical needs that impact school safety and should be addressed by this Joint Committee?

The need for timely, accurate data on the reality of school safety concerns.

First, let's start with the need to move beyond media reporting, personal experiences, and perceptual bias in order to gather and analyze accurate, timely data and information on the reality of school safety in today's schools.

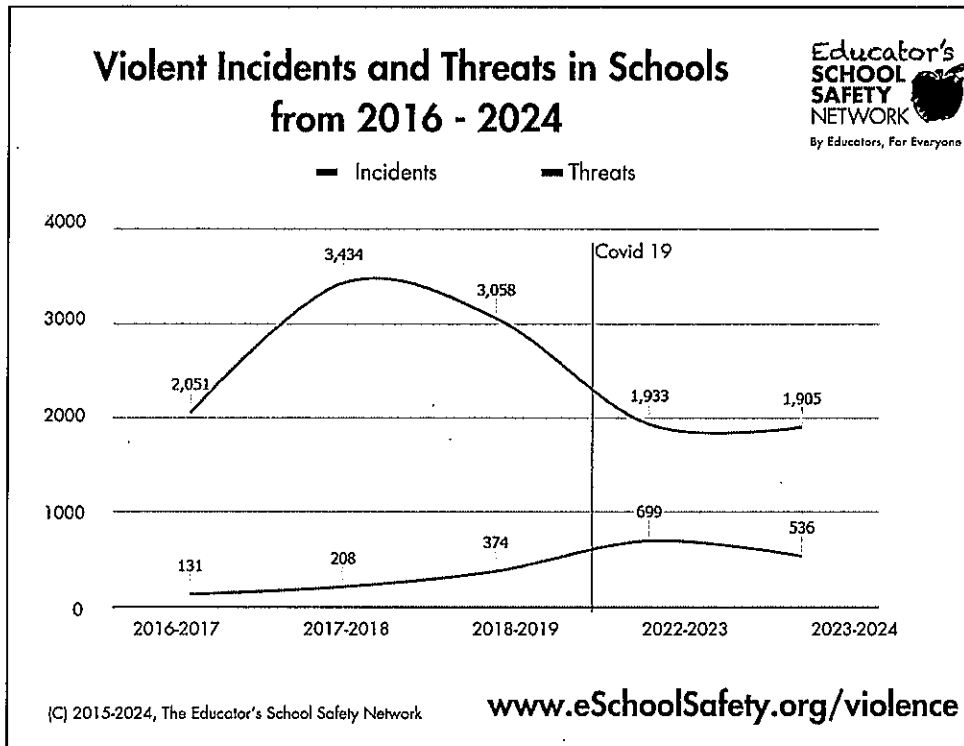
Because of the lack of current information on violent threats and incidents in schools, The Educator's School Safety Network gathers data on violent threats and incidents using the same methodology and analysis each year since 2016. Our research is derived from daily tracking

and analysis of media reports of school-based incidents and threats of violence in the United States.

I'd like to highlight a few key findings from our report, but I invite you to also [review the report from this past school year](#) in full on our website.

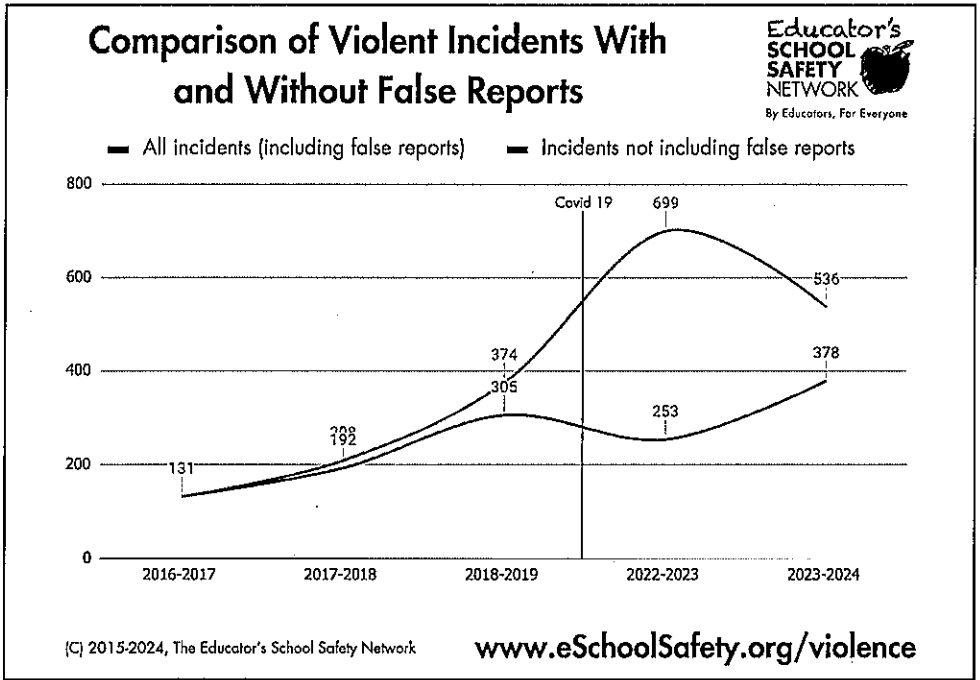
Key findings of the 2023-2024 report -

1. The number of threats in a given school year has decreased longitudinally, however the rate of violent incidents has increased during that same time period.

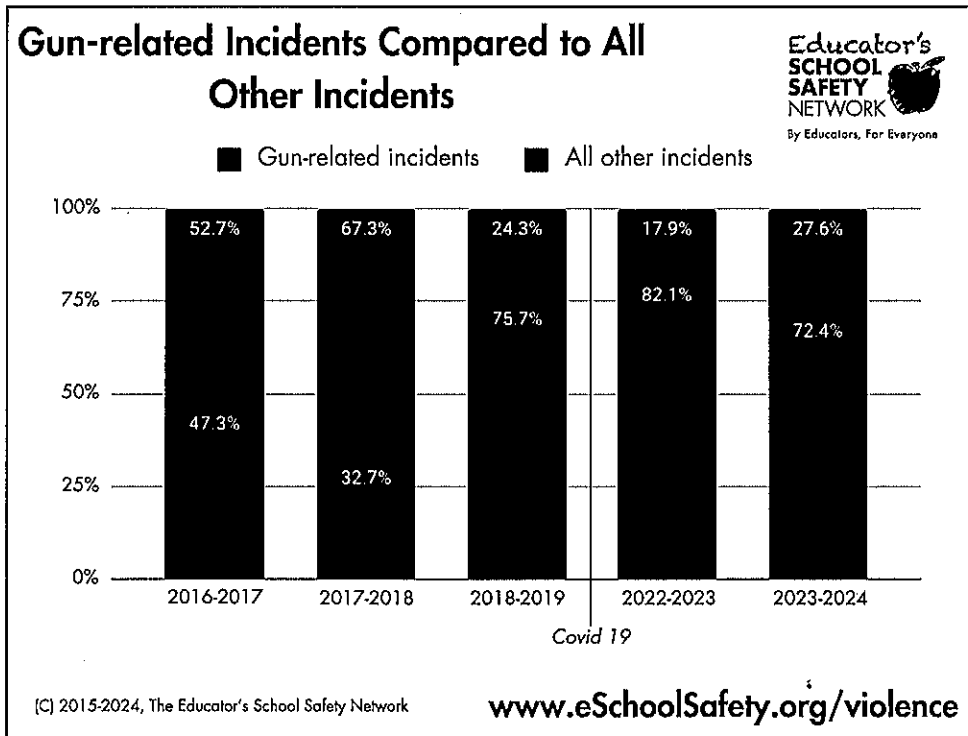


2. Violent incidents in schools appear to have declined from 2022-2023 to 2023-2024, however when false reports such as swatting are removed from the calculations, there is an actual increase of 49% in the number of violent incidents in 2023-2024 when compared to the previous year.

30x



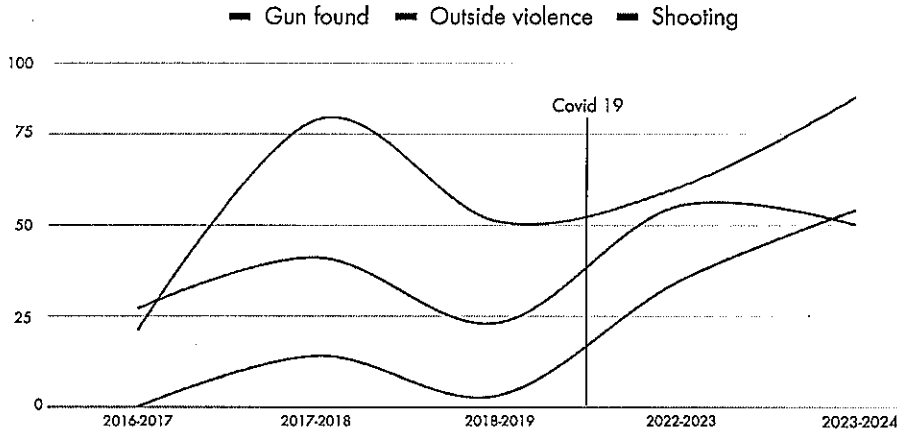
3. Gun violence remains a concern, however the majority of violent incidents that occur in a school continue to be not gun related.



31x

4. The most commonly occurring incidents in 2023-2024 continue to increase over time.

Longitudinal Comparison of Most Common Incidents in the 2023-2024 School Year



(C) 2015-2024, The Educator's School Safety Network

www.eSchoolSafety.org/violence

| Incident Type | 2023-2024 School Year | | 2022-2023 School Year | | Change from 2022-2023 to 2023-2024 |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--|
| | Ranking | Percent of incidents | Ranking | Percent of incidents | |
| False report of an active shooter | 1 | 29.5% | 1 | 63.8% | 54% decrease from previous year |
| Gun found on campus | 2 | 15.9% | 2 | 8.6% | 84% increase from previous year |
| Outside violence spilling into the school | 3 | 10.1% | 4 | 4.9% | 100% increase from previous year. |
| Shooting in the school or on school grounds | 4 | 9.3% | 3 | 7.9% | 17% increase from previous year. |

32x

While our yearly reports include the totality of the United States, it is also important to view state-specific data when possible. While we have most certainly not captured every violent threat or incident that occurred in New Jersey schools last year, an analysis of New Jersey's data highlights some important concerns:

In the 2023-2024 school year:

- 74% of the occurrences recorded were threats of violence, not actual violence.
- 47% of all the threats in New Jersey were bomb threats.
- 21% of the incidents recorded were something other than gun violence (i.e. a suspicious person, swatting, fights, etc.).
- 5% of the incidents recorded involved a gun: 2.5% a gun found on campus, and 2.5% actual shots fired.

Keep in mind that our research examines only man-made threats of violence. It does not include much more frequent, but equally deadly occurrences such as accidents, medical emergencies, severe weather events, and community based disasters.

The take-away here is that we cannot continue defining and approaching school safety only through the lens of active shooter response.

The need for an all hazards approach to school safety

The data we just reviewed, along with other national data, indicates that while gun violence is a horrific problem in schools, it is not the most common crisis event that schools will face.

Historically most approaches to school safety have been response oriented, focused on gun violence, derived from a law enforcement perspective, and based heavily on the purchase of hardware. While these elements are an important part of a comprehensive approach to crisis planning and response, they are not enough, especially given the high levels of mental health and social-emotional needs present in schools.

Educators must be able to “walk and chew gum at the same time”, meaning that we must prepare educators to prevent and respond to ALL of the hazards they are likely to face. An all hazards approach incorporates the work of prevention, support, and response into the daily operations of everyone in the school.

Our organization recommends that schools become proactive, rather than just reactive when it comes to school safety. Our School Improvement Cycle framework challenges schools to be proactive by doing diagnostic work to start the process. (I'll speak more on that later). This framework moves from examining what “is”, making plans for incremental improvement, providing adequate, appropriate training to all staff, communicating with stakeholders, and evaluating progress.



The need for training that is all hazards and education-centered

The linchpin of improving school safety is training. The erroneous belief that active shooter events are the most significant hazard schools face leaves educators vulnerable and unprepared for the more likely crisis events they will encounter. In many cases, the only training educators receive is geared toward a school shooting, even though it is one of the least likely crisis events.

Educators, not just law enforcement, must evaluate, improve, train, and practice school safety protocols in general - not just active shooter drills. Daily operational procedures such as supervision, accounting for students, relationship-building, access control and visitor screening must be critically examined and all staff members provided with adequate training, expectations, and accountability. Emergency response procedures and plans for evacuation, parent reunification, crisis communications etc. should be evaluated and trained - not just lockdown.

Training for all school stakeholders must have the following qualities to truly improve school safety:

1. The training is education-focused, not law enforcement, centered.
2. The training is conducted by educators, not just law enforcement.
3. The training is on-going throughout the year, not just one and done.
4. The training is focused on all hazards, not just active shooter events.
5. The training deals with prevention, not just response.

Requirements related to school safety vary widely from state to state, however one problematic commonality is that there are few mandates for training. Much of the training that is currently provided meets few, if any, of the critical criteria presented above.

The other critical issues regarding training is the lack of training and preparation available and/or required for preservice teachers and administrators. The way to truly solve many of our school safety issues long term is to ensure that educators coming into New Jersey schools have university preparation programs have appropriate all hazards violence prevention and crisis response training.

Our organization is currently working with various institutions of higher education to integrate all hazards, education-based training for educators preparing to enter the field. [School Safety 101](#) is an on-line training module that provides pre-service educators with basic school safety certification prior to their entry into teaching or administrative positions.

The need to create a balanced approach to violence prevention and crisis response

We've already discussed the importance of an all hazards approach to this work. Of equal importance is the creation of a balanced approach to school safety that places equal emphasis on each element of effective school safety. We believe for every dollar spent on buying school safety "stuff" - hardware and equipment - a dollar should be spent on training school stakeholders. Conversely, every dollar spent on response (whether it's training or materials) should also include a dollar spent on prevention (such as threat assessment or other violence prevention initiatives).

The need to examine the impact of current safety practices

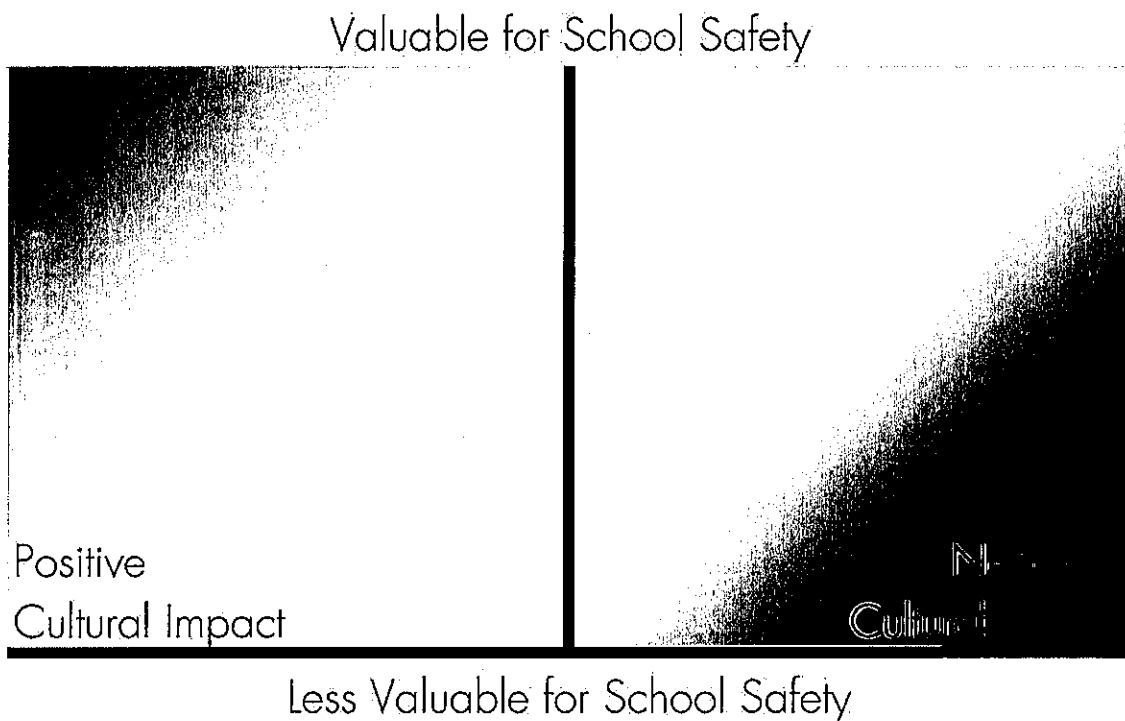
The current emphasis on active shooter response, and the practices that surround it come at a great cost to our schools. Hyper-realistic drills traumatize students. Surveillance technologies, metal detectors, armed guards, and punitive supervision creates a prison-like, surveillance-based environment in schools, where students are viewed as potential perpetrators and educators are forced into security and policing roles.

The negative school climate and culture created by pursuing security instead of safety, and surveillance instead of support, dramatically suppresses students' academic achievement, sense of belonging and connectedness, and their overall school experience. In other words, if we want to raise student performance, increase public trust, provide social-emotional support, and create a positive school experience for students, we MUST do things differently pertaining to school safety.

Preventing violence, not just responding to it, must become a priority. This can be achieved through research-based best practices such as threat assessment management, improving school climate and culture, applying appropriate supports and interventions to those at risk for

violence, enacting effective supervision, implementing visitor engagement, and other educator-based initiatives.

This diagram provides a means to critically examine several key metrics - the effectiveness of a given activity as a school safety measure compared to its impact on school climate and culture. In other words- does a given policy, practice, or initiative make schools safer AND does it contribute to a positive school climate? These are the activities that should be required and supported by the state of New Jersey.



The need for schools to assess their specific vulnerabilities and risks

When planning for and mitigating risks, it's important to understand the different approaches used to determine the threats a school faces. The terms *vulnerability assessment* and *threat assessment* are often used interchangeably in the education and emergency-response worlds.

Vulnerability assessments focus on things, not people. A vulnerability assessment examines all the tangible and intangible elements that make up an educational organization: the physical facility itself, the systems within it (such as access control or visitor sign-in), and the formal and informal policies, plans, and procedures. The assessment examines the capabilities and

liabilities of a school to prevent and respond to man-made violence, natural disasters, and technological hazards. We recommend the use of a risk matrix such as this one,

| | High Consequence | | Moderate Consequence | | Low Consequence | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| High Frequency | [Solid Black] | | [Solid Black] | [Solid Black] | [Diagonal Lines] | [Diagonal Lines] |
| | | | [Diagonal Lines] | [Diagonal Lines] | [Diagonal Lines] | [Diagonal Lines] |
| Moderate Frequency | [Solid Black] | [Solid Black] | [Diagonal Lines] | [Diagonal Lines] | [Solid Black] | [Solid Black] |
| | [Diagonal Lines] | [Diagonal Lines] | [Diagonal Lines] | [Diagonal Lines] | [Solid Black] | [Solid Black] |
| Low Frequency | [Diagonal Lines] | [Diagonal Lines] | [Solid Black] | [Solid Black] | [White] | [White] |
| | [Diagonal Lines] | [Diagonal Lines] | [Solid Black] | [Solid Black] | [White] | [White] |

that encourages a critical analysis of all the potential risks a school and the surrounding community may face. A vulnerability assessment also examines the discrepancy between what is written down - board-adopted policies, state requirements, local regulations - and what actually occurs.

Vulnerability assessments are not frequently done in schools, and often are a cursory review of security, not school-based concerns, yet in our experience, an effective interdisciplinary vulnerability assessment is the single greatest catalyst for school safety improvement.

For more information, I encourage you to review our checklist of *What Makes an Effective Vulnerability Assessment*.

Threat assessment management is a fact-based, investigative approach to determine how likely a person is to carry out a threat of violence. By investigating, gathering facts, and assessing threats, the threat assessment team is able to do three important tasks:

1. **Identify** individuals at risk for violence against themselves or others. Who should we be concerned about? Keep in mind that these individuals may be any type of school stakeholder, a student, staff member, parent, or community member.
2. **Assess** the level of concern: How concerned should we be about this individual? Where are they on the path to violence?

37x

3. **Manage** the individual. What are we going to do about it? How will the school and other agencies provide appropriate support and interventions to prevent the individual from engaging in violence?

Threat assessment is not a simple checklist of warning signs or red flags that an administrator or guidance counselor completes based on a single threat or incident. Threat assessment examines the whole picture, not just an isolated event. The use of threat assessment management principles is not a means to “kick kids out of school” or “label them” as troublemakers, but instead to craft a plan for effectively intervening and managing the individual.

Perhaps most importantly, threat assessment is not just about “finding the next school shooter”. Threat assessment assists schools in identifying and supporting individuals who may engage in a wide range of violence against themselves or others, from self-harm like cutting or suicide, to risk taking behaviors and substance abuse, to assaults and other forms of violence against others.

The need to stop admiring the problem and act

We must critically examine our actual commitment to safety. While there are many demands on the time and attention of educators, there is nothing more important in a school than ensuring the safety of the people in it. I am often shocked and dismayed to hear a building administrator tell me that yes, they know a particular situation is unsafe, but... their priority is... (fill in the blank here - it's usually academics, funding, or the current hot topic).

Educators have a moral and ethical responsibility to the children in their care. Their *most* critical job is to keep our kids safe. The allocation of time, money, personnel, and training for safety must come before anything else.

Keeping schools safe may seem overwhelming, and as demonstrated, the rate of violence continues to increase. When it comes to school safety, education has chosen the definition of insanity - doing the same ineffective things over and over and expecting a different result. As I have outlined in my testimony today, the good news is that there is so much that we can do differently - we just need to get started.

Dr. Amy Klinger, Director of Programs
The Educator's School Safety Network (www.eSchoolSafety.org)
amy@eschoolsafety.org
419-699-4657



Security Testimony November 1, 2024

Dr. Steven A. Forte, Superintendent of the Denville Township Public Schools

The impact of the Sandy Hook tragedy resonated deeply with my family, especially with my son, Anthony, who was just eight years old at the time. I still remember the fear and disbelief in his eyes as he watched a news report about the shooting that claimed the lives of elementary school children in Connecticut. It was a horrifying moment, one that compelled me to think about how we could do everything possible to prevent such a tragedy from happening again. My daughter, Marissa, now 23, has always been passionate about education. After completing her student teaching on 195th Street in the Bronx, she worked in two districts in New Jersey and now teaches in A Coruña, Spain. When she first arrived, she asked the principal about safety drills, but to her surprise, the principal didn't grasp the severity of the question. Marissa had to clarify, inquiring about the protocols for a potential shooter entering the school which was met with disbelief by the principal.

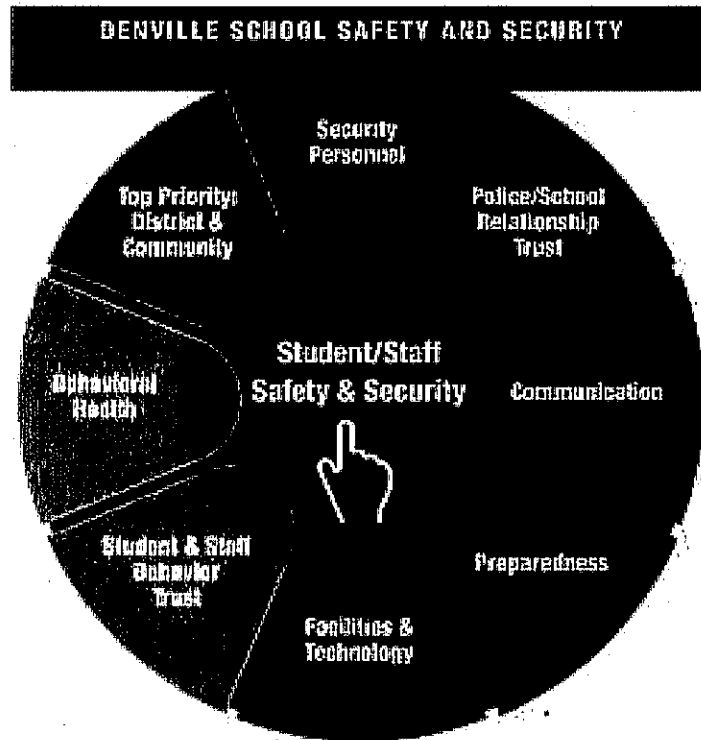
In response to these concerns, we developed a comprehensive safety plan in Denville that addressed eight crucial aspects of school safety, symbolized by a wheel where no single part was more important than the others. One of the challenges we faced was combating the "It won't happen here" mentality, as well as the skepticism of those who believed that if comprehensive solutions weren't possible, then no action should be taken. Our plan prioritized the safety of staff and students, emphasizing the importance of building trusting relationships between the police and schools. We recognized the need for clear communication about our safety measures and reinforced the significance of maintaining locked doors and the "see something, say something" principle among students and staff.

Facilities and technology also played a pivotal role, with investments in locking systems, vestibules, cameras, and constant monitoring of safety measures. Preparedness became essential, requiring ongoing professional development, drills, and frequent discussions about our strategies. Behavioral health was equally important, leading us to establish threat assessment teams and counseling services in collaboration with St. Clare's Behavioral Health, all while prioritizing mental health awareness. To bolster security, we employed a range of personnel, including security guards and Class Three Police Officers.



However, these advancements come with significant financial implications. For the 2024-25 school year, our recurring annual costs for security and mental health have risen to over \$520,000, a stark increase from just a few years ago. This figure represents 1.44% of our total allowable tax levy increase. Since 2017, we have invested more than \$3.5 million in security measures, including facilities, technology, and personnel. Additionally, from 2021 onward, we have allocated over \$1 million to support our students' mental health with in-house clinicians and screenings, all aimed at fostering a safe and nurturing environment for our students.

From NJSBA May/June 2018 School Leader Magazine



40x



Joint Committee on the Public Schools

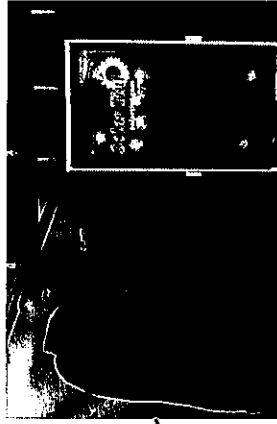
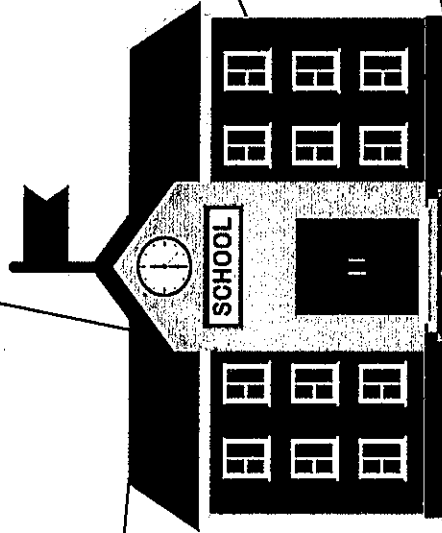
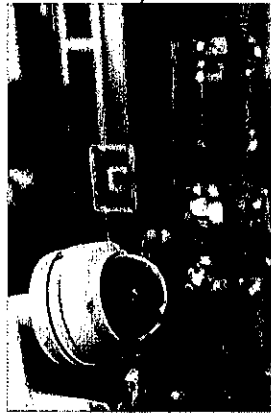
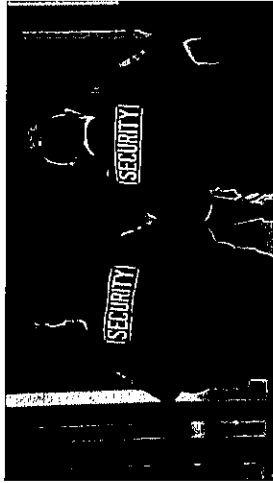
41x

November 1, 2024

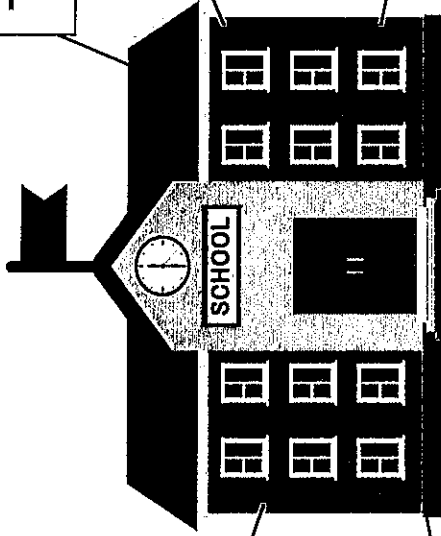
Tony Trongone
Executive Director – Great Schools of New Jersey
Past President - NJASA

“Hardening” Schools

42x



43x "Human Aspect" of School Security



Emergency Preparedness Training and Drills

Communication Tools

Community and Parent Involvement

Mental Health Services
 Districts have expanded mental health services, hiring additional counselors, social workers, and psychologists to support students.

Behavioral Intervention Programs
 Schools are increasingly focused on identifying and addressing behavioral issues early through threat assessment teams and intervention programs.

Funding for Resource

- Stronger Connections Grant
- Professional Mental Health Supports Grant partnership w/ Rowan
- Reappropriate existing General Fund positions

Anonymous Reporting Systems
 schools have adopted anonymous tip lines or mobile apps where individuals can report concerns about violence or bullying without fear of retaliation (STOP IT)

Staffing as per Mental Health Assessment Plan

BIMAS 2 ASSESSMENT GRADES 3-12 Students referred to I&RS

Elementary School Counselors

- Amy Sacco
- Cami Howard
- Holly Heights
- Amanda Haviland
- Kristin Fasolino
- Kelly Pilla
- Lauren Swartz
- Arlene Magicolda
- Deana Parker
- Child Study Team**
- Gena Pacitto, Psychologist
- Jeanne Clifford, Social Worker
- Keturah Binder, Social Worker
- Deb Broe, LDTC
- Tom Moore, Social Worker
- Beith Deforest, Social Worker
- Counseling Social Worker**
- Megan Fleck, Social Worker
- Transitional Coach**
- Nicole Schneider, Holly Heights
- Aida Serrano, Rieck
- Elementary School Counselors**
- Rachel Pizzo

- Steve Matusz, Director of Exceptional Children and Student Services
- Danielle Pulli, District Crisis Coordinator
- Wendy McKensie, Supervisor of School Counselors Prek-12

Middle School Counselors

- School Counselor
- Brittany O'Shea
- Megan Hoffman
- Melissa Sooy
- Child Study Team**
- Karly DePalma, Psychologist
- Mike Almodovar, Social worker
- Audrey Muller, Social Worker
- Jackie Eppright, Social Worker
- Counseling Social Worker**
- Sharon Shiffer
- Transitional Coach**
- Dr. Williams
- Elementary School Counselors**
- Nicole Dudek

High School School Counselors

- Nicki Russo
- Tami Jackson
- Michelle Giercyk
- Leanne Kuhn
- Tom Herman
- Anthony Procopio
- Mary Bacon
- Child Study Team**
- Pete Arsenault, Psychologist
- Katie Baralus, Psychologist
- Emily Zeck, Social Worker
- Migna Gonzalez, Social Worker
- Chelsea Santiago, Social Worker
- Counseling Social Worker**
- Haley Hunter
- LINK Counseling Services**
- High School School Counselors**
- Aiyahna McCoy

44x

Behavioral Intervention Programs

- BIMAS² - Universal Screening
- Navigate 360 Portal
 - Columbia Suicide Assessment
 - Threat Assessments
- Handle With Care
- Other Info – HIB, Threat Assessment, Homeless, referrals, free and reduced lunch

45x

Behavioral Intervention Programs

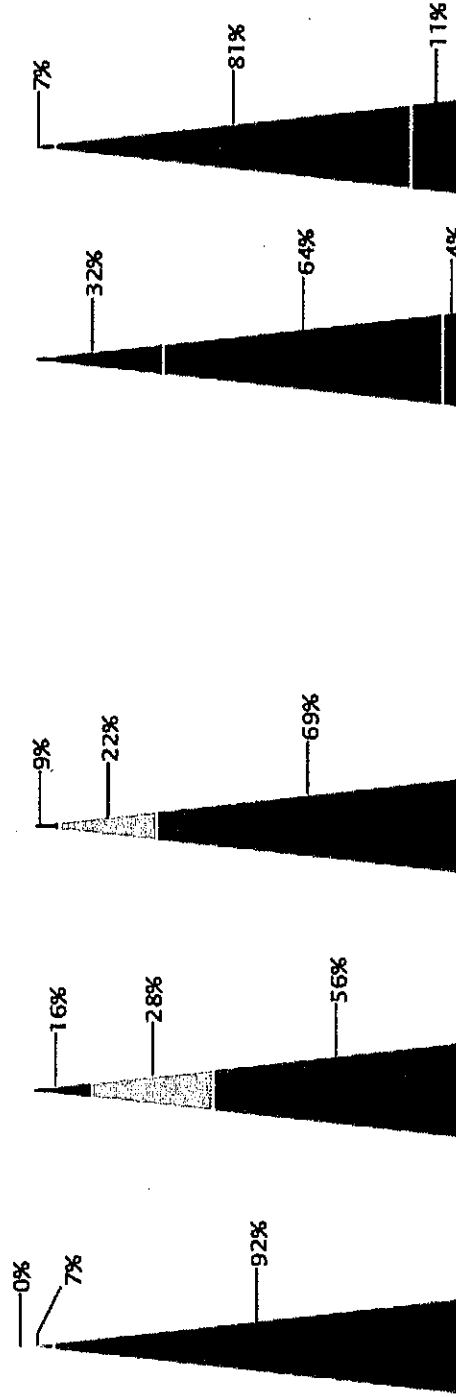
BIMAS Assessment Data – Universal Screening

| Data | Elementary | Lakeside | High School |
|-----------------------------------|------------|----------|-------------|
| # of students | | 609 | |
| Percentage of Students took BIMAS | | 64 | |
| Tier 3 | | 40 | |
| Referred to Crisis | | 6 | |
| Tier 2 | | 56 | |

47x

Behavioral Intervention Programs

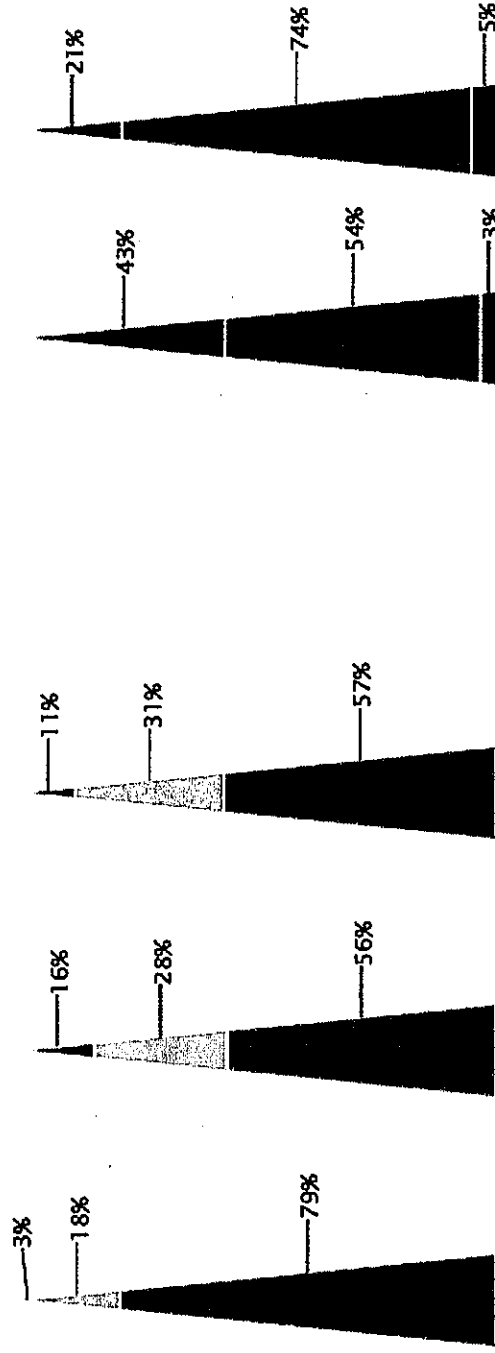
BIMAS Assessment - High School Data



| Levels Of Risk | Conduct | Negative Affect | Cognitive/Attention | Levels Of Functioning | Social | Academic Functioning |
|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| High Risk | 1 (0%) | 42 (16%) | 23 (9%) | Concern | 83 (32%) | 19 (7%) |
| Some Risk | 19 (7%) | 71 (28%) | 57 (22%) | Typical | 164 (64%) | 209 (81%) |
| Low Risk | 237 (92%) | 144 (56%) | 177 (69%) | Strength | 10 (4%) | 29 (11%) |
| Total | 257 (100%) | 257 (100%) | 257 (100%) | Total | 257 (100%) | 257 (100%) |

48x

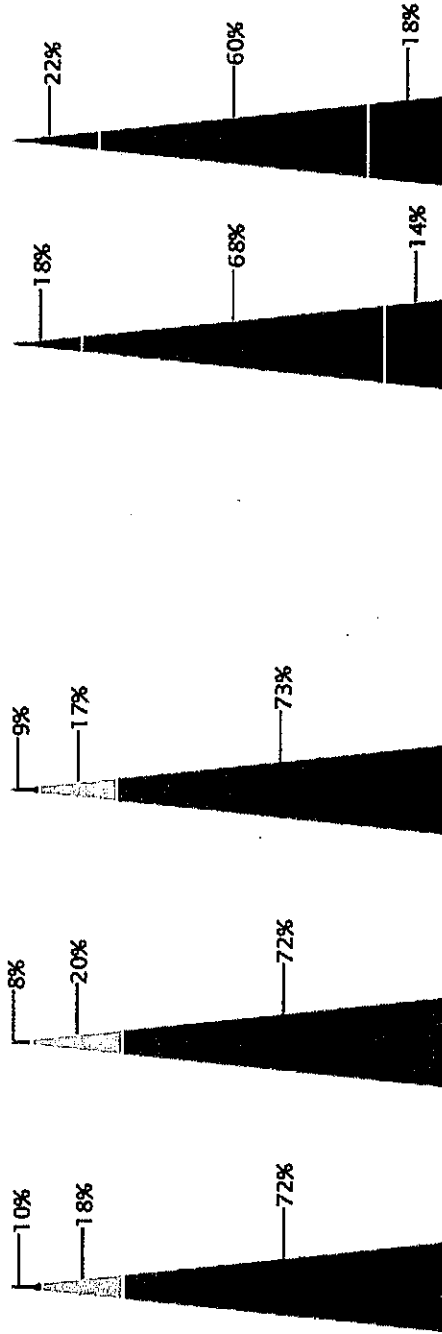
Behavioral Intervention Programs BIMAS Assessment - Middle School Data



49x

| Levels Of Risk | Conduct | Negative Affect | Cognitive/Attention | Levels Of Functioning | Social | Academic Functioning |
|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| High Risk | 18 (3%) | 95 (16%) | 70 (11%) | Concern | 261 (43%) | 127 (21%) |
| Some Risk | 110 (18%) | 170 (28%) | 191 (31%) | Typical | 327 (54%) | 449 (74%) |
| Low Risk | 481 (79%) | 344 (56%) | 348 (57%) | Strength | 21 (3%) | 33 (5%) |
| Total | 609 (100%) | 609 (100%) | 609 (100%) | Total | 609 (100%) | 609 (100%) |

Behavioral Intervention Programs BIMAS Assessment – Elementary School Data



| Levels Of Risk | Conduct | Negative Affect | Cognitive/Attention | Levels Of Functioning | Social | Academic Functioning |
|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| High Risk | 74 (10%) | 56 (8%) | 68 (9%) | Concern | 135 (18%) | 162 (22%) |
| Some Risk | 132 (18%) | 149 (20%) | 127 (17%) | Typical | 495 (68%) | 440 (60%) |
| Low Risk | 524 (72%) | 525 (72%) | 535 (73%) | Strength | 100 (14%) | 128 (18%) |
| Total | 730 (100%) | 730 (100%) | 730 (100%) | Total | 730 (100%) | 730 (100%) |

50x

Mental Assessments/Data

- BIMAS²
- Navigate 360 Portal
 - Columbia Suicide Assessment
 - Threat Assessments
- Handle With Care

51x

Behavioral Intervention Programs

Threat Assessments

What is a Columbia Assessment?

The Columbia assessment is conducted when a student makes some kind of indication that they want to harm or kill themselves. The student is asked a series of questions by one of the counselors at the school and a decision is made on the level of risk that student poses to themselves. Appropriate resources and support is provided.

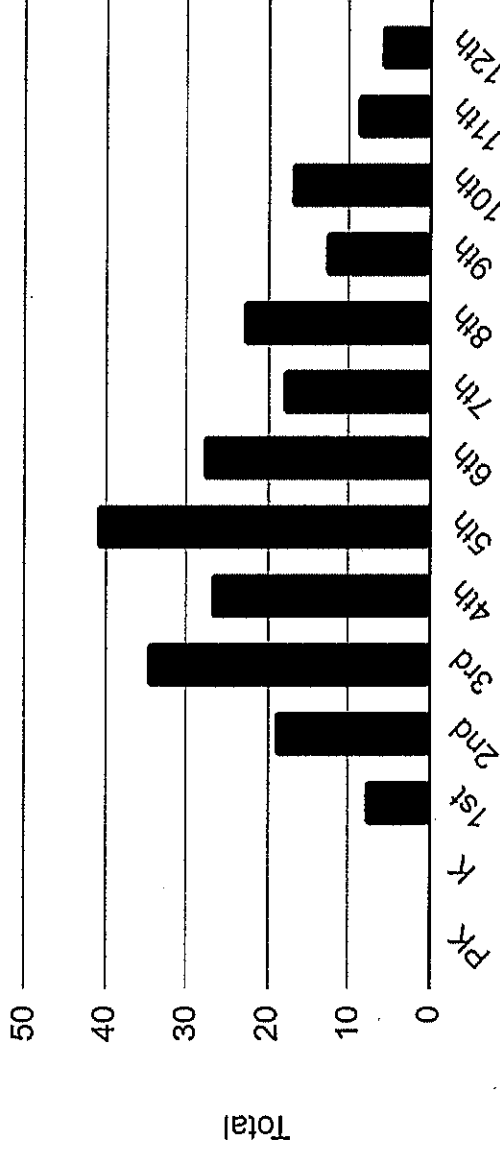
52x

Behavioral Intervention Programs

Overall Mental Health Assessments Conducted

- **244** assessments have been conducted for the 23-24 school year.
- **3rd and 5th grade** students had the highest number of assessments conducted.

Total referrals for 2023-2024



2023-2024

GSNJ

Great Schools
Of New Jersey

53x

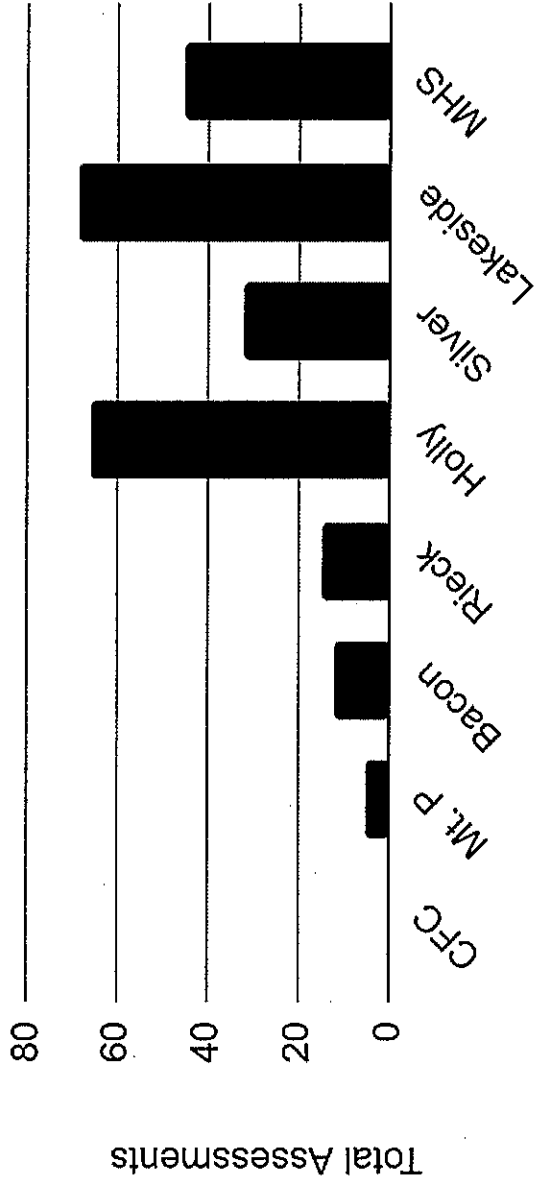
Behavioral Intervention Programs

Overall Mental Health Assessments Conducted by School

Holly Heights had the most risk assessments conducted compared to all other **elementary schools** and also more than the high school.

Lakeside Middle School had the highest overall compared to all other schools.

Total Assessments by School



Percent of students sent out by school

54x

Behavioral Intervention Programs

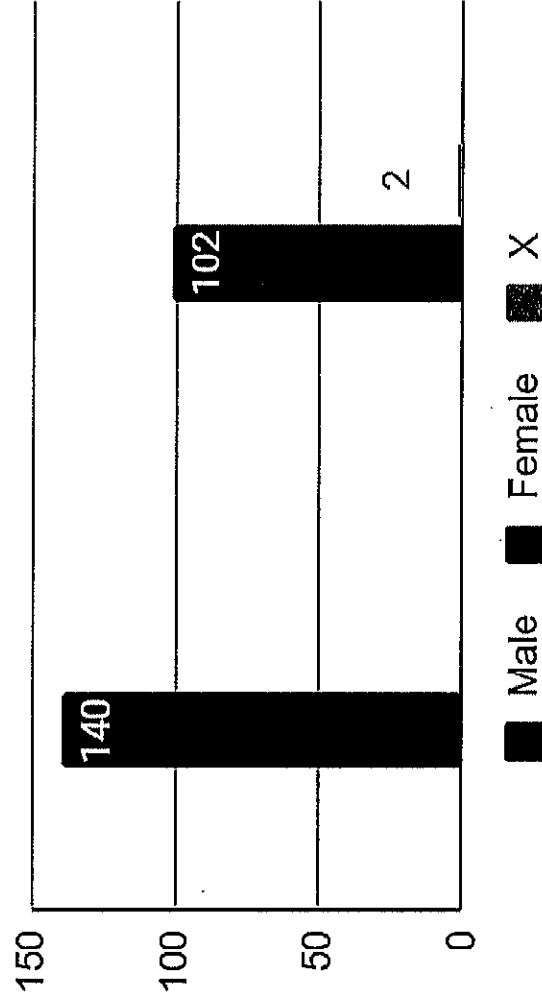
Overall Mental Health Assessments Conducted by Gender

We see a slightly higher number of male students indicating that they want to hurt themselves or others.

However, of the **86 students who were sent out to crisis, 45 were female and 41 were male.**

Males may be more likely to make statements but slightly less likely to result in a high risk classification.

Assessment by Gender

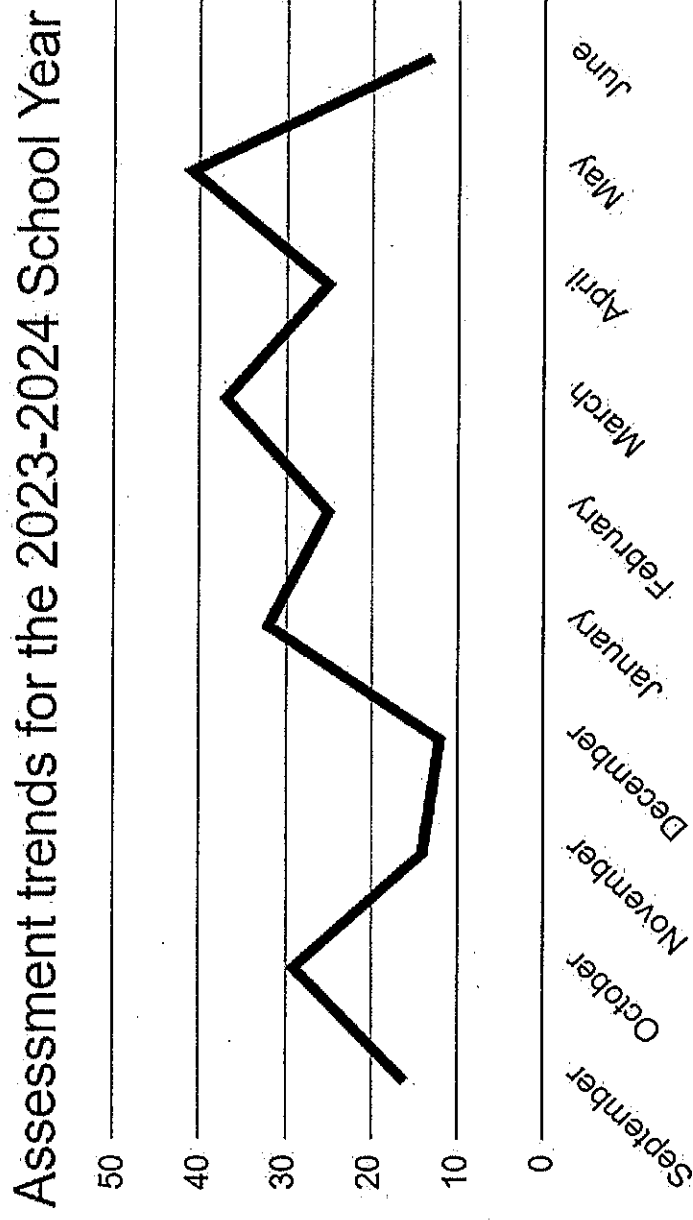


Behavioral Intervention Programs

Overall Mental Health Assessments Conducted by Month

There was a spike of assessments conducted in March and then another spike in May.

Anecdotally, March frequently tends to result in higher rates of mental health and behavior concerns.



School Year

GSNJ

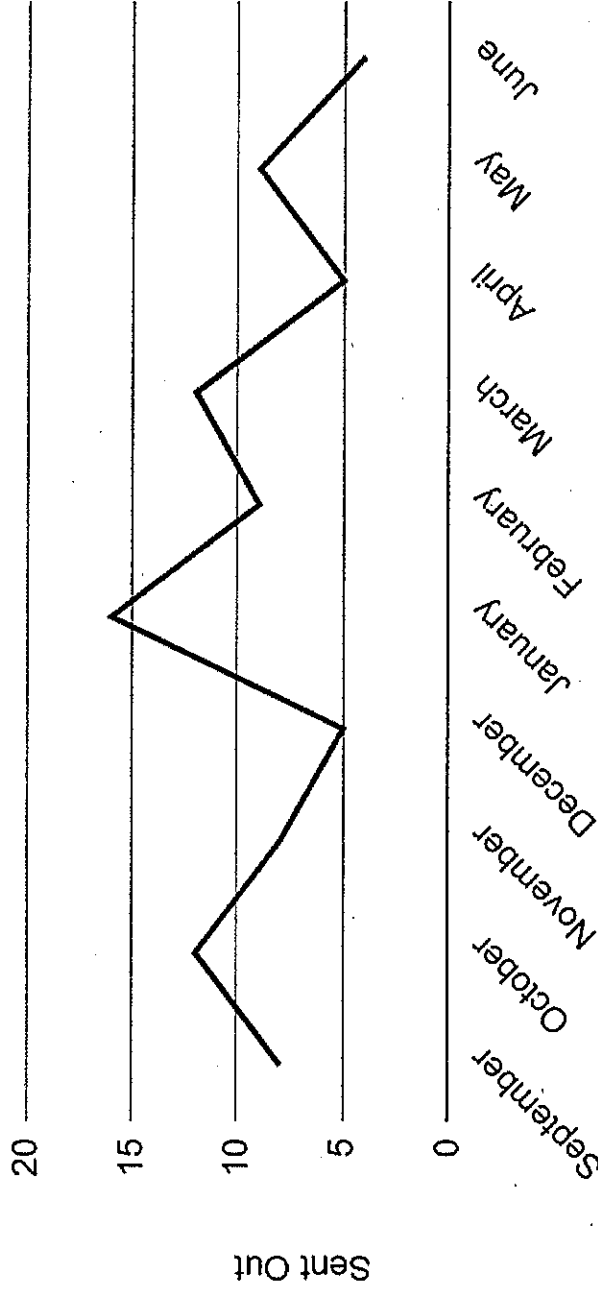
Great Schools
Of New Jersey

Behavioral Intervention Programs

Mental Health Assessments Conducted sent to crisis by Month

Although assessments were higher in March, more students were sent to crisis in January than any other month this school year.

Students Sent to Crisis



School Year

GSNJ

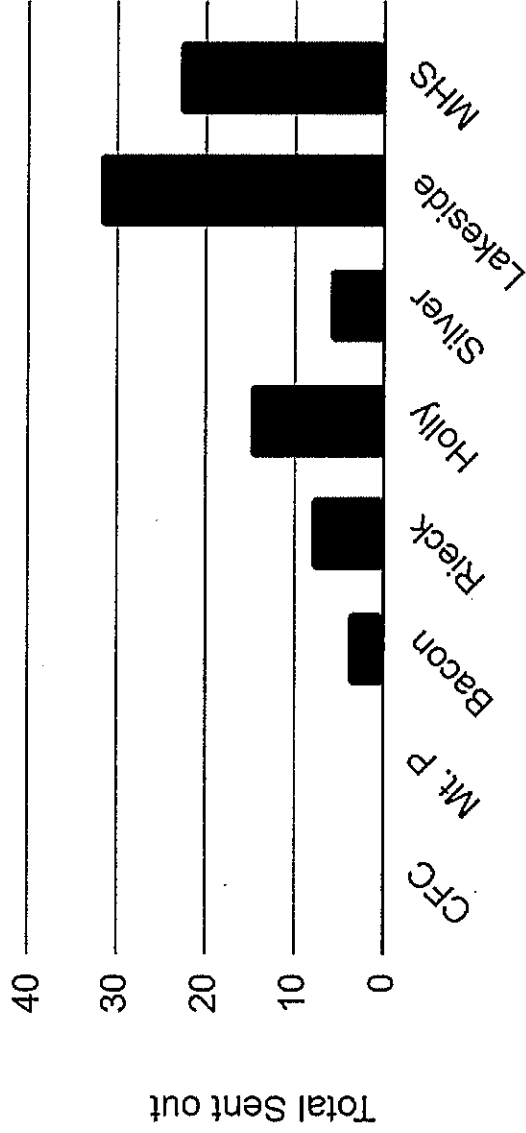
Great Schools
Of New Jersey

Behavioral Intervention Programs

Mental Health Assessments Conducted sent to crisis by School

Lakeside Middle School had the most students sent out to crisis overall so far this school year, showing the greatest level of social emotional need.

Total Sent Out by School



Percent of students sent out by school

Mental Assessments/Data

- BIMAS²
- Navigate 360 Portal
 - Columbia Suicide Assessment
 - Threat Assessments
- Handle With Care

59x

Behavioral Intervention Programs

What is Handle with Care?

60x A handle with care is a form completed by law enforcement after responding to, or encountering, an incident involving a traumatic event where a child is present. School staff receive a notification that a form was completed for that child. However, they do not receive information on the specifics of the incident. Staff are made aware to handle that student with care and counselors check in with the student, without bringing up the event specifically.

Behavioral Intervention Programs

What is Handle with Care?

Notifications are not sent for minor incidents, but for identified incidents that are qualified as traumatic such as:

- the arrest of an individual who resides in the home
- a search warrant executed at the residence;
- drug/alcohol overdose
- suicide, or attempted suicide, of an individual who resides in the home
- an incident of domestic violence;
- physical/sexual abuse;
- community violence;
- a bullied child or a child who is bullying others;
- forced displacement from the residence;
- involvement with the Department of Child Protection & Permanency;
- house fires;
- any incident where a child is identified at the scene as being exposed to trauma (i.e. crime/drug activity at the scene); or
- the sudden death of an immediate family member or guardian of the child of which the police are made aware.
- any incident where a child is identified at the scene as being exposed to trauma (i.e. crime/drug activity at the scene); or
- the sudden death of an immediate family member or guardian of the child of which the police are made aware.

6/1x

**2023-2024
School Year
(August 1 to
July 25)**

62x

Summary Statistics

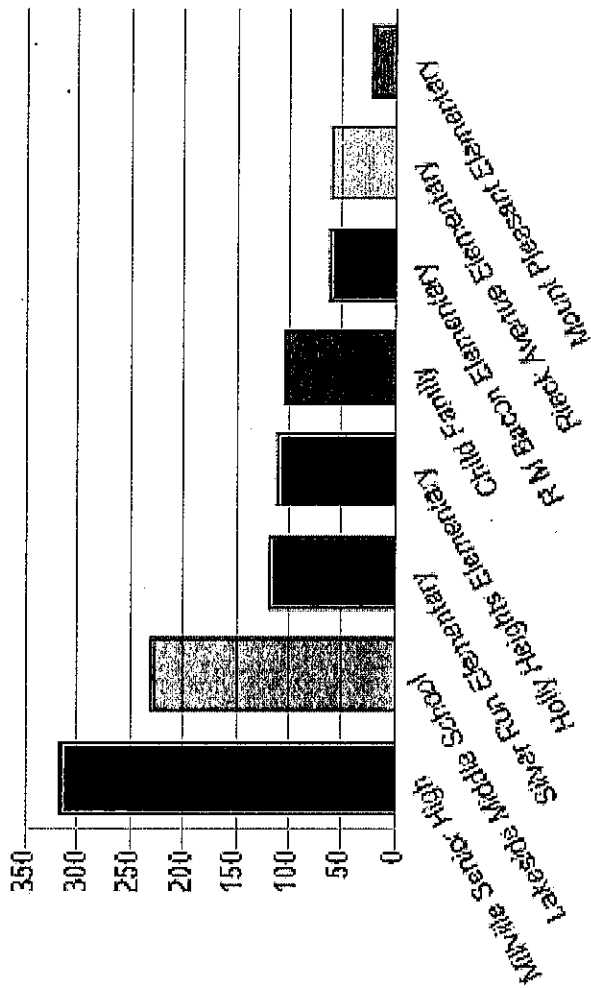
| | |
|---------------------------|------|
| Total Matched Incidents ⓘ | 513 |
| Total Students Impacted ⓘ | 708 |
| Total Impacts ⓘ | 1028 |

Behavioral Intervention Programs What is Handle with Care by School

As is expected, the larger school buildings with more students have a higher number of impacts, or instances of handle with care forms completed.

Silver Run and Holly Heights have the highest number of impacts for elementary schools.

Total Impacts per School ①



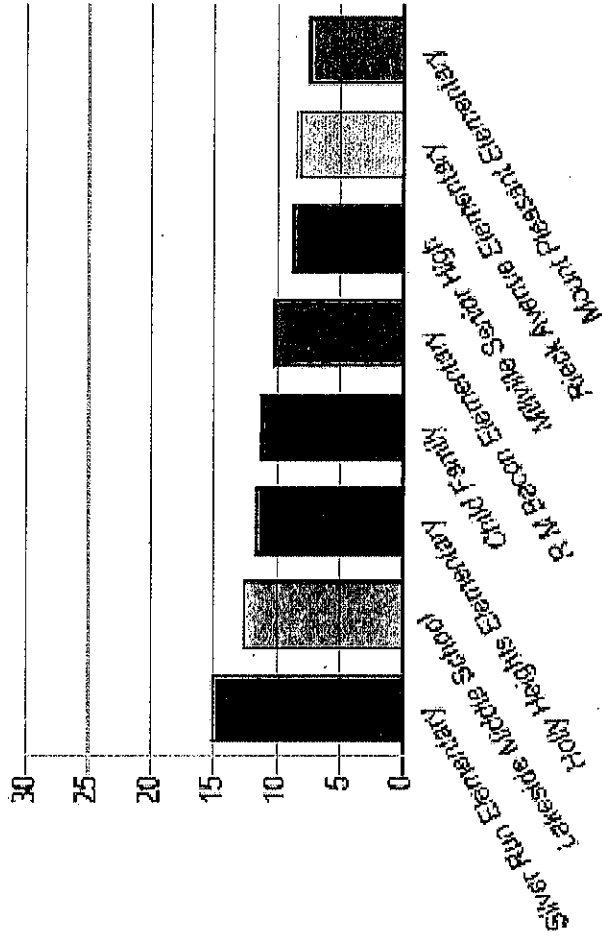
Behavioral Intervention Programs

What is Handle with Care – Percent of School Population

Silver Run Elementary has the highest percentage of students impacted throughout the building.

Percent of Impacted Students per School

| | |
|--------------------------|--------|
| - Silver Run: | 15.1% |
| - Lakeside: 1 | 2.64% |
| - Holly Heights: | 11.71% |
| - Child Family Center: | 11.19% |
| - R.M. Bacon: | 10.23% |
| - Millville Senior High: | 8.75% |
| - Rieck Ave: | 8.33% |
| - Mount Pleasant: | 7.45% |

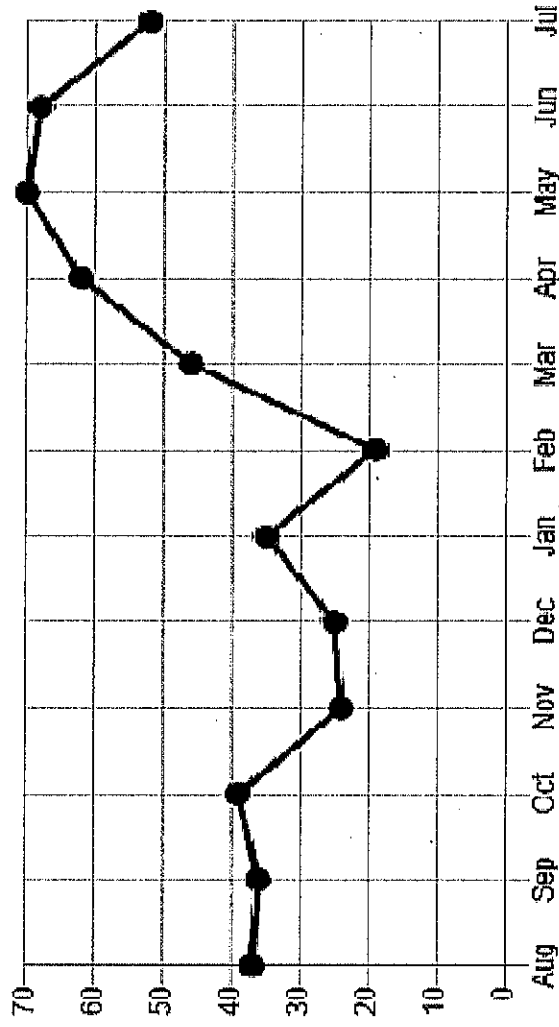


Behavioral Intervention Programs

What is Handle with Care – by month

- April May and June show the highest number of incidents compared to all other months. This indicates that our students are experiencing more traumatic events at home around this time of year. Also, it is interesting to note a down tick in February.

Incidents per Month ①

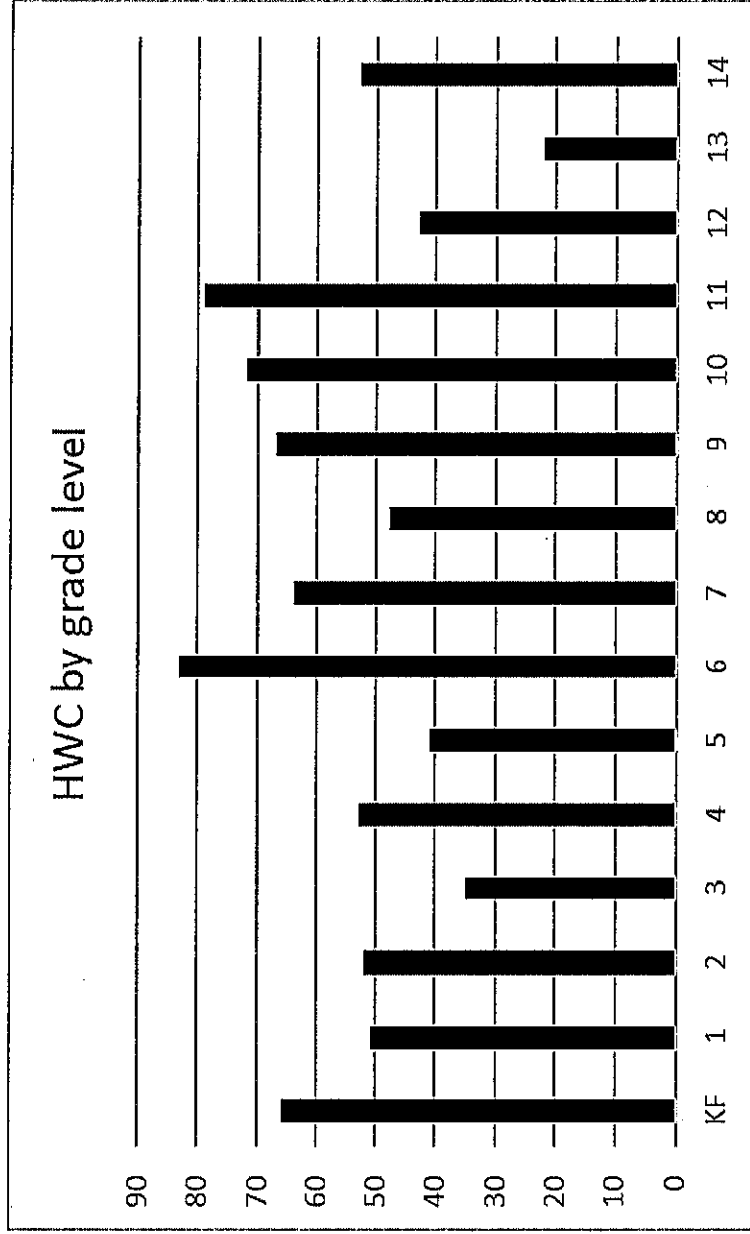


Behavioral Intervention Programs

What is Handle with Care – by grade level

The grades with the highest number of impacts are 6th and 11th grades.

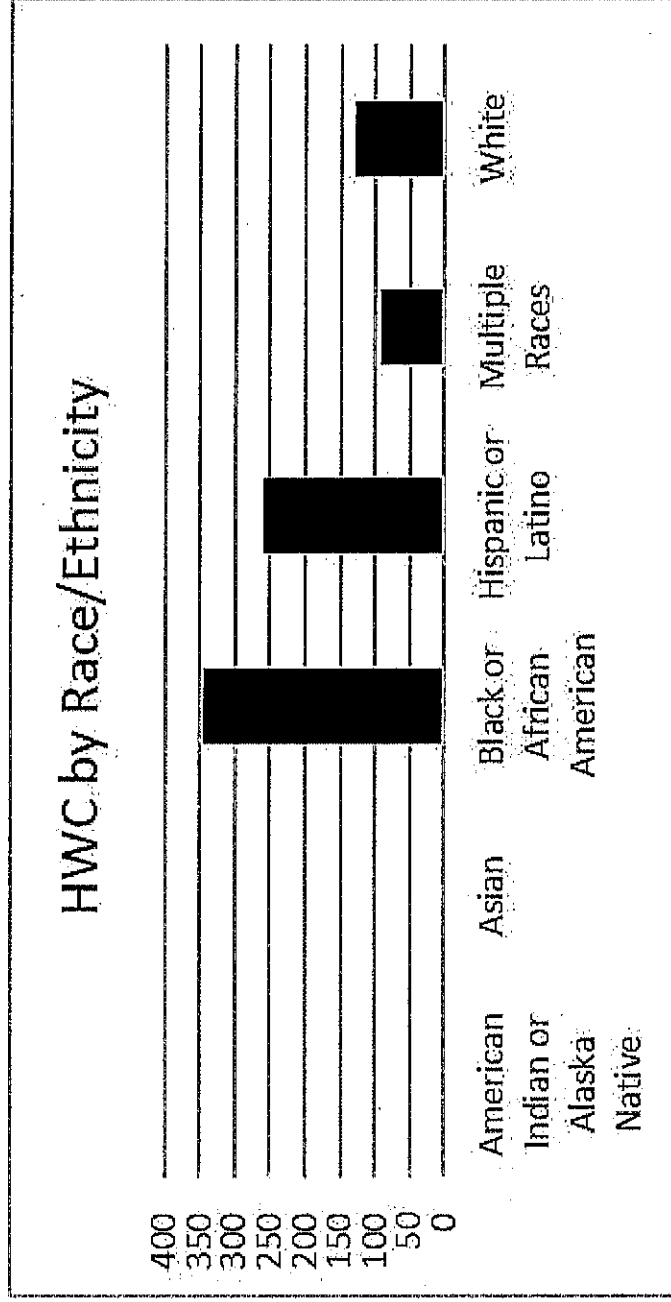
The grade with the lowest number of students impacted is PreK.



Behavioral Intervention Programs

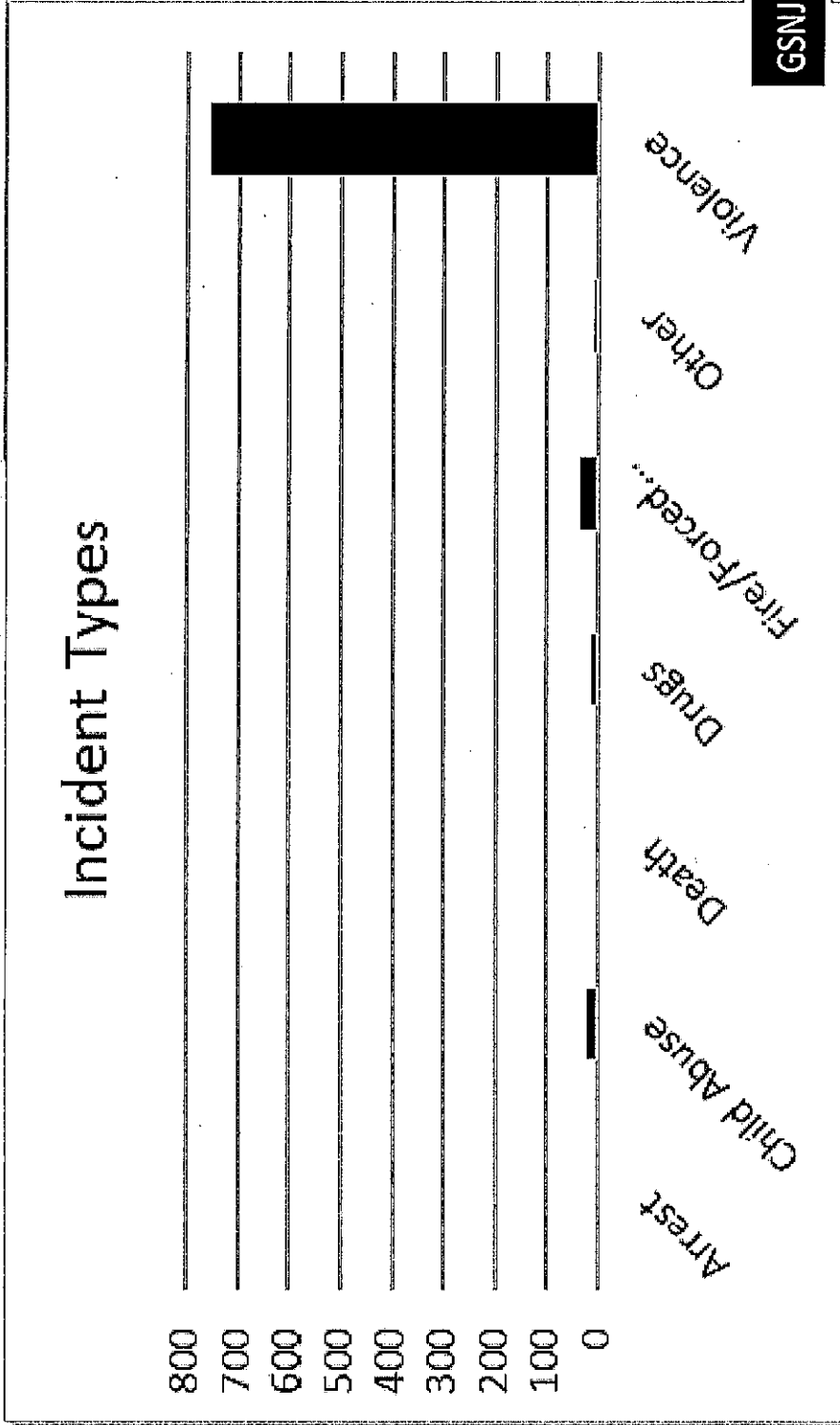
What is Handle with Care – by Race/Ethnicity

Here we see the breakdown of handle with care notifications by race and ethnicity.



Behavioral Intervention Programs

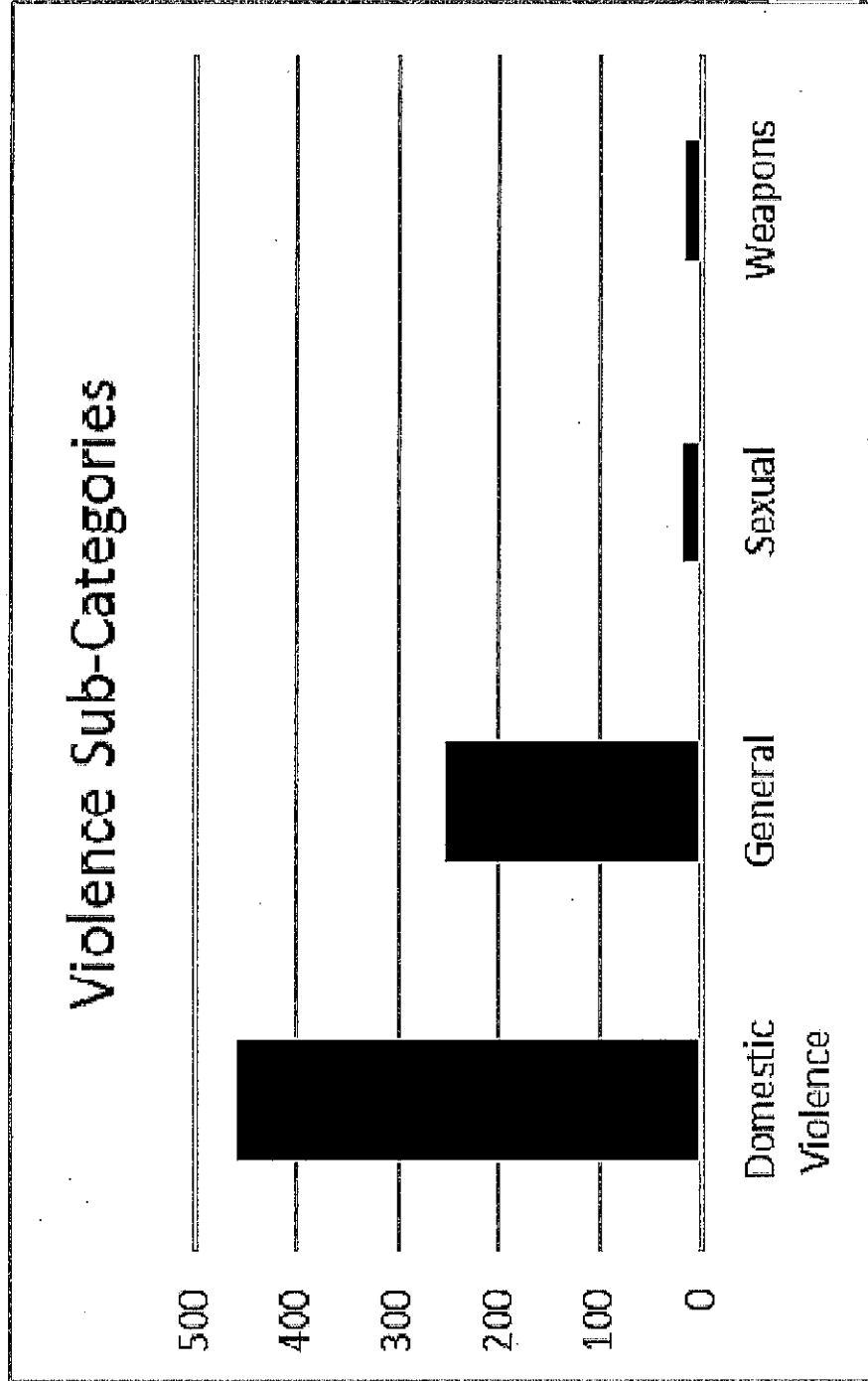
What is Handle with Care – Incident Type



68x

Behavioral Intervention Programs

What is Handle with Care – by Violence Sub-Categories



69x

Tier 1 Supports - Universal

- Health Curriculum
- Mental Health Fairs - High School and Middle School
- NJ4S - Hub supports- Assemblies with students
- BIMAS Assessment
- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
- Second Step

70x

Tier 2 Supports - Targeted

- Counseling- Individual and Group- Transitional Coaches Counseling Social Workers
- Insite Health- counseling, diagnosis, evaluations, medical.
- School Based Youth Services Program - High School
- I&RS Action Plan
- Perform Care
- After School Counseling

Tier 3 Supports- Intensive

- Crisis Referral
- District Counseling
 - Weekly
 - Short Term
 - Solution Focused
- Insite Health
- Child Study Team Referral

72x

Behavioral Intervention Programs

BIMAS Assessment

| Tier | Counseling/ Supports | Notification of Parents |
|-------------------|---|---|
| GREEN | None | Email |
| YELLOW- SOME RISK | Gen Ed Student- School Counselor/ Social Worker Classified Student- CST | Meeting at school |
| RED- HIGH RISK | Generate Action Plan Danielle Pulli Haley Hunter, Megan Fleck, Sharon Shiffler Rowan Interns | Meeting Review Action Plan Parent Signature |

Questions

74x

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**TESTIMONY OF JEFFREY GALE, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF SCHOOL PREPAREDNESS AND
EMERGENCY PLANNING**

**Joint Committee on the Public Schools
Hearing on School Security and Behavioral Threat Assessment Teams**

Friday, November 1, 2024

Senator Cryan and Assemblywoman Reynolds-Jackson, Co-Chairs of the Joint Committee, as well as the other Members, thank you for the opportunity to provide information regarding the work of the New Jersey Department of Education's (Department) Office of School Preparedness and Emergency Planning (OSPEP). The following testimony provides information concerning activities engaged in by this office to keep schools and students safe, and on how threats are being handled in alignment with the threat assessment process now required under legislation.

The goal of the Department's OSPEP is to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the K-12 school population by providing direct support to New Jersey's schools in establishing safe and secure school environments and increasing their capacity to respond in the event of crises. One initiative advancing that goal is the Department's administration of the School Safety Specialist academy pursuant to legislation passed in 2017 (N.J.S.A. 18A:17-43.2)

This academy is tasked with providing, free of charge, ongoing professional development on national and State best practices, as well as the most current resources on school safety and security. The Academy assumes the lead role in setting the vision for school safety and security in the State, providing a coordinated and interdisciplinary approach to delivering technical assistance and guidance to schools throughout the State. New Jersey is one of only approximately 12 states across the country with such an academy.

Every district in the state must have a designated School Safety Specialist trained by the Department. This entails four days of in-person training, covering topics such as: active shooter response, school security planning, school security drilling practices, behavioral threat assessment, gang awareness, proper use of law enforcement and policing in schools, school climate and culture, bomb threat response, and weapons recognition and response.

Specialists must attend 10 additional hours of training authorized and provided by the OSPEP each year to maintain certification and serve as their respective schools' liaison to both the Department and local law enforcement. Currently, there are approximately 1,500 active School Safety Specialists working in New Jersey Schools.

New Jersey is unique in its efforts to elevate school safety and security, due to several factors. Because New Jersey is a relatively small state with a considerably dense population, the Department's team is able to deliver a wide range of programs to schools in-person and creates daily opportunities to work in the field. The team provides programs such as professional development sessions for staff and administrators, and programs that emphasize observance of mandated drills for responding to active shooter incidents, bomb threats, non-fire evacuations, and lockdowns. While on-site, the team also reviews School Safety and Security Plans developed and maintained by each school as required by the Department's regulations. Additionally, team members can meet directly with school administrators to walk buildings and campuses to conduct security assessments.

The team's other activities include providing presentations on safety and security considerations to parents/guardians at Parent Night and Back to School Night events, attending meetings with school boards, and coordinating conversations with local first responders as well as other State and Federal agencies. The Department also provides training to school employee groups specific to their unique roles, such as school nurses, counselors, athletic directors and coaches, transportation supervisors, custodial staff, food service/cafeteria staff and aides, among others.

In closing, New Jersey remains at the forefront of efforts to advance school safety and security, and this list represents only a portion of activities the Department is undertaking. The Department, through our OSPEP team, has delivered training, both in-person and virtually, to well over 200,000 educators, members of law enforcement, school security officers, and mental health professionals. In many cases, New Jersey's programs have been developed and delivered well in advance of other states. Keeping student and staff safety at the forefront, the Department continually strives to do whatever is necessary to lead the nation in this effort.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this information and for your interest in understanding what is being done on behalf of our schools.

Jeffrey G. Gale

Director, Office of School Preparedness and Emergency Planning

New Jersey Department of Education

77x



Joint Committee on the Public Schools
November 1, 2024
School Security and Threat Assessment Teams

Thank you for convening a hearing on the pivotal issue of school security. The safety and security of New Jersey's students is the number one priority of principals, vice-principals and supervisors. Working collaboratively with the New Jersey Department of Education's Office of School Preparedness & Emergency Planning (OSPEP), the New Jersey State Police, the New Jersey Domestic Security Preparedness Task Force, and the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, New Jersey schools have been able to take proactive measures to protect the safety and security of all our students and staff members. This unit has been instrumental in providing direct support to school leaders in assisting with the establishment and maintenance of school safety and security plans.

Districts currently have available to them a variety of resources, including school security checklists, videos, and training, to assist with the process of developing and maintaining a comprehensive plan that meets the local needs of each district. Every district is party to the Memorandum of Understanding between Law Enforcement and the Schools which defines the roles, legal responsibilities and operational processes between schools and law enforcement. Additionally, the NJ Department of Education's Office of School Preparedness and Emergency Planning does an excellent job in providing direct training programs to school districts, operating the School Safety Specialist Academy for enhanced training each year, and strengthening relationships and processes between school districts and law enforcement / security agencies. A variety of mandatory security drills, some performed in conjunction with law enforcement and emergency responders, are another important component of a district's security plan that is implemented annually.

Recently, as you know, the Legislature passed chapter 83, which requires Local Educational Agencies to establish behavioral threat assessment teams which provide school teachers, administrators, and other staff with assistance in identifying students with behaviors of concern, assessing those students' risk for engaging in violence or other harmful activities, and delivering intervention strategies to manage the risk of harm for students who pose a potential safety risk. Threat assessment teams perform important work at the school level to proactively identify potential dangers and enhance the safety of students and staff.

Moving forward, a continuing commitment from the Legislature is critical to ensure that these conjunctive agencies have the funding and support necessary to continue to provide information and assistance to both public and nonpublic schools on topics such as: site-specific vulnerability

78x

assessments, crisis response, contingency and continuity plans, target hardening, mitigation measures and communication protocols.

One recommendation for the Legislature to consider is the **establishment and funding of a revolving grant program at the state level**. This grant program would provide critical funding for districts to address any gaps in local security plans that have not been implemented due to a lack of funding. Such a fund should have a broad range of permissible uses depending upon individual district needs. Some districts may still need funds to modify their facilities to ensure maximum security, others may need additional security staffing including school resource officers, while others may need to strengthen local communication systems to safeguard students and staff in an emergency. Each district knows what it needs to enhance the security of its district. Each district should be permitted to seek grant funding to meet that need in a simple grant application process so that smaller districts, that do not employ grant writers, have a fair shot at obtaining grant funding. These districts would also benefit from state assistance in accessing federal funding for school security needs.

If we leave you with one "ask" today, it is that you please recognize that when it comes to school safety and security, every community, every district, every individual building faces its own unique needs and challenges in addressing school security. However, districts can learn from one another about successful security practices. NJPSA **suggests that a confidential mechanism be created at the state level, for districts to share best practices in school security across districts**. This centralized database could be housed in the NJDOE Office of School Preparedness and Emergency Planning for school districts to confidentially share effective practices, resources and training options. We believe this could be a positive tool for local school districts to consider in developing their safety and security plans.

Thank you for your time, and for your interest in keeping all of New Jersey's school children and those charged with educating them safe. We appreciate all that you do.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennie Lamon, J.D.

NJPSA Assistant Director of Government Relations

jlamon@njpsa.org

79x