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# Public Hearing

before

## ASSEMBLY TASK FORCE ON ADOLESCENT VIOLENCE

*“Issues relating to factors influencing youth violence, prevention of youth violence, the current system’s handling of juvenile justice offenses and offenders, ways to improve the juvenile justice system, and alternatives to juvenile detention”*

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**LOCATION:** Committee Room 11  
State House Annex  
Trenton, New Jersey

**DATE:** October 27, 1998  
10:00 a.m.

### MEMBERS OF TASK FORCE PRESENT:

Assemblyman Paul DiGaetano, Chairman  
Assemblyman Tom Smith, Vice Chairman  
Assemblyman Samuel D. Thompson  
Assemblyman Charles “Ken” Zisa



### ALSO PRESENT:

William G. Double  
*Task Force Aide*  
*Office of Legislative Services*

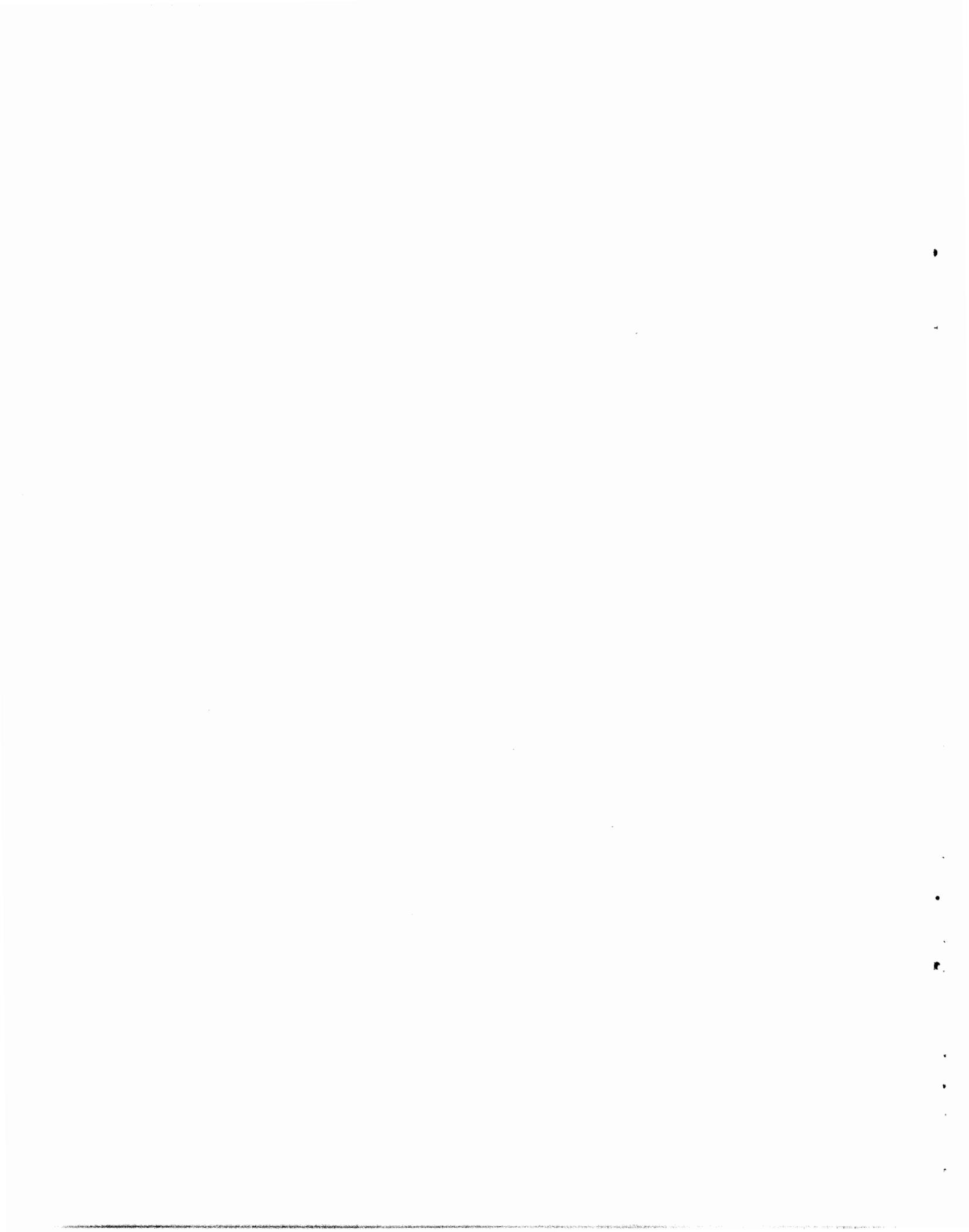
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*Task Force Aides*

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PAUL DIGAETANO  
*Chairman*

TOM SMITH  
*Vice Chairman*

SAMUEL D. THOMPSON  
GUY F. TALARICO  
GERALD J. LUONGO  
MARY T. PREVITE  
CHARLES "KEN" ZISA

*New Jersey State Legislature*  
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**PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE**

The Assembly Task Force on Adolescent Violence will hold a public hearing on Tuesday, October 27, 1998 at 10:00 AM in Committee Room 11, 4th Floor, State House Annex, Trenton, New Jersey.

The Task Force will take testimony from representatives of the educational community and will learn about the experiences of school administrators and teachers in dealing with youth violence, including use of weapons and threatening behavior by students. The Task Force will receive information concerning existing or proposed programs within schools designed to prevent and curb youth violence and promote safe school environments.

Issued 10/15/98

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**ASSEMBLYMAN PAUL DiGAETANO (Chairman):** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. If everyone would kindly take their seats, I would like to welcome my colleagues here this morning -- Vice Chair, Assemblyman Smith, Assembly Thompson, and Assemblyman Zisa.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is the second hearing on this issue that this committee (*sic*) has undertaken. Some of you, I know, have been at the last hearing. We will attempt to accommodate everyone who has indicated an interest to testify today. I will tell you this, we do have a time constraint in this room. We will take no testimony after 1:00 p.m. today.

In that regard, I would ask two things of those who wish to present testimony. The first is that you present your testimony in as a concise a fashion as you believe is possible, while still keeping the integrity of your presentation. In addition to that, I would ask that those of you who are testifying later this morning -- later in the hearing that you be cognizant of the testimony that has been given before you. In the event that your testimony should be redundant, we would ask you to encapsulate that in as a small a package as you possibly can, while still maintaining the integrity of your testimony. It is the goal of this committee to take as much testimony from the public -- from those interested in this issue whether it be on a personal basis or professional basis. In that regard, I would ask for your brevity in order to accommodate each one of our witnesses.

Is there any member of the committee who wishes to make any opening comment before we begin our testimony? (no response)

Thank you very much.

We will first hear from the Department of Education. We have Dr. Susan Saravalli, Division of Student Services. Is Dr. Saravalli here? (no response)

Okay, we will move on our list. We have, from the New Jersey Education Association, Bill Lewis, Executive Director of Government Relations.

Good morning, Bill.

WILLIAM H. LEWIS JR.: Good morning.

I see I have just been promoted to Executive Director. Thank you for that promotion.

ASSEMBLYMAN DIGAETANO: Actually, I read it wrong, Bill. It should be Associate Director. I congratulate you on your promotion.

MR. LEWIS: Right, right, right.

Thank you. I have given you copies of my testimony. I will try to summarize that and emphasize some things.

NJEA is pleased to have this opportunity to present our perspective on adolescent violence. Our schools and communities must be inseparably joined if we are to successfully diminish violence and violent criminal acts in and around our schools. State and local government participation in this effort is needed to provide us with the resources, changes in law, or regulation to eliminate or significantly reduce violence and the fear associated with it. We thank you for its leadership in this area.

During the 1990s, we have experienced a troubling growth in violence in our schools, highlighted by school shootings in other states. Absent such high-profile cases, research seems to show that there has been a decrease

in school violence in the last few years. Of course, even one case of violence is too much.

School staff, traditionally, have not been trained to handle the growing frequency and severity of incidents, requiring more enforcement skills than teaching and educational management skills.

Educators, other school staff, and boards of education want to provide safe schools for the children and communities they serve. We recognize that the establishment of safe schools is inseparable from the issues of violence and crime in the larger community.

The NJEA *Violence Reduction Resource Guide* points out that “to be successful, solutions to the school violence issue must ultimately be pursued in the context of a safe community, not just a safe school. Only the broadest possible coordinated response of educators, parents, community leaders, public and private agencies can produce a long-term effect.”

We suggest that school planning committees carefully plan for the specific needs of their unique communities and schools. Since there are so many factors involved with juvenile violence and many variations of the population at risk, it is necessary for schools to develop and offer different programs.

What are some of the causes of school violence? Even though the causes of violence in our schools vary considerably, experts consistently link gang presence and activity, hate-motivated behavior, and drugs to violence in schools. Even though only a small percentage of students belong to gangs, they may have a big impact on schools because of their involvement with drugs and weapons. The mere presence of gangs in school creates tension in the school.

Hate-motivated behavior that we read about and see on television which target particular people in society at large also target those same people in schools. The sufferers of this violence are members of ethnic, racial, and religious groups. Changes in the economy sometimes generates a backlash against immigrants, particularly ethnic and racial immigrants. When students fail to understand one another, it can result in name-calling, fighting, and violence with direct ethnic, racial, and anti-Semitic overtones. Homophobia in society also results in egregious name-calling and violent behavior directed at students and adults in our schools.

With respect to females, schools mirror the general lack of respect for females in our society. Harassment, bullying, date rape, and other forms of victimization of girls are increasing.

The National Education Association Representative Assembly, the policy making body of the NEA, adopted the following resolution: "School employees and students must be safe from physical, verbal, and psychological violence. Schools should provide appropriate services within the regular education program or develop appropriate alternative education placement programs for students who are dangerous to other students and education employees. Students must receive due process before placement in any alternative program. Appropriate community agencies should use their authority to reduce and prevent violence in schools and in society."

NJEA members can help establish a School Safety Committee to address the school's immediate problems and begin long-term planning. The School Safety Committee should develop and implement a plan for continuous action and one plan for crisis management.

The Action Plan includes things such as school management, including discipline codes, crime and violence reporting, off-campus crime, student involvement in planning, and alternative education. It should also address curriculum related to school safety policies, peer mediation, conflict resolution, and multicultural education. Other items of discussion could include whether or not to use metal detectors, eliminate lockers, improve lighting, better oversight of student areas of congregation, and reduce school size.

Another plan should be the Crisis Management Plan to specify what procedures will be followed in the event of a crisis such as a shooting on school grounds. The plan should include how to communicate with the media, parents, staff, and police. It should make provisions for assistance to victims, offenders, and police. It should address counseling for students and staff.

In the community, key leaders must be involved in the process of making schools safe. We suggest the formation of a community task force or board that will oversee the violence reduction effort. They should design and carry out needs assessment studies, crisis- and long-term action plans that are fit community resources and existing programs, and evaluate the effectiveness of their strategies.

In families, we want parents to participate in mentoring, reading, and other involvement programs. School employees can help districts develop child care programs for parents and train school staff to identify, report, and deal with child abuse. Where necessary, schools can help provide training in parenting skills.

I thank you for this time.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Thank you very much, Bill. Your testimony has been very informative. We thank you for submitting it to us in writing as well.

Are there any questions by any member of this committee? (no response)

Thank you very much.

I understand that Dr. Susan Saravalli has joined us, and at this point, I would like to bring Dr. Saravalli up, from the Department of Education.

**S U S A N S A R A V A L L I, Ph.D.:** Good morning.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Good morning.

DR. SARAVALLI: I want to thank the Chairman and the committee (*sic*) members for allowing us to be here this morning. The Commissioner sends his greetings also. Thank you for allowing the Department to testify in this morning's session.

We wish to commend the Chair and the committee members for examining this important issue. Students do need a safe environment in order to achieve high standards. While discipline and safety, ultimately, must be assured at the school level, the Governor and the Legislature have undertaken numerous activities and initiatives to support local efforts.

The following summarizes the Department's current program efforts and highlights other activities that will be implemented in the near future.

In 1994, the Department initiated a safe schools initiative in response to the increase in school violence and disruption documented by our

Violence and Vandalism Substance Abuse Incident Reporting System that is required by State statute. The following is a brief summary of the main components and accomplishments of this initiative.

We have a Codes of Conduct document that, in 1995, we revised and disseminated it to all schools providing information and resources. It can be used as a framework in developing individual codes of conduct at the school level.

The Zero Tolerance for Guns Act-- These two statutes, Chapters 127 and 128 of Public Laws of 1995, require that pupils who possess firearms and who commit assaults with weapons other than firearms must be removed immediately from the regular education program and provided with an alternative program pending a district board of education hearing.

We have a revised Violence and Vandalism Substance Abuse Incident Reporting System. The forms and definitions used to report incidents were revised two years ago in an effort to make the data more reliable and useful. Data on firearms result and assault with a firearm were collected the first time in 1995 and 1996.

We also have our alternative education programs in schools. Over \$6 million in Federal funds have been used to create a network of county alternative education programs statewide over the past four years. These programs are approved at the county level, and over 600 students were enrolled in countrywide programs in the 1996-1997 school year, the last year that we have data. Students are placed in the county alternative education programs by local school districts because they are disruptive or disaffected or because the provision of the no tolerance for firearms Act.

We also work with communication of records. With the amendment of the juvenile delinquency confidential law, Public Law of 1995, Chapter 56, a joint memorandum from the Attorney General and the Commissioner of Education was disseminated to the county prosecutors and superintendents providing law enforcement officials with procedures for sharing information on juvenile investigations with schools, allowing for law enforcement and schools to work together to address juvenile issues.

In the last two or three years we have also implemented a prevention initiative called Neighborhood Community Service Centers. These facilities are located at schools. Other program sites would provide a way of comprehensive educational recreational social service to students and their families after school and on Saturdays so that we can keep students and children occupied in productive activities.

Our most recent effort, beginning this year, is our Individual Referral Services for General Education Pupils Project. Short version of this is IRS Project. This project is designed to assist the school personnel in identifying and intervening when students are not succeeding for behavior or academic reasons. We have produced a video series, with the help of NJN, that instructs school personnel on how to identify -- to set up a team and how to identify those students that, for some reason, are not performing in schools or have some issue with being disruptive or disaffected by school and try to identify, through school resources and community resources, ways in which we can intervene at that point in time before anything -- any violent act occurs. We are pulling together those videotapes now and the documentation that will go with them and hopefully have those out by the end of the year. We will

also provide technical support programs to school districts in order to design and implement their teams and see how -- help them with their effectiveness.

For the last 10 years, we have been funded through the Federal government under the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act to provide funds to local school districts, either through entitlement and discretion and grant programs, to provide activities through Safe and Drug-Free Schools. Our entitlement grants utilize Federal funds in a formula to aide school districts. Over \$9.1 million were awarded to local education agencies in Fiscal Year 1998.

Our discretionary grants-- We have a sudden, violent loss and mediation services projects. We have a contract with the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey to provide services to prevent, intervene, and provide post-intervention services for sudden, violent loss events in public and nonpublic schools. They also manage and mediate the circumstances surrounding acts of violence in New Jersey schools and provide training and technical assistance to the development of skills in school personnel to prevent or intervene when a fight or crisis arises.

We also have a juvenile risk reduction initiative. Part of our monies from the Federal government allow us to provide monies to those students that are not in school or are not served by our public schools, nonpublic schools, or by the charter schools. This program was chartered to the Juvenile Justice Commission to develop and sustain a delivery system for alcohol or other drug abuse and violence prevention education and to provide services to youth placed in juvenile facilities.

We also have a Community Service Learning for Judicated Youth Grant Program. These funds are provided to the Administrative Office of the Courts to implement a community service learning program for judicated youth at county sites. It combines community service court distribution with cognitive and behavior learning strategies and activities that encourage drug- and violence-free lifestyles.

Also, through our Federal resources, we are committed to providing monies to law enforcement personnel to work with school districts to expand, modify, and implement new programs for the prevention of violence, alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. This is our Education and Law Partnership Grant Program. In cooperation with State, county, other law enforcement agencies, county prosecutors, and governor-based agencies, school districts provide activities in order to prevent violence in their communities.

We also have our alcohol, tobacco, and other drug abuse prevention services for special populations. This program is targeted to the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services who manages the program. They provide new alcohol, tobacco, and other drug abuse and violence prevention services to special, at-risk youth through their particular community-based provider system.

This year, we have a new grant program to try to serve those youth that are normally not served through the school system. It is called Promoting School Success. It is a dropout prevention grant program. We are funding six district programs selected from 193 districts with concentrational, low-income pupils. This initiative is to provide funding to the LEAs to develop, expand,

and modify new or existing dropout prevention programs, either with pregnant/parent teens, truant teens, or those students at risk out of school.

We also have one of our most interesting projects this year -- the last two years called the New Jersey Character Education Pilot Program. This is really geared towards promoting positive student development. This program is targeted to the Newark school district in partnership with Jersey City and Paterson school districts to develop and implement character education in the elementary and middle schools through our curriculum process and to improve the climate of participating students who actually are in service learning strategies.

The Department has also been working with the Attorney General's Education and Law Enforcement Working Group on two very important initiatives of the development and distribution of the school search manual that will detail the conditions under which a student search has been carried out, as well as the establishment of the school -- Safe Schools Officer Program in which local police assist schools with issues of school security.

We have several other activities that we are pursuing in the near future in addition to the distribution of our IRS videotape series to assist school districts. We will provide guidance to our *Abbott* school districts in the development of alternative education for disruptive and violent students and identify model programs to be entered into the Department's database of best practices in the categories of safe learning environments, citizen tolerance, character education, and public engagement.

In addition, we will be reviewing and updating our *Student Codes of Conduct* book that we distribute to all LEAs. We are in the process of

working on a fact sheet to help school districts and parents to work together to help students develop positive attitudes and act responsibly, and we are reviewing and updating our guide for the improvement of our alternative education programs. We continue to provide professional development -- school staff and violence prevention.

As you see, we have numerous activities that we have pursued over the last 10 years. These will continue to-- These will continue as our Federal funds continue.

Finally, we stand ready and willing to offer the committee whatever assistance it needs in order to accomplish its objectives.

I thank you for this opportunity to present to you this morning.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Dr. Saravalli, we thank you as well.

Any member of the committee have any questions for Dr. Saravalli?

Assemblyman Zisa.

ASSEMBLYMAN ZISA: Throughout your presentation, you mentioned, a few times, initiatives which would encourage law enforcement -- local law enforcement to work cooperatively with the schools in this effort. You also mentioned that as a result of work that was done with the Juvenile Justice Code, there is a requirement for police to share information with the schools in terms of delinquent behavior. There is also existing requirements for school employees to report acts of violence to principals, for principals to report acts of violence to superintendants, for superintendants to report acts of violence to the boards of education, yet the one thing that seems to be

missing in all of the this is the requirement for schools to report acts of violence to the local law enforcement agency.

I would take the position that, perhaps, there is not a sharing of information going on, but rather a one-way dissemination of information from law enforcement to the schools. I think that that creates, in some cases, a problem in communities where the schools are reluctant to engage the support of the local law enforcement agency.

My question to you is, would the Department be supportive of a requirement on the part of the school district to report all acts of violence and vandalism to the local law enforcement agency?

DR. SARAVALLI: That is a question that I couldn't answer today. I would have to take that back to the Commissioner and discuss it with him and his staff. I would gladly do that.

ASSEMBLYMAN ZISA: I would appreciate it if you would do that and then follow up with a notification either to the committee (*sic*) or certainly-- I am interested in knowing myself.

DR. SARAVALLI: Sure.

ASSEMBLYMAN ZISA: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Thank you very much, Assemblyman Zisa. The committee is certainly interested in that response.

Any other member of the committee have a question of Dr. Saravalli? (no response)

If not, thank you very much for your presentation. We will await the response from the Commissioner.

DR. SARAVALLI: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: At this time I would like to call up Edwina Lee, the Director of Governmental Relations for New Jersey School Board Association.

EDWINA LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning to all of the members, and thank you for the opportunity to address the issue of violence prevention from the perspective of the New Jersey School Boards Association and the local school boards that we represent.

Our organization has been a leader in promoting safe schools and combating violence perpetrated by and upon school-age youth. Association policies provide guidance for us to lobby for legislation and funding to keep schools as safe havens. Boards of education are encouraged to adopt local policies and procedures that ensure school safety and a school climate that instills respect and tolerance for diversity and nonviolent conflict resolution.

Some of the specific recommendations that NJSBA makes to districts to address the issue of in-school violence are that school programs should enhance student self-esteem, respect for others and teach students effective strategies for dealing with conflict in a constructive way. School administrators, teachers, and other staff should serve as models for appropriate behavior. Adequate supervision must be provided within school buildings, on school grounds, and at all school-sponsored extracurricular events. School- and community-based after-school programs should be available to children of working parents to provide supervision and enriching activities for them during the critical hours between the end of the school day and parents' arrival home. Local police and juvenile justice officers should meet with school officials on

a regular basis to establish good working relationships and create opportunities for students to develop an understanding of, and positive attitudes about, law enforcement. And incidents of school violence should be promptly reported and dealt with.

Our organization supports the Zero Tolerance laws, which require the removal of violent, disruptive students from the regular classroom until they cease to be a danger to other students and staff. But, at the same time, we recognize that it is critical that the education of these students must be continued. Therefore, we urge the Legislature to maintain oversight of the alternative education programs required under these laws to ensure that sufficient alternate placements are available for all students who need them.

NJSBA believes that the State Board of Education should promote safe schools by maintaining the Division of Safe and Drug-Free Schools to act as a statewide advisory council. The State Board should also sponsor training programs and establish an information clearinghouse for school administrators and other school personnel to learn how to handle and prevent acts of violence.

In addition to measures to protect youth from one another, the Association also wants to ensure that child abuse, in all of its forms, is eradicated. To that end, the Association supports community school programs that teach parents how to properly care for their children and discipline them using nonviolent methods and encourages school curriculum that teaches students parenting skills so that they don't become abusive parents in the future.

NJSBA has also actively sought legislation that ensures comprehensive and prompt background checks for all school employees to reduce the potential for the exposure to in-school abuse.

Violence is pervasive in today's society. And although nationwide data confirm that schools are relatively safe places within a community, we know that school officials, teachers, and other school staff must be prepared to deal with security issues, crisis management and identification, and amelioration of emerging violent behavior. In-school violence prevention efforts should start in the early grades and continue through high school, and those efforts need to be supported by parents and community programs.

Through publications, workshops, and staff consultation, the New Jersey School Boards Association assists local boards of education to develop policies on violence, vandalism, and student discipline; identify model violence prevention programs, research, and resources; and to create safety procedures and Crisis Management Plans for their schools.

As a part of a continuing effort to keep our members informed of this important issue, NJSBA's annual workshop, which begins tomorrow, will feature two sessions dealing with the issue of school violence. In a session tomorrow afternoon, Dan Korem, a nationally known expert on the topic, will present "Stopping School Gangs and Random Violence: Proven Strategies" in which he will discuss how some schools have successfully combated gangs and violence. On Thursday, the Executive Director of the Martin Luther King Association for Nonviolence, Dr. Teta Banks, topic, "Youth and the Culture of Violence: Challenges for the New Millennium," will address the development of racial harmony as a means to reduce youth violence. At the

November Delegate Assembly, Attorney General Peter Venerio will address the delegates on “Youth Violence and School Safety.” And the December issue of *School Leader*, NJSBA’s professional journal, will feature violence prevention as its theme.

Our organization’s commitment to safe schools is also evident through ongoing work with the Attorney General’s Education and Law Enforcement Working Group, like the recently released *School Search Manual* and active participation in the Governor’s recent initiatives.

The New Jersey School Boards Association welcomes the opportunity to continue to work with the Governor, Legislature, State Board of Education, and other statewide organizations to promote school safety and reduce youth violence in our state.

Thank you for the opportunity of presenting before you today, Mr. Chair.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Thank you, Ms. Lee.

On the first page of your testimony, you note six recommendations that New Jersey School Boards make to districts in this area. Do you find, generally, that the districts accept and implement your recommendations, or are they, generally, reluctant to implement these recommendations that you make?

MS. LEE: I think that most of the policies and recommendations that we encourage are embraced by, at least, 70 percent of our schools. There may not be total acceptance of all of the components, but clearly, there is a prevailing desire by boards to address the issue of school violence. With the

increase in that issue, I think the public and the community's pressure to guarantee safe havens in schools has increased that willingness.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Thank you.

Any questions from the committee of Ms. Lee?

Assemblyman Zisa.

ASSEMBLYMAN ZISA: As did the previous speaker, you mentioned the importance of school districts working cooperatively with the law enforcement community to work to reduce incidents of school violence, so I will ask you the same question. Would the School Boards Association support a requirement for school districts to report incidents of violence and vandalism to local law enforcement authorities?

MS. LEE: I think school boards, locally, encourage such reporting. I will not make a blanket statement for all local districts. Typically, the issue is a resolution that comes before us. I believe there are several pieces of legislation, right now, that would address that issue including Assemblyman Barnes's recent piece of legislation that speaks to try to remove a lot of decision making at the local level. I can tell you that local board members have mixed feelings about that. They know that there needs to be a due process for some considerations and no blanket requirement that removes the opportunity for decisions to be made locally. They encourage reporting to local officials violence and acts so that they can send the right message to their community.

ASSEMBLYMAN ZISA: Well, let me ask you this then. Since I have had a bill in for a number of years which would require school districts to report those acts to law enforcement authorities, what is the downside to that?

Tell me what problems can result from a school district informing the local police department of an act of violence committed by a student.

MS. LEE: It is hard for me to imagine, Assemblyman, any downside to the reporting of violence. I believe that when you factor in the human nature of who reports the incidents and the absolute written manner in which any incident from carrying a gun -- a fake gun or an actual attack on a person, be it a staff member or another child in the school system -- the devil is usually in the details of how that should be implemented. Members of our Association and local school board members have indicated, even through their administrators, that there must be some component that allows for discretion at the local level to, at least, allow a difference between a high school student, a special education student that has unique protections associated with their classification, and an elementary child or a kindergartner that might be viewed in the same manner, according to the letter of the law, without the ability to know the difference between right and wrong.

Those have been the issues that have been raised by our members. I think, to that extent, some way of trying to impose the human factor in making decisions while still keeping to reporting incidents of violence is encouraged by our boards.

ASSEMBLYMAN ZISA: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Any other member of the committee? (no response)

Thank you, Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: We will now hear from John M. Abeigon, the Legislative Representative for New Jersey State Federation of Teachers.

**J O H N M. A B E I G O N:** Good morning.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Good morning.

MR. ABEIGON: Before I go into my testimony I would-- Before becoming Legislative Director for the American Federation of Teachers, I spent eight years in the high schools of the Newark public schools, the state's largest local, central high school, where, I dare say, some of the people in this room would have a little bit of trouble getting in and out of.

I can answer Assemblyman Zisa's question, as a teacher. Teachers in most districts are required to report acts of violence and vandalism to the principal, when they go south. The downside for the principal or the staff member reporting such incidents of vandalism and violence are written up as either lacking school management skills or classroom management skills. Therefore, the problem lies within the system.

If I, as a teacher, saw an incident of violence, I would have to report it to my principal. Our principal was going to try to resolve the situation by putting Johnny in the cafeteria for a little while or help him -- go help the janitor for a little while so that it doesn't get reported as an incident of violence, so that the superintendent doesn't find out, so that the local police department doesn't find out.

That leads me to my next statement, which is that we need a statewide code of conduct. Home rule shouldn't, and doesn't, hold water when it comes to what we, as a society, find acceptable behavior. The present Zero

Tolerance law as per 18A is a joke because it calls for the last word on any disciplinary action to come from the district superintendent, the person furthest removed from the incident, instead of the teacher and/or the principal, the person closest to the situation. We also, before I begin my testimony, ask that the Task Force, in respect for this committee, urge the Speaker of the Assembly to post resolution ACR-61, which indorses a bill of rights and responsibilities for learning in the public schools, which would address and resolve many of the issues that are being discussed here today.

The New Jersey State Federation of Teachers wishes to thank the Assembly Task Force on Adolescent Violence for inviting us to testify. We can't think of a more important topic. Over the last few months and over the next few months, there have been and will be a number of conferences on this issue. I can assure you, all of the other conferences resemble each other, and this one will be very different. We will have a very different point of view.

Americans are worried about violent crime, more so than about any other problem. And, of course, they are worried about how to solve it. The Clinton administration has set up a task force to find solutions. Obviously, this administration has also done the same thing. This is a welcome move. Schools, too, need help in coping with the eruption of violence that threatens to turn them from safe havens into extensions of the street. But schools are also part of the solution to ending the violence afflicting our entire society.

Chairman, I must tell you that the New Jersey State Federation of Teachers takes great liberties with the words of our former president, the late Al Shanker, and much of what we have to say is, quite honestly, borrowed from

his body of work on adolescent violence dating from 1972 to the recent past. Schoolchildren have been killing and harming themselves and others for decades in New Jersey's cities. Yet, it took a handful of deaths in the Midwest to rekindle the debate.

That having been said, Chairman, it's time to ship out the violent students.

Beginning in kindergarten and continuing all the way through grade 12, school is one of the chief places where youngsters learn about rules and responsibility. Do they learn that obeying rules gains them approval and respect and helps them succeed; whereas, disobeying rules brings unpleasantness, punishment, and failure? Or do they discover that they can get away with breaking rules and that if they do it with enough flair, they can become big heroes and leaders of their peer group?

Many of us remember how, in second or third grade, some kid who was trying to show off repeatedly yelled out bad words in class. If the teacher was unsuccessful in getting the kid to shape up, the principal appeared and led him off, and the kid didn't come back to class that day and maybe for several more. The rest of us didn't know what happened, but we were sure it wasn't good, and we thought, "Thank God that wasn't me."

A lot of people would say that pulling a kid out of class or having his parents come in, which sometimes also happened, is too stiff a punishment for a little thing like yelling out. But if youngsters don't learn that rules are to be taken seriously for little things, pretty soon you have to deal with much bigger problems like shouting obscenities or hitting someone, and you have a school in which very little learning can take place.

But rules that are fairly and consistently enforced have another important function. They teach youngsters about taking responsibility for the results of their actions. And when they see that lesson reinforced time after time in school, that experience becomes a permanent part of their character.

Our schools, today, tolerate a tremendous amount of disruption and disorder. Kids do and say pretty much what they want without fear of the consequences. There are rules and laws against this kind of thing, but they are not being enforced because some people say that suspension or expulsion will not help the kids who are tossed out. That may be true in some cases, but it does a world of good for the majority of students who can now enjoy an orderly learning environment. And it's not just a question of reading and writing. When students see rules enforced, they are learning the habits and sense of responsibility that people need to live together civilly and safely.

And so we have a very interesting phenomenon. We have members of Congress and governors and State legislators talking about choice and vouchers and charter schools, and you know what the big incentive issue is. Parents are not really pushing for these things except in conditions where their children seem to be unsafe or in conditions where they can't learn. And then they say, "Well, look, if you can't straighten things out here, then give me a chance to take my youngster somewhere else." And so we are about to be put in a ridiculous situation. We're creating a system of choice and charter schools so that 98 percent of the kids who behave can go someplace and be safe. And we're going to leave the 2 percent who are violent and disruptive to take over the schools. Now, isn't it ridiculous to move 98 percent of the kids, when all

you have to move is 2 percent or 3 percent of them, and the other 98 percent would be absolutely fine?

What's to be done? First, we should adopt the idea put forth by John Cole, President of the Texas Federation of Teachers, of zero tolerance for the violation of rules and regulations that are necessary to carry on learning. The OLS and the leadership in both Houses and both sides of the aisle have copies of it. Having zero tolerance means that students will find there are consequences for violating rules and that these consequences will increase with increasing numbers of violations and with their seriousness.

If we are to be able to follow through with consequences for seriously disruptive kids, we have to reexamine State regulations and court decisions dealing with suspension, expulsion, and placement of students outside of regular classes. In recent years, these decisions and regulations have made it difficult or impossible to remove even the most disruptive student from regular classes. We should not put these kids out on the street, but we do need to create special classes or facilities for students who are so violent or disruptive that they prevent others from learning.

We are unwilling to suspend or expel students in this country or even put them into separate facilities because we fear we are violating their rights. But we have to realize that no other country permits a small number of kids to destroy the learning of the majority. No matter what kind of standards and curriculum we set up, if we allow one or two kids to stay in a class where they ruin learning for everyone else, we can forget about achieving world-class educational standards. And if what kids learn in school is that any

rule can be broken at any time, we will continue down the road to destroying our civil society.

I just have one last phrase which comes from our 1994 AFT resolution on school safety and school violence. “America’s schools must have high standards in academic performance and high standards for students’ behavior. The AFT calls for the development of a review of the existing due process requirements in order to more efficiently and expeditiously process decision on placement for disruptive and violent students who cannot function or will not function in regular schools and classrooms. The AFT calls for legislation that guarantees to school staff the right to know the histories of students who have exhibited violent and disruptive behavior.”

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Thank you very much, Mr. Abeigon.

Any questions of the committee?

Assemblyman Thompson.

ASSEMBLYMAN THOMPSON: I would agree with you as to the importance of maintaining discipline and decorum within the classroom, without which, none of the kids could learn anything.

You indicate that there are regulations and rules in place that will assist in this, but at the same time, you indicate that you feel they’re are very much an impediment to achieving this goal. I am not sure what you are proposing as the answer to how we can achieve this. Are you saying that at the State level we should modify regulations to make it easier to suspend or remove or expel students?

MR. ABEIGON: Yes. For instance, in the case of the New Jersey Zero Tolerance legislation, delete entirely that whole portion where the district superintendent makes the final call. He or she is the last person on the scene, two or three months after the incident.

If I break a chair over your head and you are the teacher in a Newark school and I am in class the very next day or that afternoon because I have to wait two weeks for a meeting before the board, then he or she has to go into executive session, they have to make a recommendation, all the meantime I am reeking havoc-- If you just delete that one portion, the principal and the staff member would have the right to expel Johnny on the spot. Actually, this past year, Senator Palaia passed legislation that would require a principal to immediately suspend the student for an act of violence against the staff member and expel him on the spot pending an investigation and a hearing and a due process hearing.

So, yes, there are laws that are in place, and some of them are fine, but we're saying that they need to be enforced. They are not being enforced. There is no law that prohibits me, as an American citizen, to drop a dime on Johnny if he broke a chair over your head. There is a policy in the Newark public schools that will write me up for conduct unbecoming if I should do so without first notifying my principal. You know my principal is never going to put that down on his report because the superintendent is going to go to him and say, "What kind of principal are you? Your school is going crazy. I am going to give the \$20,000 Ford Grant to school X instead of yours because you can't seem to control you students, staff, and kids."

ASSEMBLYMAN THOMPSON: I agree with you that this is an area that needs close examination.

MR. ABEIGON: Basically, it is misconduct in education. It wouldn't happen in the law firm because-- Up in Essex County, I sit on the Office of Attorney Ethics, and believe me, the law is the law, and we wouldn't dance around it. But in public schools, it is danced around all the time.

Just very recently, a steering committee on the new discipline code in a public school in New Jersey-- Level 2 act of violence or vandalism is called stealing, yet theft is on Level 4. The student that sat on the Committee asked the chairperson, "What is the difference between stealing, which is a Level 2 act, and theft, which is a Level 4 act?" The district didn't have an answer. This is a student in a Newark public high school not getting an answer from someone in a supervisory position. Actually, this person makes more than the Commissioner.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Mr. Abeigon, are you suggesting, in your testimony, that the principals, in incidents where a student is acting out in class, are willing to remove the student from class for a period of time?

MR. ABEIGON: Some.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: And that the superintendents override them?

MR. ABEIGON: I am saying that a principal in a Newark public school will bend over backwards to make sure that the superintendent never even finds out that that incident occurred.

Your suggestion is that the principal is reluctant to remove the child from class, in some cases, for fear of his or her personal well-being -- safety.

MR. ABEIGON: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Are you suggesting that the teacher who is closer to that student would remove the child and not fear for his or her personal safety or well-being? If you are moving the decision that close to the student, wouldn't it be logical that there is a greater likelihood, if you believe the student is capable, that the person closest to the student would be more in danger?

MR. ABEIGON: No, generally, in the urban districts, what we have found is that the teacher is more endeared of the community than the principals or the supervisors or the superintendents who are further removed from directly dealing with their child.

If I go to a parent or a community and say, "That's right, I removed Raheem because he did X," the other 29 parents are going to applaud me because their child remained in the classroom safe from harm and learned that day. It is my responsibility, as an educator, to educate. It is the security and the school staff, child development teams, school psychologists, school security, and the principals and vice-principals-- It is their responsibility to deal with Johnny once Johnny has disrupted my ability to teach.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: I would tend to agree with you, Mr. Abeigon, but I think the incidents that are most widely reported, at least in our schools, and I am not talking about any of the Midwest schools, would lead us to the conclusion that the acts of violence committed by students on

other than students are more often committed against teachers than they are against principals, superintendents, and alike. In addition to that, with respect to the endearment of the teacher, the most reported incidents of violence against teachers by other than students in the classroom setting have been by parents of, what would appear to be, the students acting out.

I think we all agree that the students and the parents of students who are there to learn and who are on their best behavior, etc., aren't the problem to the extent that those parents are supportive.

We are trying to listen to testimony on how to deal with this issue. I don't think we have-- I don't think I have a full understanding of what you are suggesting as to the disruptive student. That is why I continue to ask these questions. I guess, on behalf of the Federation of Teachers, are you suggesting -- do you still suggest -- because I drew from your testimony that you are suggesting that the teacher makes that decision-- Are you still suggesting that's the case?

MR. ABEIGON: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Okay.

Any other questions?

MR. ABEIGON: Would you not, as the Chair, if I were disruptive or some member of the audience were being disruptive not ask a staff member to get a State Trooper in here and remove that one person and not spend the rest of your day even caring what happened to that one person? It would be the State Trooper and the law's decision.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: It's a very easy question for me to answer, but I might also liken in myself to the principal and the school and

some others might liken me or others to the superintendent in the district. I find it difficult to accept, not hard to believe, but difficult to accept, that a superintendent is prohibiting the students from being removed from class. I find it difficult to accept that the principal is leaving the disruptive child in a class simply because he or she does not want to report it to the superintendent. In either case, I am not comfortable with it, and I don't think any member of the committee is. I heard Assemblyman Zisa, in his line of questioning, indicate to me that we need more interaction with the local law enforcement. That is what I think you are suggesting.

So we are not very comfortable with it -- with the situation that exists, and that is why we are having these hearings. What we are trying to do is elicit testimony that will enable us to act and/or react as the Legislature sees fit, upon recommendation of this committee.

MR. ABEIGON: Then my last suggestion is that a staffer, today, call at random 20 school districts and ask them what is -- get it faxed today so there is no rewrites -- what your district's policy is on reporting acts of vandalism and violence in a school and you want it now. See what it says.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Thank you very much.

MR. ABEIGON: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN ZISA: Mr. Chairman, I just want--

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Assemblyman Zisa.

ASSEMBLYMAN ZISA: --to say, in regard to this speaker's testimony, I think he has really highlighted one of the major problems in addressing the issue of school violence. I think what he is saying, and we can disagree, perhaps, on what the process should be for the removal of a student,

but I think he is right on point in saying that there is a concern among many of us that principals and superintendents are reluctant to address a problem, specifically because they feel that somehow or another it is an indictment on themselves or on their district. That is easily, I think, backed up by certain things that we see, one of which -- you may have noticed it in Bergen County -- our newspaper publishes a listing of all reported incidents of school violence. They publish it in the newspaper.

I looked at all the districts in Bergen County, many of which reported zero for an entire year, that includes fights. It is very difficult to convince me that you can put 1000 kids together for 180 days, seven hours a day, and there will not be a single fight among adolescents. That is absolutely unbelievable. I think the problem is exactly what the speaker is highlighting, and that is that some districts are reluctant to report them. They feel that it is somehow or another a negative -- presents their district in a negative light.

I think the representative from the School Boards Association, in making the statement that the school districts want to maintain discretion, sort of sums up what the problem is. And that is, in maintaining their discretion, there will always be certain administrators that abuse that discretion, and they abuse it by purposely trying to paint their districts in a more favorable light by showing zero or, at least, very few incidents of violence. I agree with the speaker that that does present a problem for the teachers who are in the classroom and have to deal with that.

So I commend him for coming forward and bringing that to our attention. Although, as you say, I am not sure what the answer is, and that is what we are hoping to move towards over here-- Certainly, the teachers need

to have an integral role in the reporting of violence, whether it is within district or outside the district of other law enforcement agencies.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Thank you.

We will now hear from Debbie Bradley, Director of Government Relations for the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association.

Perfect segue.

DEBRA BRADLEY, ESQ.: Good morning.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Good morning, and please identify the gentleman to your right.

MS. BRADLEY: Yes, I am Debbie Bradley, Director of Government Relations for the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association. To my right is Frank Palatucci, the Principal of Highland Regional High School.

I guess we are coming in at a hot point in this discussion.

We have given you a bunch of materials, and I won't, in the interest of time, go through all of them, but I would like to summarize my comments, briefly, and then turn the microphone over to Frank.

The two points I wanted to make -- number one is that school principals and supervisors in schools are the ones directly responsible for maintaining the safety of the school building. We take that job very seriously.

The one point we wanted to make to this Task Force was our concern about the media coverage about violent incidents in schools and that it doesn't, necessarily, help us do our jobs better if we sensationalize the issues. We would like to, in a summary fashion, just point out that, in fact, violence and vandalism in New Jersey schools have gone down in recent years. A lot of

incidences-- We have given you a report within this called *School House Hype*, which deals with the actual figures nationally, in terms of when students are victimized by crime, and basically speaking, 95 percent of it occurs outside of schools. We would like to really focus our efforts on making schools safe-havens for students and also helping us to support the programs and services we need to make the process work in the schools.

The other point that I wanted to make before we moved on-- We gave you a list of recommendations. A lot of them will be covered by what Frank has to tell about his experience as a school principal. Basically speaking, we believe, as you do, that we need better communication not only with law enforcement, but with the court systems. I think there is a lack of understanding between the respective spheres involved about the roles and responsibilities of each sector, as well as what the constraints are on all of us. For example, we deal with an issue that is very -- become a very big issue in dealing with student discipline. That is the issue of special ed students. The Federal IDEA has set out very strict requirements for how we have to handle special ed students. Facing that, we have given you a summary of how we deal with them, but, in fact, it causes us a lot of problems, and, in fact, law enforcement might not understand, as well as us not understanding, the constraints on law enforcement.

So we do believe in better communication all around. In terms of the reporting requirements you are talking about, our Association has supported increase reporting requirements. I believe last year they passed a statute, through Senator Palaia, that required school principals to report

incidents of school violence and assaults on staff members. I think that was the statute that was passed. So we have supported them in the past.

At this point I would like to turn it over to Frank.

**FRANK W. PALATUCCI JR.:** Thank you for this opportunity to address this committee (*sic*).

**ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO:** Would you please press the button on your microphone?

And, ma'am, if you would, shut yours off.

Thank you.

**MR. PALATUCCI:** Am I live? Thank you.

I appreciate the opportunity to address the committee. Again my name is Frank Palatucci, and I have been an educator for 28 years. I taught English in the Philadelphia Public School System for nearly 10 years. I have 19 years of experience as a building administrator. I have spent 15 years of that time as a high school principal in three separate districts in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. I am speaking today on my own behalf and on behalf of the Camden County Secondary Principals and Supervisors Association.

I am currently in my seventh year as Principal of Highland Regional High School, which is located in Blackwood, New Jersey, in Camden County. Highland is a comprehensive, suburban high school of 1730 students in grades nine through twelve. The building houses 300-plus students above capacity. Our district is the only one in New Jersey currently on a staggered schedule to accommodate this overcrowded situation.

I am also a parent. All three of my children have attended and continue to attend public schools. The concerns I am expressing to you today are from both vantage points.

I ask you to think of one of your children, your son or daughter, your grandchild, or some youngster whom you love. I would like you to think of them in school, eager to learn, struggling with their studies, maturing, learning how to cope with the complexities of new found relationships, getting involved with activities, and all the other things, both good and bad, that our kids do.

Now I would like you to picture them in class, in the hallways, in a lavatory, or in some unsupervised area of the building with another student. Place them with a youngster whom, for whatever reason, cannot or will not abide by the same rules of law and common decency that should define us as a society. Would you feel comfortable having your loved one sit next to a violent-prone youngster, an arsonist, sexual predator, a strong-arm thief, a drug dealer, a weapon's offender? Who should be there to protect them? The obvious answer is the school's teachers and administrators.

Let me now tell you that the current climate in our state makes it more and more difficult for me, or any other educator, to adequately establish and maintain a safe environment for everyone in the school. Let me make it clear that the teachers and the vast majority of our students come to school to exercise their rights to teach and to learn and not in chaotic madhouses. However, they are frustrated and thwarted by a juvenile justice system and special education regulations that seem to have the scales heavily tipped in

favor of the juvenile offender. To be fair, much of this is by default, not by design.

Generally speaking, the juvenile justice system was established sometime around the turn of the century in order to permit judges to handle juvenile matters differently, without subjecting youngsters to the experiences in adult court. It was felt, at the time, that it was inappropriate for juveniles to appear in court like any other adult. The belief was that the juvenile justice system should be more rehabilitative and nurturing in nature rather than punitive.

Whether or not this ever worked is open to question. There is no question that it does not work now. It has evolved into a system that serves no one particularly well. Recent data from the New Jersey Assistant Attorney General's Office indicates that juveniles committed 59 percent of all the crime in New Jersey in 1997 -- 26 percent of all violent crimes and 33 percent of all nonviolent crimes. This does not mean that 59 percent of all the state's juveniles are committing crimes. It does mean, however, that the small number, and I am guessing around 5 percent to 10 percent, of juveniles who engage in criminal activity is more active than ever. It also means that the types of crimes committed by these juveniles have become more serious, heinous, and horrible. One only needs to pick up a newspaper to find ample examples of which I speak.

What is not so obvious is what has happened to a system that is no longer equipped to handle the magnitude of these cases. Because family courts are swamped and because the resources and alternatives are scarce, judges are literally sentencing dangerous juvenile criminals back to school. In

effect, many schools like mine have become holding tanks for young criminals because there is nowhere else to put them.

What exacerbates the problem even further is the slew of new regulations concerning special education students, which literally set up a dual standard of discipline for students for whom the rules simply do not apply any longer.

The 4th Circuit Court, within the last few years, had a ruling that upheld a complaint that the arrest of a student for doing, roughly, \$1200 worth of damage in a school laboratory was in violation of his rights as a special education student and constituted a change in educational placement. That is very interesting. Thankfully, the 4th Circuit doesn't have any jurisdiction over us.

Let me give you some examples from the last school year that I personally had to endure. We had a student expelled from a district after being caught in the act of selling drugs. He was taken before a school board and expelled. He went to court, and it was suggested that he go back to school. Our superintendent had to appear before the judge and give reasons why the district chose to expel this kid. Another student, last year, was apprehended for bringing a realistic imitation firearm into our building. We again brought him before the board, he was expelled. He appeared in court, and again he was told to return to school. When we refused, I had a superintendent and solicitor again have to appear before a judge and give reasons as to why we chose to do that.

Last fall, a student arrived in my office with a court-appointed guardian with a letter from a judge indicating that "he be enrolled in the school

district where he resides and begin classes immediately.” No other information was given to me. Upon questioning the student and the guardian, I found out that this student, within the last 10 days, had been arrested for assault and battery on his mother, assault on a police officer, was incarcerated in a jail where he attempted to commit suicide, put in a crisis center, sent to court, and within two days, was in my office with an order from a judge to put him in my school.

Last spring, on a Friday afternoon, I had another student arrive in my building with a court-appointed guardian with the same letter instructing that he be enrolled and begin classes immediately, and no other information was given to me. Upon investigating, I learned that this student had not been in school since the previous May, nearly a year; that he had been removed from his previous school for calling in a bomb threat from the school’s cafeteria; had been in court answering a series of assault charges, one of which involved the principal of the previous school; he had a weapons offense and a shoplifting charge on him. I suggested to the guardian and the child that there wasn’t much we were able to do for him at this point in the school year and that we would look to, perhaps, getting him enrolled in summer school or maybe get some tutoring involved and talk about next September. They were okay with that.

I called the judge -- tried to contact him, and he was unavailable. Monday morning, I got a call from an official of the Superior Court wanting to know why this individual was not in my school. I explained why. Within an hour, I had faxed to me, by another judge not directly involved with this case, an order to me personally that this student be enrolled immediately under

threat of criminal contempt on my part. So, in effect, for me, attempting to deal with, basically, a sociopath, I am under threat of arrest, fine, prosecution. It is incredible.

Examples are not unique to Highland or to South Jersey. By the way, Highland is a suburban high school. We are not talking about an inner-city school. This is a suburban school on the outskirts of Camden and Philadelphia.

A student in North Jersey, adjudicated delinquent for aggravated sexual assault -- this did not occur in the school-- He was placed and incarcerated in at a facility here in the state, did his time, was released, and returned to the same school with the victim by a judge. How did they solve that problem? They moved the victim to another school.

Something is radically wrong. Schools are being asked to maintain and preserve basic societal traditions and expectations that society, as a whole, has either abandoned or failed to do in any other arena. While these may be extreme examples, they are not isolated.

From a principal's perspective, the following are conditions that have contributed to this: lack of judicial understanding and respect for school responsibilities and resources; lack of communication from court with school officials prior to decisions being rendered, and the results are negative effects that judicial orders can have on the overall instructional programs in a school; school safety issues and at-risk students' criminal behavior, including those who may be classified in special education programs; the creation of antiheroes; both existing and proposed special education regulations that make it difficult, and in some cases impossible, to apply the same standards of behavior to

classified students. We have, in effect, established a dual standard. Many students realize that the rules simply do not apply to them.

I would also like to offer some suggestions.

First, we should require that school principals be contacted through the prosecutor's office concerning any court decisions that direct a student to return to school whether or not the school or district is directly involved in the adjudication. Students should never be returned to school without notice.

Judges can assign guardianship; however, all educational plans and services should be left to the discretion of the districts. Existing laws and due process rights protect the students and their parents or guardians up to and including the Commissioner of Education.

Require regular meetings between county principal associations and Family Court judges.

Expand the range of juvenile crime that can be heard at the municipal court level by empowering local judges. Models exist in Pennsylvania and other states.

School cases in Family Court should receive priority treatment and/or be on-call to prevent the loss of valuable instructional time from witnesses -- students and teachers. There are cases where we sat in court for four hours only to find out that the case had been postponed.

Provide resources for alternative schools both inside and outside of districts.

Review current special education students within their existing policies.

Oppose any changes to special education regulations that further restrict the ability of school officials to effectively discipline classified students.

There is a risk that testimony like mine can paint a distorted view of schools. I am not a zookeeper. Highland is a great school with the same sorts of problems that others encounter. Most of our experiences are positive and productive. Most schools work despite rumors and distorted reports to the contrary.

We owe it to our children to protect them and ensure their rights to an education in a violence-free environment. We also owe it to at-risk juveniles to meet their needs. The dwindling resources with which schools have to cope make that more and more difficult. Sentencing them to school is not the answer. At-risk students have plenty of advocates. I believe that I am one of them.

However, I also believe that I am an advocate for the majority of students who are trying to get the best education that they can in my building. I believe that I am an advocate for teachers and staff members of my building who do their best to provide the kinds of experiences in and out of the classroom that result in solid students and, ultimately, productive citizens. We need your help to make this happen.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Thank you.

Mr. Palatucci, in your world, with you as the supreme ruler writing the regulations for dealing with students who have appeared before a Family Court, what would you have the judges order if the principal, superintendent, and/or teacher were not willing to accept the student back in the classroom?

MR. PALATUCCI: If a student has been expelled for some of the offenses I spoke about, they are expelled. What I mean by expelled is that expulsions can be anything beyond 10 days. So we've had situations where we have expelled a student for the balance of the semester and for a school year with the thought of looking to, perhaps, bringing them back.

We need to be very clear on the message we send when we have a student who is picked up with an imitation firearm in the building, caught selling drugs, involved in a violent incident and marches back into my school within a space of a couple of weeks waving an order from a judge in their hands. We have now expanded the circle of kids who believe it is safe to push the edge of the envelope because, "What the heck, nothing happened to him." In many cases, I don't want kids to go to court because I understand, in all fairness, some of the limits that Family Courts have in terms of the resources that are available to them. But simply telling the kid to come back to school isn't the answer.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: I am not suggesting it is. I am asking you to suggest to this committee what your answers are. What should be done by the courts with the student who, at the determination of the superintendent, principals, and teachers should not be returned to school?

MR. PALATUCCI: Two things. First off, I truly believe that more discretion and a broader range of criminal offenses -- minor criminal offenses need to be heard at the local level. They can be heard immediately, they can be dealt effectively -- dealing with kids before they step over the line to get into more serious crime. Currently, that doesn't happen. We are not allowed to do

that. We have judges, one in our district, who is willing to go that way if he is permitted to.

When it gets to Family Court, I think the resources need to be available to either have alternate sites for kids that are developed across the county lines for alternative schools with enough seats to be able to house them or funds available for districts to be able to establish alternative programs within their districts to keep these students out of the mainstream population for a period of time. We would love to do that at Highland. Unfortunately, we are hamstrung, financially, to be able to pull that off. It is, roughly, about a \$125,000 bill for us to do that. We are struck, also, by the fact that we are a transition district, so we have been getting it from both ends, financially, so it is impossible to do that. We have been willing to do that, but we just don't have the resources to pull that off.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Trying to draw this to a close because I don't wish to prolong this-- I certainly agree with what you are suggesting, and I agree with what our problem is. Again what we are trying to do is elicit testimony as to how to deal with it and how to solve it. I am still unclear. Please help me with what options there are for students who cannot return to class right now because, as you indicate to me, we don't, at least in your district, have the opportunity to send that individual -- that student to an alternate placement or whatever that may be. That raises a whole set of other issues.

What option do we have right now, other than expulsion, which would seem to me to put them out in the street without education, guidance, without anything?

MR. PALATUCCI: Right.

Part of what we have -- use is called home instruction. We use that to a limited degree. That is where a student stays home and tutoring is provided at home.

I have to explain to you again and implore you to understand this. At some point, based on what a student does -- selling drugs, getting involved in violent acts -- they forfeit their right to be there because what they do, in effect, is eat away at the integrity of the instructional programs for everyone else. That is a terrible thing to say, but without the alternatives available to us, the resources like alternative schools through the county office or the State Department or funds available to local districts to do that-- We don't have a heck of a lot of other choices unless we are willing to bite the bullet and bring that kid back into the building and deal with the mayhem that they could create.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Thank you.

Any questions from the committee?

Assemblyman Zisa.

ASSEMBLYMAN ZISA: I would like to be clear on the process. If you expel a student, what avenues of appeal does that student have?

MR. PALATUCCI: The student can appeal to the county superintendent of schools and right up to the Commissioner of Education.

ASSEMBLYMAN ZISA: Doesn't that student have to do that before they, ultimately, go to a judge in court?

MR. PALATUCCI: No, the expulsion procedures are a school district function, and it doesn't involve the courts. The court does not get involved in the actual expulsion itself.

ASSEMBLYMAN ZISA: How does--

MS. BRADLEY: It's a local due process hearing.

ASSEMBLYMAN ZISA: How does a student come back to school with a court order?

MR. PALATUCCI: That is our problem. That is mainly what I am talking about. We have had a judge, knowing that a student has been expelled, give them an order to return to our school. In my view and the view of the County Association of Principals, they have overstepped the line.

The incident that I was talking about, previously, is that if the judge had contacted us, which he did not, and asked if there was anything that we could have done-- Make it real clear on this. The individual that was in front of me that I spoke about that phoned in the bomb threat-- I had set up that we would work with this kid with tutoring, work toward getting him into summer school, and look to September to see what his status was. That wasn't good enough for the judge.

The point we are trying to make is that the judge went way over the line, in our view, in stepping into what I believe is our realm of discretion and authority, to decide what is the best avenue to deal with this kid. The information that I got was because of the honesty of the guardian and what I could glean from the previous district and not from the court. So, in effect, if I had just blindly obeyed that order, I would have put a student, who has a history of calling in a bomb threat, criminal assault, and weapons offenses, in

my building with teachers and other kids with absolutely no information whatsoever coming to me to be able to find an appropriate program, if we could have done that, to address his needs.

That is the problem. There is no communication or very poor communication between Family Court and school officials when they decide to make a move like that.

ASSEMBLYMAN ZISA: Well, I think -- where I am going with my question is-- Is there a problem that needs to be fixed or is the system in place, and do we have a case where there is a matter that is not before a court where a judge, perhaps, had no authority to even intercede in the matter? If that is the case, are you legally required to abide a court order from a judge that has no standing?

MR. PALATUCCI: I am, because when I was hit with that order, it was to me directly. For me to ignore it, I would have been in criminal contempt of that order. I had no choice. It was directed to me personally.

The Juvenile Justice System, in my opinion, is not equipped to handle either the volume or scope of some of the problems that are coming before it currently. Judges are also not required, at present, to give us information even though they can by law. It is there. They are not required to give us information so that we can meet the needs or attempt to meet the needs of some of these kids if, in fact, we can find a program for them in our district.

I will make it real clear. The student I was talking about-- We did not throw him out in the street. We set up a tutoring for him -- set up summer

school looking to this current school year, and the judge said it wasn't good enough.

ASSEMBLYMAN ZISA: Well--

MS. BRADLEY: I think that is the issue that we want to raise in terms of the different spheres of the government being involved in this process -- better understanding each other's role. The judge does not have the authority to decide what the placement should be, but they are doing that.

ASSEMBLYMAN ZISA: I don't disagree. I don't personally-- From a personal standpoint, I don't disagree with that. I will look into it, at least, myself or however the committee wants to do it. I would, certainly, be curious to find out whether or not judges are interceding in matters that they should not be interceding in. If there is a process, which I believe there is, in place for expulsions and appeals thereof that that process should be allowed to take its course without a judge interceding in the case.

However, having said that-- I just want to go on record as disagreeing with what I think is your solution of transferring matters to the municipal court, which, by the way, are also terribly overworked and which are run by judges who really don't have a familiarity with the Juvenile Justice System, necessarily. I just want to point out, and we may be off the track a little bit, that we should always keep in mind that 90 percent of the kids that we deal with in the Juvenile Justice System are kids who are minor, one-time offenders, and I think we are all here today to focus on those violent and repetitive offenders who are having a very negative impact in our schools and our youth in general.

I don't know if that is necessarily an effective approach.

MR. PALATUCCI: Just to respond to that, having worked in Pennsylvania where that was a model, I can tell you that it works because you can deal with kids -- kids getting involved in very minor things within the community. Bring all the community resources to bear prevents them from taking the next step in doing something worse. That is not what we have in place right now whatsoever.

ASSEMBLYMAN ZISA: Well, we won't debate that, but I can tell you, as a police officer for 23 years and a juvenile officer for 15 years, I would prefer a juvenile offender to go to juvenile court where they do, actually, take time, where they have a seemingly limitless list of programs available to them rather than a municipal court that processes offenders, literally, in two minutes as they move motor vehicle tickets and everything else. I think you may want to really reconsider in that regard.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Well, we take all suggestions and take them all under advisement. We don't necessarily agree with them.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Assemblyman Smith.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: I am a former law enforcement officer myself. What do you think of Juvenile Conference Committees? Do they have any impact?

MR. PALATUCCI: Yes, terrific. We work very closely with the Juvenile Conference Committee in Glouster Township, where our school is located. It is tremendous. Let me give you an example of how that occurs. A student-- By the way, we have a tremendous peer mediation program that is a model in South Jersey that works with the courts outside of school time in

the evenings. Let me make it real clear that we are, certainly, taking the extra steps to try to address it. A student who appears before a Juvenile Conference Committee -- and we have worked in an agreement with them that they can fulfill their community service in our school through one of our students. I get notices through the chairperson of the committee that the student has been charged with -- or given 20 hours of community service. I generally give that kid two days to touch base with me, because they are directed to see me, and I seek them out. The look on their face, when I come to them and say, "Weren't you supposed to see me about the Juvenile Conference Committee decision?" -- it is like, "Well, how did you know about that?"

The point I am trying to make again is trying to harness the local authorities and the local institutions to work together. That has tremendous power and a tremendous effect on kids because they know there is an immediacy to their acts, good and bad, that they commit within their schools and within their communities, that you don't get working in Family Court -- and they have to go to camp.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Thank you.

Any other questions? (no response)

We thank you very much for your testimony.

MR. PALATUCCI: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: We'll next hear from Ray Kalainikas.

Ray, we thank you for being patient with us today. As you've noticed we have had testimony from organized groups, and we do recognize the fact that you were present, but we did not reach you in the list of witnesses.

RAY KALAINIKAS: That's okay. Good morning.

I was listening to the testimony this morning, and I guess I had an immediate agreement with, wherever there is violence in the classroom, the individual should be placed outside the classroom, in a different setting almost immediately if it can be verifiable that the individual is dangerous with regard to actions of violence. As to what kind of programs -- I am not familiar with all the programs, but Assemblyman Zisa indicated there are a number of programs.

One of the problems I have, and I guess this is the heart of the testimony -- the heart of the testimony for me, in part -- monkey see, monkey do. The violence that is currently taking place in our schools is simply a matter of youngsters viewing their adults in the mentality of adults. If adults justify violence -- and I am not talking about the mugger in the alleyway. I am talking about judges, legislators, those in law enforcement, clergy, doctors who find reasons to justify violence against their fellow humans, whether it is a doctor destroying a human fetus or whether it is a stalker destroying the doctor who destroys the human fetus or whether it is a judge sentencing somebody to death or to a harsh prison sentence or whether it is somebody in the military who sees nothing wrong with destroying an entire village, and so on, and so on it goes.

We, as adults, really set the tone for the kids. If we find reason to return violence for violence or to use violence for our own convenience, the children -- they get the message. All of a sudden, it doesn't matter what kind of safeguards we put into our school systems because now it becomes an internal matter and not an external matter. It comes from within as a result

MR. KALAINIKAS: Adolescent violence.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: I am sorry, adolescent violence. Please confine your testimony to that.

MR. KALAINIKAS: What I am trying-- What I am, essentially, saying to you, Paul, is this understanding not understood by adults. Adults justify the violence. Well, the understanding adults have, with regard to the use of violence, filters down to teens. It filters into the school system, irregardless of any external control such as those in a hallway -- rules and regulations. This is something internal. If you understand that in destroying a human life you have your own life destroyed, if not in this lifetime, in a future lifetime, you are not going to hurt anybody. But you have to understand that. If you don't understand that you will always find justification the way--

You are a graduate of Notre Dame, are you not Paul?

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Ray--

MR. KALAINIKAS: Are you?

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: I am going to ask you to stop your testimony unless you get to the issue of adolescent violence. This is not about what you think what people should be following on a religious belief. This is not about where we went to school.

MR. KALAINIKAS: No.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: This is about adolescent violence. Unless you get your testimony to that, I am going to have to ask you to remove yourself from that witness-- Please.



of watching the adults, listening to the adults, and watching all of these adults use violence and justified violence. We have grown in the use of violence in our society, within the last 30 years or so, and I think we all know that.

I have put out the smallest handout I have ever put out. I don't know if it has been handed out. Do you have it in front of you? (affirmative response) I am going to ask you to do something. I am going to ask you to read the sentence in that box and simply to follow the instructions. I am going to ask you, and I guess the instructions say to you, count the *F*s in the sentence in the box and tell me how many *F*s there are in the sentence. There is a point I want to make here in doing this. So if you would take a minute to do that, I am going to--

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: I am sorry, Ray, we will not do that.

MR. KALAINIKAS: You will not.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: So please make your point in the interest of time. As you can see, we have a number of witnesses yet to go.

MR. KALAINIKAS: Okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Please make your point.

MR. KALAINIKAS: The point-- I guess the point being is most people will only count three *F*s in the sentence in the box, and there are, in fact, six *F*s in the sentence in the box. There is no magic trick to this. It is simply a matter of what is called conditioning.

In the conditioning process, we are conditioned to think in certain patterns, and so anything outside the pattern we do not see. When I say there are six *F*s, people count the *F* in finish, the *F* in files, the *F* in scientific, but for

MR. KALAINIKAS: I guess the only point I want to make in bringing this up, Paul, without even talking about it any further, because I think it is understood now, is-- You are not going to make the change in the school itself with regard to the type of violence that is occurring right now. The change is going to have to occur outside the school, and it is going to have to occur in adults first before it changes in youngsters.

I guess what I am saying is that this is the kind of understanding -- Whether you realize it or not, your current justification for violence in the legislative system -- organized violence against your fellow human beings -- is predicated on your religious understanding, Paul. I think you understand that. You know that. That is where it comes from. Everybody's motivation for violence, ultimately, comes from their meaning of life whether they have a name for it or not, whether they call it Catholic, Jewish, or Protestant or have no name, that is where it comes from. Mahatma Gandhi of India used this understanding to give into--

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Ray, that is enough. I am very sorry that you cannot confine your testimony to the issue of adolescent violence but--

MR. KALAINIKAS: It is confined--

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: The committee is not going to--

MR. KALAINIKAS: --to violence in adolescents.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: The committee will not continue to hear your testimony. Thank you very much, Ray.

Our next witness-- I would like to call up these gentlemen together. We have two superintendents here, unless I am missing someone.

We have Tim Brennan from Parsippany and Dr. Jack DeTalvo from Perth Amboy.

Would you please come up together in the interest of time and present your testimony to this committee?

**JACK DeTALVO, Ed.D.:** Is that on? (referring to PA microphone)

**ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO:** It is.

**MR. DeTALVO:** Tim agreed to let me go first, so I will start and I will brief. It is my pleasure to appear before this Task Force.

I am Jack DeTalvo. I'm the Superintendent of Schools in Perth Amboy. I've got 30 years of combined teaching and administrative experience in New Jersey's public schools. In addition to being Superintendent in Perth Amboy, I have been Superintendent of one of New Jersey's high-achieving J-factor districts.

My comments this morning are really based on my experience as an education practitioner. I am not here as a school psychologist or a social scientist, so my comments are really based on my experience as somebody out in the trenches dealing with kids in the public schools.

Your resolution that established this committee (*sic*) basically talked about two issues. One is the root causes of violent behavior, and the other is possible solutions. So I want to comment briefly on both of those, and I will be brief.

First of all, I would like to say, from my perspective, I think that the major root cause, or contributing factor, to adolescent violence and threatening behavior is a lack of proper parental supervision. Certainly, I think it is a primary factor for the type of behavior that we are most concerned

about. As you know, this problem transcends socioeconomic status with far too many parents who view the public schools as a fluff-and-fold industry. They want to drop their kids off at four or five years old, pick them up after graduation, and rely on the public schools to, in many ways, substitute for their role as they should be supervising their children.

In many of our poorer urban communities, I think you will find a lot of the lack of parental supervision is aggravated by the fact that poverty is a factor and the problems that are generally associated with that. In wealthy suburbs, you are likely to find that some parents are spending more time working on their tennis game or tan than they do supervising their children.

Quite frankly, I don't know what you or the public schools can do to make parents take responsibility for the supervision for their children. In fact, I believe that you may already be doing too much in terms of substituting technology for parental supervision. I happen to believe that mandating devices like TV guardian, the V-Chip, Web filters, smart gun technology, metal detectors, and closed-circuit video and alike is absolutely the wrong approach. I think that it lets parents off the hook and provides an excuse for many of them not to take an active role in the supervision of their children. In addition, I can introduce you to a group of 12-year-olds that can find their way around any of those technologies without too much difficulty.

Whatever you do to address this problem of violent adolescent behavior, I would urge you not to continue the trend of substituting governmental regulation for parental supervision. I believe that that is the key if we are going to, in fact, address this problem in a meaningful way.

I think a second contributing factor to the problem that you are here to discuss this morning is the fact that we don't hold young people accountable for their actions. Just recently, there were two newspaper reports, in Middlesex County, about youngsters who were caught illegally possessing firearms in school. Now, in all likelihood, both of those youngsters will end up classified as emotionally disturbed. They'll be placed in private special education schools at a cost of about \$50,000 a year to the taxpayers. I don't think that is either an effective deterrent in terms of other kids who might consider such a bizarre action or a just punishment for that matter. I think students who possess deadly weapons should be mandatorily incarcerated. Adults who don't take reasonable measures to keep firearms out of the hands of children should also face mandatory incarceration. Students who act in a violent or threatening manner must be punished and punished severely. Parents who contribute to that behavior must also be held accountable.

By letting certain behaviors go unpunished or punished with a mere slap on the wrist, we are teaching young people that they may literally be able to get away with murder.

Certainly, trying more juveniles as adults when they commit serious crimes would be a step in the right direction. However, I am not sure that you can really have any impact on that. I think that determination rests with the courts.

I want to point out that I didn't initiate my appearance here this morning. I was asked to come here by several people. We have had a lot of visitors in the Perth Amboy schools because we, probably, have the best school facilities in the nation. Thanks to the Supreme Court we are, probably, going

to have some more, too. We have had an awful lot of people visiting our schools over the past couple of years, and they have commented on the fact that we have an exemplarily environment in terms of a safe and orderly atmosphere for learning in our schools. When I say exemplarily, I mean exemplarily compared to any school district and not just urban schools. Obviously, there are a lot of factors that contribute to our success in Perth Amboy, and we realize that no district is immune when it comes to random violence. However, we believe we've taken some steps to reduce that potential, and I'll share a couple of those with you just briefly.

In Perth Amboy, we have a good number of teachers, school administrators, police officers, and citizens in general, in the city, who are not afraid to confront young people when they are misbehaving. All too often adults see young people, in and out of school, involved in some inappropriate conduct and they look the other way. We need to support teachers, police, and citizens who care enough to question kids when they see something that looks suspicious or out of the ordinary. Unfortunately, we have a lot of people, and far too many people, in our state and even in our nation who are fearful in terms of questioning adolescents about their behavior.

Another thing we do, in Perth Amboy, is punish kids severely for any offense against another person or property. I've attached a copy of our long-term suspension policy for your information. We've had this policy for several years, and we use it. I can assure you that even though we don't apply it all that often, it does serve as a deterrent to violence, threatening behavior, graffiti, and theft in our schools. The policy has not been challenged legally,

but certainly it could be. I would ask you to consider legislation that would guarantee that such policies would withstand any legal challenge.

In addition, I would ask you to look into the problem that you have already been made aware of today, and that is the problem of what to do about discipline for special education youngsters. As you know, a separate standard exists for discipline of classified youngsters, and that has got to change. I think it is in the benefit of those youngsters that it change, since, out in the real world, there is no separate standard. A police officer, when you commit a crime, doesn't say, "Well, are you special ed or classified?" He treats you in the same manner as he treats everyone else out there in the real world. These youngsters-- I believe we have a duty to them to teach them that there is one standard of conduct in this state, in their communities, and in this country.

Another lesson we've learned in the public school is that 99 percent of our serious problems occur entering school, when school lets out, during lunch, and during the change of classes. The reason is obvious. These are times when we have large numbers of students interacting. In the public schools, we know that these are the times that we have to intensify supervision and watch kids closely to ensure the safety of all students. I would suggest to you that you take a hard look at the way shopping malls, video arcades, mega-movie complexes, and other places where young people congregate, deal with security and supervision. Some communities are only now becoming sophisticated enough to deal with these issues through local zoning boards. I think there could and should be some statewide standards for these types of establishments. Incidents, just within the last year or so, at both the Freehold

and Monmouth Malls would seem to indicate that there is a necessity for some governmental entity to take a leadership role in demanding that these magnets for groups of young people are safe and intensely supervised.

Lastly, a major factor in our success in Perth Amboy has been our close relationship with the local police, specifically the members of the juvenile detective bureau and the patrol officers who routinely work our school events, our football games, basketball games, and alike. I don't want to give the impression that we have a police presence in the schools because we don't. Fortunately, such a presence isn't necessary because our cops already know what is going on among our students, and many times they are actually advising us as to what or to whom we should be watching. It's unusual, in this day and age, to have a lot of your teachers and administrators living in the community where they happen to work. The police, really, become your eyes and ears out there in the community, in a large extent, in terms of what is going on with young people.

This kind of involvement with young people by local law enforcement and cooperation with the public schools is critical for safe schools and safe communities. Local police departments must have the resources to dedicate the necessary manpower to deal with the potential problems that can occur with this age-group of students. These officers must be well trained and have the ability to be both a friend, as well as an intimidating force, to young people. They also need the patience to do the necessary follow-up on trivial and petty complaints since this often leads them to becoming familiar with those young people who have the potential for committing serious crimes. If you agree with me that local law enforcement is a critical part of the solution

to this problem, I recommend that the Perth Amboy City Police -- give it a good look. They certainly could be a model for, I think, any police department in the state.

In closing, I would like to invite the members of the Task Force to visit the Perth Amboy schools, specifically our junior and senior high school. I would also urge you, before you come to any conclusions or decide what action you might want to take on this issue, to get out into the public schools and into the communities and not just do it based on testimony here today, but actually, take a look at what works and what doesn't work.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Thank you.

TIMOTHY C. BRENNAN JR. Ed.D.: Good morning.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Good morning.

MR. BRENNAN: My name is Tim Brennan. I am the Superintendent of Schools in Parsippany-Troy Hills, New Jersey. I thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I, too, was invited by a member of your staff.

Violence has always been a problem in our society. It has ebbed and flowed over the 200-plus years of our existence and most recently has taken a somewhat disturbing tack in the extreme behavior exhibited by children in places like Oregon and Arkansas.

Some national statistics show that school violence is decreasing. I do not trust this information. In New Jersey, it is compiled by Violence and Vandalism Forms submitted by local school districts. Two years ago, when

that data was reported in the paper, the schools who reported most honestly sometimes got lambasted most publicly. And I have heard, informally since then, that people who are loathe to subjecting their schools to that kind of behavior have increased the threshold for reporting, for example, school fights. I feel that this is a temporary problem and that it will level off as the data becomes more long term.

I think it is naive to believe that violence is decreasing in schools, especially in the presence of two things that are usually logically connected with violence. The first is that drug abuse is increasing in our society. Every survey that we can find shows that children are using drugs more. Where there are more drugs, there is more violence. Secondly, our society conveys electronically and relentlessly into the homes of children every day TV shows and video game cartridges that make violence seem like an attractive trapping to adventure and would seem to imply that it is a satisfactory method of conflict resolution.

Despite these trends, I believe that children may actually be safer in schools these days than they have been in the past. We have strong policies on weapons, elementary programs on conflict resolution, more elementary guidance counselors, and heightened awareness by staff. However, even if only one student is feeling emotional pain and, as Jack says, will not or cannot prevent themselves from acting out, they can circumvent our programs.

Included in my testimony is a reprint of an essay I wrote for *Newsweek* magazine last spring about an incident which occurred in our school district. And using our incident as a case study, several conclusions can be drawn. First, every school in New Jersey should have a crisis management

policy. A policy puts all cards on the table. Everybody knows what is supposed to be done and when. The school districts should conduct a simulation of how it would work in an actual emergency. There is no way that a school district is going to invent or construct a policy in the midst of an event like this. It gets out in front of you. The rumors start, you find yourself trying to quell that. What's more, people don't turn to public officials anymore for trust, for confidence to get things done. More likely, they will call the local newspaper or TV station.

In our case, our incident was on a Friday. We informed the people that were on the hitlist, but we didn't inform everybody. We didn't have time to evaluate the data. Sunday night, I got the word that local paper had the story. I called the editor and said, "Is there any way you could put this off for a day so that we can--" He said, "No way, this is a banner headline. It runs across all six columns." And it did. So you have to be upfront with a policy as to what you are going to do.

At a meeting last spring, I asked Prosecutor John Dangler, who is a tremendous resource -- somebody you need to talk to and someone who cares deeply about school violence -- whether there was a way of separating Oregon and Arkansas from pedestrian threats and kids crying out for help. He investigated and found there was nothing idiosyncratic. He reported back to our Task Force of Morris County Superintendents that every incident of school violence must be treated seriously; therefore, I think the only way to do that is to have in everybody's policy that each crisis must be dealt with on an individual basis.

There is a third problem. I am lucky. I live in a community and I work in a community where the majority of parents are very caring. If you call them, they come. They want to help and be involved. But a significant minority now is beginning to respond to a report of a problem by getting a legal representative involved and beginning to throw up roadblocks. And so some of our staff feels that if they report these problems, they may get in trouble long term and have it held against them.

I can't talk about our individual case, so I will just talk hypothetically, but hypothetically may be close to the actuality. In some cases, the lawyer for the student who was excluded on the basis of a violent act will begin to call into fault everybody else who was involved. The police overreacted, the teachers and counselors knew that this kid behaved this way; in fact, he had been seeing one of the school counselors for months. The newspaper made the kid a victim, and therefore, it is imperative that in every school policy, the school build a progressive case of medical evidence that school personnel start by evaluating the crisis. Keep in mind that this all implies that an act of violence is a crisis. Someone, earlier, said that it was two weeks before the superintendent found out, and then he tried to cover it up. It was two hours before I found out about this incident, and the principal called to tell me it happened. He had called the parent, the parent had picked up the student from the school. He had called the police, and the police would be at the school in one hour to have a meeting and would I like to attend. I think the responsibility for this has to stay with the superintendent, but the superintendent and the board must delegate authority to the building level administrator to take the action that's needed when it's needed.

Drugs and violence live next door to each other, and we have an epidemic of drug use in our country. Drugs are a business like any other. Our kids, especially in Morris County, have money, mobility, they have been targeted, they are a great market. Even with a guy like John Dangler at the helm, we have a backlog in the court.

Another hypothetical example, not in my written testimony, but to follow up on what somebody said. Suppose, hypothetically, a kid brought four small bags of marijuana to school. Suppose hypothetically, the assistant principal said, "Why did you do it?" and the kid said, "I needed the money." Wouldn't you think that would form the kind of evidence that would move things in a certain direction? That kid, hypothetically, was back in school two days later, all charges dropped, simply because there is such a backlog that we can't handle it.

It reminds me of when I was a first-year teacher, and I used to threaten the kids in my class with, "If you don't behave, I'll send you to the assistant principal." I finally did, and the kid was back in 10 minutes. I went to see the assistant principal at the end of the day, and he said, "I have a line around the block." I figured out that I had to handle discipline in my own classroom, and that is why I am also suggesting that school officials add something new to the mix: school-based negative consequences for any kind of use or bringing in or possession of drugs. I believe that schools need to initiate the zero tolerance policies, which rehabilitate such students at an alternative educational setting. I should say that my school district has two alternative schools, one for disaffected kids and one for disruptive kids. It's a very effective deterrent in the comprehensive schools and a very effective therapy

for the kids that end up there. The message is: these are our kids, we will stand by them but not at the expense of the learning environment in our comprehensive high schools.

Finally, I think the best solution is prevention. Two years ago, we had two central office administrators retire, and we did not replace them. Instead, we went to full-time guidance counselors for all elementary schools. Discipline has improved, but more importantly, a kid who comes to school with a problem from home, can no more learn than you could read the *New York Times* if you had a splitting headache. I do believe that each elementary school should have an elementary guidance program that can respond in a timely way to the symptoms that might lead to a violent outburst. The best way to do that is with elementary guidance counselors. I think by deciding in advance what we'll do, by not giving up on kids, by keeping in mind that the thrust of all our work must be rehabilitative, and that we have a strong deterrent we can make a difference in the lives of children.

I have also attached the policy and the Crisis Management Plan for the Parsippany schools, and I thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Thank you.

Any questions of the members of this committee? (no response)

None.

Thank you.

In the interest of time, I am going to begin bringing more witnesses up in groups. The next group will consist of Dr. John Sills, Vice Principal of Plainfield Schools; William Gary, Director of Special Services; Louis Lopez,

Vice Principal, Maxon Middle School, Plainfield; and Diane Ianniello, Guidance Counselor, Maxon Middle School, in Plainfield.

It seems to me that I see five instead of four.

Please begin.

**WILLIAM E. GARY:** Thank you for having us here.

The Plainfield Public School District takes pride in being asked to testify before the Assembly Task Force on Adolescent Violence. We hope that our presentation will be helpful in your effort to combat incidents of violence in the state and the country. We are proud that we recognize, early on, the need for safe and orderly schools, and our district has been actively been developing strategies and reviewing other efforts to create a safe environment for all students.

Safe Schools was identified early on in the fall of 1997 by the District LINCC, a group comprised of district administrators, staff, community members, parents, and students who are active in the district's effort of systemic reform. The increase in student disruption in Plainfield Public Schools parallel state and national trends. Our focus will continue to be creating a safe environment where learning is the primary focus in which academics and a higher achievement can be concentrated.

What we have done is to outline 21 strategies, which the members here will present, and I will go with a few of them. These are the strategies that we feel have been proactive in helping us decrease the number of incidents of violence in our school district. And you have it in your handout, and we also have a crisis manual, and we also have a procedure manual for students referred to the disciplinary review committee.

1. Safe schools are a district priority. Safe and orderly schools are a high priority for all the Plainfield Public Schools. If our schools are safe and orderly, students can focus on learning. Parents and the community will have a high level of confidence in our administrators and staff and as a consequence, we'll have better schools.

2. Safe schools were identified in our strategic school plans. Comprehensive plans have safe and orderly schools identified early on, even prior to the acts that took place in Kentucky, Louisiana, and Oregon as part of our six schools in our District Strategic Plan. Review of the discipline and weapons possession policy by the Safe School Committee-- The Safe School Committee met on a regular basis to ensure that all of our policies are in compliance with the Federal Gun-Free School Zone Act. The district has revised and updated policies to reflect compliance and more importantly our priority to have safe and orderly schools. Then we talk about teacher training and staff (indiscernible) given high priority by the board of education in the areas of student behavior and management.

I think we will ask Mr. Sills to talk about the Crisis Management Program at Plainfield High School.

Dr. Sills.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Before we do that, do I assume that you are Mr. William Gary?

MR. GARY: I am William Gary.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Okay. Thank you very much, we need that for our recording purposes.

The next gentleman is--

JOHN E. SILLS, Ed.D.: I am John Sills, Vice Principal at Plainfield High School.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Thank you, please go on.

DR. SILLS: The Plainfield Board of Education states that safe schools are a necessary and fundamental part of education and are a prerequisite for accomplishing our goals. The Board expects the administration to ensure that all schools are continuing efforts to provide safe learning environments for all of Plainfield's children by, one, gathering data on the most pressing safety issues in our schools; two, developing literacy skills so that children can learn alternatives to violence and constructive solutions to conflict; and three, building the capacity of all staff to ensure that they can create safe learning environments in schools and classrooms.

Regarding classroom management, we have started training districtwide using the Lee Canter's New Assertive Discipline Program. In addition to using the Canter training materials for the high school, we will also use training materials from the Crisis Prevention Institute, Inc., for a selected population. This is a response to some teachers and security staff who have expressed some concerns about their personal safety as it relates to dealing with older, stronger high school individuals. Four staff members have been trained and certified as trainers by the Crisis Prevention Program, and we are among about 17,000 people in the country and around the world who have been trained by the Crisis Prevention Institute. Their major focus is on care, welfare, safety, and security.

The result of training will include the following: staff learn how to defuse potentially violent individuals before they become assertive; decreases

the number of physical interventions needed; reduces staff injuries resulting in fewer workmen compensations claims; increases staff confidence and morale; improves the overall safety of the facility; and training provides a framework for developing emergency response policies and procedures.

In Plainfield, we have a partnership with the city council, the mayor, and the police. Plainfield has established a valuable partnership with the mayor and other city agencies to work jointly to ensure that Plainfield students have safe and orderly schools. Police actively enforce school curfew regulations, and merchants adhere to the District's request to deny student access during school hours. In other words, we talked to the merchants in the area so students are in school and not cutting class. The police will bring them, literally, back to our school.

We also have implemented a comprehensive extracurricular program through our school-based program. Plainfield tends to provide a full array of programs during and after school. We're providing students with after-school tutoring, mentoring, recreation counseling, pregnancy prevention, onsite health care and substance abuse counseling, and other services that are needed.

We also have a Discipline Review Committee-- I heard someone mention about onsite at the principal's level and the school level to handle discipline problems. In our school -- each school has a DRC, or Discipline Review Committee, to work with students to listen to their offenses, to have teachers, child study team personnel, principals, and others in the school come together as a committee to hand out the sanction of whatever might happen prior to going to the board. If it is a more serious offense, it will go to the

board. And it is on this level that we can intervene and have some intervention steps taken.

The next area we will talk about is the assertive discipline training.

**LOUIS LOPEZ:** Hi, my name is Louis Lopez. I am a Vice Principal of Maxon Middle School, and I am beginning my 30th year in education.

One of the things that we felt, right from the beginning, was that when you look at safety in school, the one place it really has to begin is in the classroom. We did a survey of our staff and felt that -- they felt that they were not really capable of being able to run an effective classroom situation, so we scoured and made a subcommittee which went out and looked at various plans that would help us provide an orderly classroom, and as Dr. Sills has indicated, we went with one model, which is the Lee Canter model.

This program will train teachers to be effective managers in their classroom. In most cases, most of the conflicts begin in the classroom. If the teacher can establish an environment which, obviously, keeps those incidents down, it would be a much better situation. So therefore, when the classroom teacher provides a framework to teach students to choose responsible behaviors, the students will be more in focus on their academics. Teachers will be provided with a greater, more in-depth approach to classroom management program that will help them confidently create an optimal classroom environment conducive to learning. It is our hope that through the assertive discipline training, teachers will be provided with the skills that will empower them to meet their own professional goals and the needs of their students.

The training for our staff will cover the following areas: one, to become assertive and determine a plan, build a plan by which you are going to

judge your classroom; two, put your plan into action. Sometimes we provide teachers with plans, and they don't necessarily follow through with them. Dealing with chronic and severe discipline problems-- I think a lot of our teachers can deal with minor discipline problems, but how do I deal with chronic and severe discipline problems? This program will address that issue. And finally, if you are assertive in your classroom, your kids will pick up on that. I think that tends to be a way to help solve situations.

Thank you.

MR. GARY: In Plainfield, we have a system where we identify disaffected and disruptive students to track repeated or potential offenders. In our elementary school, we have an elementary counselor in all schools to identify students who are disruptive or disaffected. Plans that are developed provide counsel and referral service and in-school support for this population.

In addition, implementation of peer counseling and peer mediational training are available to work with students, particularly ninth grades and new entrance. In our middle school, we have a comprehensive middle school peer mediation program that Mrs. Ianniello will discuss.

DIANE IANNIELLO: I'm Diane Ianniello, and I am a counselor at Maxon Middle School. Prior to coming to Maxon, I was an elementary school counselor in Plainfield when I moved up with my children. We had established a mediation program at an elementary level for fifth- and six-grade students. So, when I entered Maxon, I had a core group of students that had already been trained.

During last year, it was a year of learning for me -- assessing the needs of the building. This year, when we entered the building, our building

increased in population of up to about 1000 students. We currently have 30 students that are trained in mediation and have the names of another 40 who have requested the training.

The mediation model that we use is a dual-mediator model where there are two children that are involved in the process with two disputants. The reason that we adopted that model is if there is a situation that a child really wants to talk about, you have the opportunity to separate the two disputants. They talk to the mediators and come back and work on solving the problem.

This summer Mr. Lopez and I took a group of 15 mediators on an overnight retreat. It was probably one of the most fatiguing two days that we had spent because the kids, having a lot more energy than we did, didn't need to sleep. It was a good opportunity to have the children really develop a program of how they would work conflict resolution into the building. These students actually designed a program that will be implemented and -- started implementing already in all the classrooms where they are the ones that teach conflict resolution. That seemed to be necessary because at this level kids will listen to each other a lot more than they are going to listen to an adult, in terms of peer interactions.

The goal in the building is really to change the norm that violence has to be the solution. I recognize that some of the children come to us with problems so deep that we're not going to be able to totally eliminate violence within the school community, but through programs of conflict resolution and peer mediation, the goal is to change the norm of the building so that more

children accept that there are ways of solving problems -- talking it out. So far, this year, it has made an impact on the building.

MR. GARY: We also have established an alternative educational program in our middle and the high school. I heard one of the people -- gentlemen say something about using the police. We do believe in calling the police. We do engage police. The police do work cooperatively with us. We have met with them. We have a literacy program where our police chief came in and spoke to the students. So they are very intricately involved with the school. But in terms of threats that are made, we take it very seriously. In fact, that is why we are here.

We had a nine-year-old student who made a threat that he was going to come back and kill everyone. We called the police. His father and his mother both did not understand what happened. There has been a lot of schools of thought as to what you should do and use certain kind of discretion. The fact of the matter is that we had met with our police chief, and he told us all threats should be taken seriously and let the police make that decision as to whether it is serious or not serious. We, at least, should make an effort to call the police.

In incidents where people did not call the police, there could be other consequences. Our administrators are told to make the contact with the juvenile police, let the police come and investigate, and they will make the decision. We, in fact, utilize police on that basis. We have had staff development teach-ins. Our opening day school program -- was a well-known speaker who came in and talked about school violence. We are very much into

trying to promote safe and orderly schools in Plainfield utilizing these 21 strategies and also trying to adopt other strategies as they come about.

One of the things that was mentioned earlier was about judges and their involvement with us, and it does create a problem because we have had judges who-- In one instance, a young man, 14 years old, raped an older woman. The judge sentenced the child study team of special services to place this child in a treatment -- Bonnie Brae, which is a school for students classified as emotionally disturbed. It costs the district upwards of \$45,000. We didn't feel that is the proper thing for the judge to do, and this young man should have probably been incarcerated. Those are the kinds of decisions that judges make in dealing with children that have problems. Maybe they don't have alternatives to other alternatives, but we feel-- That costs the school district \$45,000 for us to classify a child and place him in a facility. It is not fair to the school district, and certainly it is not cost efficient.

So those are the areas that we have been very much involved in. We are going to continue to have training and staff development of all the schoolchildren. All the schoolchildren in our district are aware that we're concerned about the issues of violence and that we're dealing with it at all levels, from kindergarten through 12th grade.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Does that complete the testimony of the entire group? (affirmative response) Thank you.

Any member of the committee have a question of this group?

Assemblyman Zisa.

ASSEMBLYMAN ZISA: You may have indicated this and maybe I just missed it. Your Safe Schools Committee -- that meets on a regular basis?

MR. GRAY: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN ZISA: Who are all these? There are a lot of people on this. (referring to written testimony)

MR. GRAY: Okay. We have parents, we have community people, we have teachers, we have police officers involved. The whole community is involved. What makes Plainfield-- How can we have safe and orderly schools? So it's not just teachers. It's administrators, it's teachers, it's custodians. We have our custodial staff involved, we have security guards involved, so anyone who is involved in our educational system, be it parents or community and ministers, they are all invited to join the Safe School Committee.

DR. SILLS: I think you also should add that we have students involved in that.

MR. GRAY: And students involved, as well.

ASSEMBLYMAN ZISA: And they will sit down and brainstorm and come up with ideas--

MR. GRAY: Right.

ASSEMBLYMAN ZISA: --and then they filter through the superintendent and the board.

MR. GRAY: Right.

DR. SILLS: Right.

MR. GRAY: And we came up with a policy manual, and we have a lot of manuals to help teachers govern what we are trying to do. I think that helps. We have a crisis manual -- someone mentioned about a crisis manual.

We have one in every school so that a person knows what to do if an incident takes place, and they don't have to say, "Let me call Special Services, let me call the police." I know what to do instantly.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Thank you, Assemblyman.

Any other member of the committee? (no response)

We thank you very much for your testimony today.

MR. GARY: Thank you.

DR. SILLS: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Next group we will bring up consists of Elsa Mottola, Associate Director of Substance Abuse Resources, and Lauren Glick, Coordinator of Violence Prevention Services, Substance Abuse Resources.

ELSA MOTTOLA: Thank you.

My name is Elsa Mottola, and I apologize that Lauren Glick was unable to attend today.

Are the microphones on?

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: It is, please continue.

MS. MOTTOLA: Thank you.

My name is Elsa Mottola, and I am the Associate Director of Substance Abuse Resources located in Monmouth County. I want to take this opportunity to thank the Task Force on Juvenile Violence and especially Assemblyman Tom Smith for bringing attention to this crucial topic.

Substance Abuse Resources has been providing violence prevention programming since 1996. Our mission is to develop and execute programs and

services to prevent and eliminate substance abuse in Monmouth County. We accomplish this through advocacy, collaboration, and education.

In 1996, we were awarded a three-year grant, through the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, to provide a violence prevention program to youth at high risk in Asbury Park, Keansburg, Long Branch, and Neptune. In partnership with schools and community agencies, we teach conflict resolution to students and provide referrals to their families. Our program, Project CARE, is a comprehensive primary prevention curriculum, serving students in grades two through middle school. We provide a more intensive prevention program for students who have had disciplinary problems with an after-school program for middle school adolescents.

The provision of prevention programs is crucial to our struggle against youth violence. It enables us to be proactive in reducing threats or violence. If youth are expected to behave in ways that are nonviolent, we must teach them the skills to form the foundation of nonviolent beliefs and choices.

Our experience over the past two and one-half years has discovered some disturbing trends among teens that I would like the Task Force to be aware of.

1. Teens are socialized to see violence as a normal part of life.
2. They perceive aggression as the natural means of solving conflicts with their peers and even with adults.
3. They view fighting as entertainment and are not disturbed by the consequences.
4. They say that if they do not fight when challenged, but back down from a fight, they may face verbal and physical humiliation.

5. Teens view a put-down, or insult, as grounds for aggressive retaliation.

6. They often do not view traditional discipline as a deterrent to future acts of violence.

7. Teens that do view aggression as creating more problems than it solves feel isolated in their attempts to resolve a problem verbally or perceive it as ineffective. They find that their peers, or they themselves, lack the competence and/or the willingness to find and utilize alternative methods of conflict resolution.

Project CARE teaches students to be aware of the consequences to violent acts and that each person can choose to solve their problems constructively by using the power of their minds instead of their fists. Youth are taught skills to reduce anger, communicate needs effectively, and change the norms regarding violence. Students begin in second grade to learn conflict resolution skills and to learn and practice how to talk to others in an assertive and nonviolent manner.

We have received a great deal of support from the communities with whom we collaborate. Although teachers are initially cautious about our use of their classroom time, after they have seen the program, they have encouraged our expansion of Project CARE. Teacher evaluations and requests reflect their desire to continue the lessons learned in Project CARE, to practice the conflict resolution steps regularly, and to give teachers the knowledge of how they can more fully integrate this into their curriculum. When this is achieved, it establishes healthy standards for behavior between schoolmates.

Teachers also feel that students would benefit greatly from learning skills starting as early as kindergarten. They would like to start helping children when they get into school to reduce bullying and victimization of students.

A coalition, called the Prevention Policy Board, comprised of community leaders, including school personnel, police, youth leaders, parents, and youth, oversee and advise the Project CARE staff. Assemblyman Tom Smith is our newest member, and I thank him for his commitment to the project.

In conclusion, Substance Abuse Resources has found that the schools we are working in are crying out for more violence prevention programs and for those programs to start at earlier ages. If we are to make a sustained difference in the lives of children and their families, we must work with them consistently and continuously.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Thank you, ma'am.

Are there any questions of Ms. Mottola? (no response)

Thank you very much for your testimony today.

We'll next hear from Nicci Spinazzola and Michael Frost. Nicci is the Coordinator, School Consultant Team, Allies Adolescent and Family Services Mental Health Center of Somerset County.

**MICHAEL J. FROST:** Or Nicci (indicating pronunciation) as she is also known. Nicci we can go with.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: I just got back from Bologna and Sorrento, and I didn't find anybody that said it that way, but if you would like, I will be happy to--

MR. FROST: She'd have no problem with that either.

N I C C I S P I N A Z Z O L A, Ed.D.: Are we on?

MR. FROST: We are on.

My name is Michael Frost, I am a clinical social worker and family therapist by training. I am the Director of the ALLIES Adolescent and Family Services Department of the Richard Hall Community Mental Health Center in Somerset County.

ALLIES provides intensive outpatient treatment -- family, group, individual, and art therapies -- to troubled adolescents and their families at our facility in Bridgewater. In addition, we offer a variety of mental health services to schools. These services, which you will hear about in a minute, include crisis management training, case consultation, and collaborative casework on school grounds with school staff.

I come from a family of teachers. My grandfather was Chairman of the History Department at Stuyvesant High School in New York City; my grandmother taught music at another New York City junior high; my mother was a nursery school teacher; my father taught at the Rutgers College of Pharmacy; my aunt taught for many years in the Hillside Public Schools; and my sister is teaching now in Plainfield, where I graduated from Plainfield High School in 1971. I also taught school as a long-term sub for a year in Hillside.

It was following that experience that I decided to move into a less stressful venue, and I say this only partially in jest, and began working as a

family therapist with suicidal and self-mutilating children. I have a healthy appreciation of what it takes to work effectively in a school setting.

I have had many experiences with violent children. In my early career years, I worked as a residential supervisor for the Devereux Foundation in Pennsylvania. I fully expected to be saddened and sometimes deeply moved by the life stories of many of these young people. What I was much less prepared for was the level of rage and aggression acted out by many of these kids. Growing up in the late 1960s, in Plainfield, I had thought myself comfortable with turbulence, social change, and intensity. I thought I had become reasonably well armored from school days begun through a gauntlet of State Police in riot gear and tear gas in the auditorium.

Following my graduate work in the early 1980s, I returned, this time as a therapist, to act as an agent of change with emotionally chaotic teenagers and their families. Again I was initially stunned by the use of violence as a mode of expression accepted by a variety of systems, familial, educational, societal. I am no longer shocked by what I see, but am both saddened and angered by it. In the brief moment I have here today, I want to share thoughts and recommendations about adolescent violence and what we can do about it.

What strikes me most is the remarkable consistency in the genesis of rage and violence in adolescents. It would be naive to view the cultural context of the inner-city and rural America as one and the same. It would also be frightening to be blind to the particularly difficult issues faced by minority youth in a white majority milieu. However, there seems to me to be more

similarities than differences in the expression of violence in Jonesboro, Arkansas, and the expression of violence in Camden.

In my work with adolescents over the years, I am reminded of the constant interplay between nature and nurture, environment and genetics, and sometimes, simple twists of fate. Much attention has been paid in the mass media over the hypothesis offered by Judith Rich Harris in her recent book, *The Nurture Assumption*. Harris writes: "The world that children share with their peers is what shapes their behavior and modifies the characteristics they were born with and, hence, determines the sort of people they will be when they grow up." She recognizes, of course, as most of us who spend our days in conversation with adolescents and their families do, that positive environmental influences alone cannot completely overcome a family legacy that includes exposure to regular doses of overt violence and raw aggression. Still, what being a family therapist has taught me is that context is everything.

Small changes in the operation of a system can have an influence far beyond that which might be expected. Paradoxically, I am also reminded that we can wait too long to begin to attempt to make that change. Adolescence is sometimes too late. By the time a child becomes an adolescent, their sense of the fairness or unfairness of the world is pretty well formed. If a child has learned that those around him feel justified and entitled to hurt others if they themselves are hurt or if their exploration of the world is met with a smack in the head or worse yet, no response at all, it becomes very difficult to convince such a child that their existence matters. It is certainly an easy jump from self loathing to the violent loathing of those around us.

In Randall Sullivan's recent article in *Rolling Stone Magazine*, "A Boy's Life: Kip Kinkle and the Springfield Oregon Shooting Party," he recounts Kip's football coach's recollection of Kip's descent into anhedonia. "I was trying to encourage him, tellin' him, like, 'Well maybe you won't graduate with us, but maybe you can. Maybe you can take summer classes or something and make up the credits. Your life's not over. You can still graduate and go on. It's off your record when you're eighteen.' But he was just saying things back like, 'It's done. It's over. I can't change it,' like his life was over and done. I thought it was just the situation and he was overacting." By the time kids get to "it's over," the inertia to fail and strike out is extremely hard to resist.

So what do we do about this ever-growing number of children who find hopelessness and disengagement the only way they can survive emotionally? We can endlessly debate causality. Is it abuse in families? Is it social disenfranchisement? Is it poverty and racism? Perhaps it is the media -- the endless assault of removal from self, the voyeur existence, the cool removal of the Internet chat room. Perhaps it is the failure of our school systems to take responsibility early on for what they see in front of them. Or perhaps it is the expectation of many people that school systems should take a responsibility at all for the failures of the family and the larger cultural context. Let us not forget the clinical detachment of the developmental pundits, the pathologizing glibness of the mental health community, the prevalence of weapons, of easy violence, the drugs, the alcohol, the easy platforms for political expediency.

I want to suggest to you today that there are truths in all of these things. I want to suggest to you that until we stop pointing fingers and all

share in the process of responsible change, we might as well rearrange the deck chairs as we go down in righteous indignation. I still believe, as many of us still do, if you are not part of the solution, you remain part of the problem. Let me share some thoughts about solutions.

Let us not feel the need to reinvent the wheel whenever public and horrific adolescent violence draw the voting public's attention. While increased awareness is essential and a clear and firm response to such acting out is certainly called for, such a response, police presence in the schools for example, is probably not particularly helpful in the long run. It is, I think, somewhat analogous to the Just Say No push of the mid-1980s with respect to substance abuse. It is easier, no doubt, to chip away at student civil liberties as though this will allow us quicker access to real problem resolution than a coordinated effort to address the systemic sequences that sustain the attractiveness of adolescent violence. We need a variety of ongoing measures, many of which, as politically unattractive as they may be, require significant public funding if they are to have any chance at meaningful success.

These include early intervention in elementary schools, training in identification and referral for adults who work with children on a regular basis. They include an awareness that easy access to handguns remains a major problem in this society, particularly with adolescents who are easily able to obtain powerful weapons that allow a jump from having a really bad day to the very real killing of other children. There is a growing body of knowledge among school professionals on what works: home visits, crisis intervention, social skills training. It is clear, at least in my own work, that interventions that help families as families, rather than purely child-focused methods, help

make and sustain changes. This is particularly true in families and communities in which there is a long-standing tradition of violence as a legitimate expression of rage and frustration.

I would like to close with the plea that we understand that partnerships are not only desirable, but that they are absolutely essential -- partnerships between schools, between governmental task forces, and funding sources and the very kids they all wish to help. I happen to work in a county that has had the foresight and guts to publicly fund what I consider to be an extremely effective treatment program for adolescents and families. At the same time, the almost complete absence of public transportation in our county means that many kids who need and want help simply cannot come in to get it. So yes, we try to go to them. I want to suggest to you, however, that is somewhat sad that we seem unable, or unwilling, to make the connection from both ends, in all ways, with all of our intensity and coordination. Clearly we will either make a real commitment to solving the problems of adolescent and familial violence in this state or we will find ourselves consumed by our own excuses for not doing so.

Thank you for your time and willingness to commit.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Thank you.

Nicci Spinazzola.

DR. SPINAZZOLA: My name is Nicci Spinazzola. I am the proud and grateful mother to four very special children. I am a New Jersey-licensed marriage and family therapist. I hold a post-master's education specialist degree in this field as well.

I currently work as the School Liaison Coordinator at the ALLIES Adolescent and Family Services Department of the Richard Hall Community Mental Health Center in Somerset County. For the past two years, I have been working with a team of family therapists on the ALLIES School-Family Partnership, which is a school-based model of collaboration, to deal with a wide range of child/adolescent problems, including those on the continuum of violence.

I believe in the notion that child violence exists on a continuum. At the extreme are those behaviors we view as most harmful, meaning behaviors that threaten or terrorize the safety of self or others. In either case, if something is not done to intervene, someone will die.

Before we get to that point, we see and hear about a variety of behaviors that warn us that there is something wrong. We may see isolation, withdrawal, difficulty in forming peer and adult relationships, bullying, physical aggression, verbal threats, substance use, changes in school behavior, disturbing writings, and warnings from others to pay attention. There has never been a clinical interview that I have done where violent ends are a true surprise to anyone. There have been cries for help all along the way.

I would like to take a few moments to bring you through my beginnings. In my family, I am the eldest of four children. My mother and father, both children of Italian immigrants and first generation Americans, raised us in the middle-class suburban township of East Brunswick. My father is a retired professor and continues to work in private practice as a marriage and family therapist. My mother has not yet retired from her job. As matriarch of our family, she is asked to love and care for each of us. The

decision for my mother to continue her work was purely motivated by the fact that the family could not survive without her income, and we would have been placed at risk. So she continues her work as she cares for my children, her grandchildren. At the end of each week she brings home the only paycheck that will never be measured in dollars.

Family was at the center of our work, our play, our celebrations and rituals, and those endless Sunday dinners. Family. There were rows and rows of them, and we all managed to somehow fit around my grandmother's table, elbow to elbow, sometimes piled two-high as babies sat on their mother's lap. Everyone was included. Sometimes we laughed, sometimes we talked, and other times we sat quietly, tears in our eyes, as someone at our table suffered but never suffered alone.

Alone. What a terribly sad word. It is what I hear most about from the kids that come through my doors. "Family," they say, "where are they when you need them?" "Lost," I reply, as my heart sinks.

In return for that labor of love, the idea that each Sunday you would sit for hours around a table of food and not dare ask to move. The family fulfilled its promise to provide membership and to provide love, which sometimes looked like protection and other times meant to deliberately control us. If, as parents, one could strike the delicate balance between the two, protection and control, they would grow children who had strong personal beliefs about respecting themselves, their families, their work, and their communities. For this gift, I am ever indebted to my parents.

If you have ever seen a mother stand by helplessly watching her child slip away while a father tries desperately to breathe life back into a body

that was lifeless, you would understand just how compelled I am to prevent this loss to any parent and to any family. I watched as my parents stood back and helplessly saw their child die. I was 11 years old, and at that moment, as my world seemed to collapse around me, I realized that time is of the essence. I have since lived my life with that energy and passion because time is of the essence.

My professional endeavors in the field of helping children and their families began in 1977, when I worked as a child care clinician at Brookside Academy-AREBA School, in Mt. Freedom, New Jersey. This was a residential educational/therapeutic community for kids who had been classified emotionally disturbed.

All of these kids were exiled from their families, schools, and communities because they were either a risk to themselves, meaning their lives had no value, so they would do all they could do to die, or they were a risk to others, meaning their lives had no value, so they would hurt those who have hurt them until they would die. I was 22 then and had decided that I would be the one, single-handedly, to make the difference. I would give them back the hope they had lost, the dreams that no longer had life.

It was my first session. I came face to face with a kid who had intense rage for me, for his family, and for the people who had put him here. I asked him how I could help. He used a few choice words and rose from his chair. My heart began to pound, I was afraid. Afraid to talk, afraid to move, afraid to do the thing I said I would do. I was afraid to help. He stared right through me, pushed aside the chair, put his finger up to my face, and told me, if I knew what was good for me, I would leave him alone. He turned and left

the room. He was out of my sight, away from me. He could not hurt me. I was relieved, just as all those before me must have been relieved when they exiled him.

The stories I began to hear were of beatings, cuttings, burnings, nights when children could not sleep for fear that someone unwanted would enter their rooms, then enter their souls forever. It was so unreal to me, and then I began to see it for myself. The nightmares came to life as kids ran through the halls screaming after overdosing on pills or were found lying on the bathroom floor covered in blood as they tried to murder themselves. Kids, standing on rooftops, desperate to quiet the pain they felt deep within. Still others threatening to kill their roommates if they were bothered, always reminding them of the time they tried to kill their mother's boyfriend. Some threatening to break arms and legs, stab or smother at night, or promising to get someone from the outside to hurt a family member.

I realize all of this sounds extreme. Violence, by its very nature, is extreme.

I am no longer 22. I just celebrated my 43rd birthday this past weekend. My fears have quieted a bit. I still feel afraid every now and then, not so much for me, but for the kids. My heart still sinks for the young people who will never find value in who they are. That is the real danger, the real tragedy.

I still feel I can make a difference but no longer alone. I feel hopeful that together, if we make a concerted effort, children will be given back their dreams and the hope they lost along the way. We must help them find their value.

Childhood tragedy and failure have become all too familiar and all too common over the years. Attention has shifted from families raising children, to various caregivers assuming shared responsibility.

We are called now to forge a partnership, a collaborative effort, to stop violence in our families, schools, and community. We must stop arguing over who gets the job. If we don't all get to work, the results will be catastrophic.

In the words of Marion Wright Edelman of the Children's Defense Fund, "The inattention to children by our society poses a greater threat to our safety, harmony, and productivity than any external enemy." Robert Coles, a noted Harvard psychiatrist, was quoted as saying, "Children who go unheeded are children who are going to turn on the world that neglected them." It is time to act. We are called to this task together. It is time that we work directly with families in the remediation of child problems. Violence does not erupt without warning.

On October 15, 1998, I was invited to present the ALLIES School-Family Partnership at the national conference of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy in Dallas, Texas. J. Brien O'Callaghan, a clinical psychologist and marriage and family therapist, was the lead presenter and designer of the collaborative model we are now introducing in a few of the Somerset County schools.

The model is clear, comprehensive, cost effective, can be taught to teachers and educational staff alike, and works. It is a model of prevention and intervention that may begin as early as pre-K and end in grade 12. It involves

family, school, and community in an effort to solve many child/adolescent behavior problems, including violence.

We must go beyond the zero tolerance policy. If we are going to invite law enforcement officers into the schools, let's bring them to the collaborative table to work with teachers, parents, coaches, social workers, religious figures, etc., to develop a plan that will work, a plan that everyone agrees to follow child by child, family by family. This model can be utilized with children of all ages, education levels, and cultural/socioeconomic backgrounds.

Why do this in schools? Children spend at least six hours a day there, maybe more if involved in before/after-school programs. Second to parents, teachers often know the child better than anyone else does and are deeply concerned about those in their care. Educators are known to collaborate in interventions for children more than any other group. Parents usually perceive school as a safe environment to have honest family discussions necessary in situations where children have problems. Parents generally trust teachers and other educators and have shown a willingness to interact with them more so than with any other professional.

Attached you will find more information and references on the Collaborative Model of Intervention. Our team invites you to visit and talk more about this grassroots effort to reconstitute families and bring back safe schools and communities to all of us. I urge you to review this program and to help us bring this to schools throughout New Jersey. Let us become the nation's leader, as our state often is, in implementing programs that truly work. Early intervention/prevention programs like this will help our young people live

healthy, productive lives and eliminate excess violence that currently plague our families, schools, and communities.

I would like to thank Chairman DiGaetano and members of the Assembly Task Force on Adolescent Violence for the opportunity to help make a difference in the lives of our children and in all of our futures.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Thank you very much.

Are there any questions?

Assemblyman Smith.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: No.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Happy birthday.

MS. SPINAZZOLA: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Saturday was my mom's birthday.

MS. SPINAZZOLA: Was it?

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Thank you.

MS. SPINAZZOLA: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: I'd now like to call up the group of Harvey Altmann, Principal of Memorial Junior School in Hanover; Kathleen Gebhardt, Mental Health Specialist of Bloomfield Public Schools; Mary Edwards, Diversity and Site Coordinator, South Orange-Maplewood School District, Resolving Conflict Creatively Program.

HARVEY N. ALTMAN: Thank you.

I will describe a hit list situation in our town and, perhaps, be able to offer you some recommendations on programs that seem to work in our town to prevent violence.

My name is Harvey Altman. I am the Principal of Memorial Junior School in Hanover Township, which is located in Whippany, New Jersey. We have 440 middle school children between the ages of 11 and 14. We had an incident, which was a threatening incident with a hit list.

A seventh-grade boy, 13 years old, was suspended from school last June for about 10 days for compiling a hit list of 18 students and 3 teachers entitled "People to Get and Kill." I personally questioned this student regarding what he meant by people to get and kill. I was convinced at that time, and continue to be convinced, that he intended no harm. In fact, the psychological and psychiatric evaluations corroborated my belief of this child that he is not a danger to himself or to other people. However, because of the title of that hit list, "People to Get and Kill," and the recent national wave of school violence, we could not take any chances regarding the safety and welfare of our community. We contacted the police and the County Prosecutor's Office to make sure that we were following the letter of the law in dealing with this young person. The police conducted an investigation and found that the student did not violate any law.

I chose to hold several meetings to inform all of the parents and reassure them that their children were safe in school. Most parents were very supportive and pleased to hear about the incident within such a short period of time. However, several parents were very upset that such an incident could take place in our school. A few parents had difficulty separating our incident from the May 21 fatal shooting in Springfield, Oregon. Parents were fearful for the safety of their children. However, the parents who knew the writer of the hit list were secure in believing that this child would not hurt another

person. Each of the parents of the students on the list, as well as the three teachers, were informed that their name was on the list. I told them that I felt that there was never any intent by the writer to hurt anyone. Reassurance was given to the students, parents, and faculty that our school was safe and secure.

Within minutes of that meeting, somebody called Channel 2 News, and there was a television reporter and a crew there to interview me. The press -- they came from all avenues, radio, TV, and the newspapers, and they swooped down on us like vultures after prey, all in quest for a story. I had a difficult time. It was most disconcerting for me to have 11- and 12-year-old children questioned by the media for newspaper, radio, and television reports that didn't have any factual information of what really happened with this hit list. I have a number of concerns regarding how to handle the media. I wonder why the media is allowed to question students on school grounds. Why does the media misquote people, misrepresent the facts, and make a school issue bigger than it really is? One response from a reporter was, "It's freedom of the press."

The parents of the boy involved hired a lawyer in an effort to have their son placed in another school. However, after a court hearing and a week of deliberations, the judge ordered the student back to our school. He returned to school on September 28, and his return has been without event. It was successful.

We have been fortunate, at Memorial School, not to have the acts of violence or violations of the law that I have heard here in earlier testimony. I hope it is because of the proactive approach that our whole school community and our community in general take.

Our program is designed to prevent and curb youth violence and promote safe schools. I believe that most young people that commit violent acts or break the law are people that have poor self-esteem and/or are products of families that have poor parenting skills. My experiences as an educator during the last 36 years have provided me with numerous interactions with young people and their families. I spent 17 years as a vice principal of a middle school, and my role was as a disciplinarian. The students who were sent to me seemed to be those students having low self-esteem and/or had lived in households with a parent or parents that exhibited poor skills in raising their children. Young people need to feel good about themselves in the eyes of their peers and within their family structure, and I go on to another paragraph talking about the needs of parents, but I will skip that. (referring to written statement)

What we did was take a proactive approach because I believe that the self-esteem issue and the parenting issue are critical, and they have to start early. I believe schools can do an awful lot to help, but they can't do it alone. Therefore, I have a parenting workshop program that we hold several times a year for the middle school level, and there are many programs you can select. I elude to one in the testimony. Parents really need to learn to develop effective parenting skills, and they have to be held responsible, and want to be responsible, for their children's actions. They need to be taught this from the very early grades.

The second thing I've done -- and I have been in this business for a long time -- I have had peer mediation and all kinds of guidance courses. What I find is best is to have guidance counselors teach guidance courses.

Fortunately, our district will financially support that. They teach the kids about self-esteem, about making and keeping friends, about peer pressure, about ways of expressing anger, school survival tips, and conflict resolution skills. We developed that each year, so hopefully, the children have an opportunity to learn how to behave.

We also communicate with the parents regarding these ideas. I personally meet with each group of teachers and counselors every week to discuss student's needs. It is put right on the table. Children that are having trouble -- the teachers see it. We can do something at the local level and address those needs to help children feel better about themselves and be more productive in school. I think it is critical to have good communication between students, teachers, and parents.

Our business is education, not law enforcement, so we can educate through any vehicle we can including monthly newsletters, bringing speakers in, our prosecutor's office, who was earlier eluded to, Mr. Dangler, coming in. He sends people in to talk to children about bullying, talk to the children about their rights, talk about the Juvenile Justice System. Have the children interact with them. This is good education. You also need to have strong parent involvement in school, a clear, fair, and enforced code of behavior, and the students need training in conflict resolution.

The programs that I have described serve as a proactive approach in preventing school violence and promoting a safe school environment. Students need to be taught life skills. Counselors, teachers, parents, and social agencies need to be ready and willing to provide appropriate and effective assistance for students in need of additional support. Schools can educate and

also serve as a clearinghouse to ensure that no students fall through the cracks resulting in acts that are harmful to other people.

What schools can do in dealing with youth violence:

Again have a clear code of conduct that students, teachers, and parents cooperatively develop, not just an administrator sitting in an office to develop it. The school community must understand the code of conduct and support it.

Provide a safe school environment and an instructional program that is appropriate and meaningful. The curriculum needs to be made to the everyday lives of the students, and the students need to apply what they have learned. If the curriculum is not relevant, the students will become bored and, oftentimes, get into trouble.

Insure adequate guidance counselors in all schools, which we have heard testimony before, and I can cooborate that need. Counselors need to teach about self-esteem and develop conflict resolution skills. Students need to feel good about themselves within their family structure and with their peers.

We also have to provide those parents who are most in need of parenting classes and parenting skills in both the elementary, middle, and high schools to attend those schools -- those courses. We personally invite those people to join the parenting classes, and we just don't have enough of it. We received some funding through some State grants, but without the funding, we really can't go forward as much as we'd like to.

We need to do more about training teachers in conflict resolution and providing effective leadership.

What the Legislature can do to promote safe schools:

State in no uncertain terms that violence, weapons, threatening behavior by students is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. The courts need to hold parents more responsible for their children's actions. Parents of students that violate the law should attend regularly scheduled parenting classes ordered by the court. If you are caught drunk driving, the judge will sentence you to AA meetings. Similarly here, with parents whose children come before the courts of the local juvenile delinquency commission-- The reason they're there, most times, is because of poor parenting skills.

Use the media, in a proactive approach, as opposed to the way they handled our situation in Hanover Township, to educate parents regarding parenting skills. Why can't there be some TV programs that will teach parents, over a period of time, the skills that are necessary? The program that I eluded to in the testimony does provide a TV kind of interactive approach.

Provide leadership, not just the funds. You do provide funds for safe homes, you do provide funds for D.A.R.E. officers, but you need some leadership go along with it. The D.A.R.E. officers are forming outstanding services in Morris County. I know in our school in particular the D.A.R.E. officer there is a regular person, a person that the children can interact with. He joins in our classes. He joins in our field trips. The children have a comfort level in talking to a police officer. That is the best money that our local district is spending on the police.

Local juvenile committees, I believe, need more support in helping parents.

Funding for after-school activities--

Encourage communities to involve children in local civic volunteer work.

Encourage communities and provide funding where necessary for supervised recreational activities when school is not in session. Children need to be supervised. If they are left alone, they are going to get in trouble.

Provide work opportunities for students to develop skills, self-responsibility, and pride.

And take a leadership role in promoting positive role models for our young people to follow.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Thank you very much.

Assemblyman Smith, do you have any questions?

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: No questions.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Ms. Gebhardt.

**KATHLEEN GEBHARDT:** Good morning.

My name is Kathleen Gebhardt. I am a clinical social worker and mental health specialist currently working for the Bloomfield School District as a crisis counselor. I am also in private practice as a psychotherapist specializing in treatment of children and their families. I have worked for the past 30 years in clinical and nonclinical settings that provide services to children and their families. Through those years, I have seen good programs and funding for those programs for children dwindle and, in many cases, become nonexistent. I believe we do have the answers to our problems of youth violence, and we've heard many of those solutions today. A lot of good ideas are out there, and we need to continue to support that. I am honored to

have been asked to speak before you today and hope that this committee (*sic*) will make recommendations that will have impact on policies and codes that will influence community systems to change ineffective methods of working with children and that will support current and new programs that care for and protect our children.

I have been asked to identify the causes of youth violence -- we've heard many of them today -- and to offer some suggestions. There are many factors that contribute and influence youth violence:

physical abuse and/or having been exposed to abuse, poverty, use and abuse of drugs and alcohol by children and/or their parents;

the availability of weapons, especially guns;

lack of adult role models;

the amount of violence and sex portrayed in the media, on TV, and in video games;

children left alone to raise themselves because parents are working and don't have the time, are overwhelmed, or just don't care;

failure to recognize early warning signs of at-risk behaviors in children;

inconsistent accountability in the court systems for juvenile offenders and lack of resources and appropriate community after-care programs for those offenders;

schools using outdated and ineffective behavioral systems;

teachers not adapting teaching strategies and classroom management to meet the needs of their students.

These, I believe, are all causes of youth violence.

In general, we as a society have displayed a lack of commitment to protect and care for children. As a result of our blind neglect, we have created a generation of depressed and angry children who have numbed themselves to the world. Their response has been violence, both random and planned, against themselves and against whomever gets in the way. In alarming numbers, they are cutting and carving themselves, piercing and tattooing their bodies, attempting suicide, taking drugs and drinking alcohol, and perpetrating violence against others either just to feel something or to continue their numbness so as not to feel the pain of neglect and abuse. Many of our children feel disconnected from their families, their schools, and their communities. It is time that we take responsibility to reconnect our youth. It is time that we take notice of the warning signs our children are giving us.

Violence prevention and response plans should consider both prevention and intervention. Local communities' violence prevention plans are best developed by a coordinated partnership on the part of schools, police departments, courts, social service agencies, community members, and the students themselves. Children are quick to split the attention of parents going from one to the other to get what they want. As parents need to present a united front in teaching and disciplining their children, the community also needs to present an united response to the problems and needs of children. Isolated, inconsistent, short-term, and fragmented interventions will not be successful and may actually perpetuate the problem. The problem of youth violence is not simple and must involve the efforts of many systems. Obviously, in the 10 minutes I have here, or less, I will not be able to talk

about all those systems, but I do want to focus in on, particularly, the schools, since that is currently where we're working.

The good news is that there are many effective programs that are currently being used in schools. We need to acknowledge this, and we need to support them. These programs are peer mediation programs, conflict resolution programs, anger management groups, social skills training, mentoring, mental health specialists hired to work full-time in the schools with students, parents, and staff, wilderness adventure programs, after-school intramural sports and activities programs.

The bad news is, for a long time, a good number of schools have used outdated and ineffective means of holding students accountable for their behavior. They do not provide adequate staff training or supervision so that teachers are sensitized to student differences and better equipped to deal with the demands and needs of today's students. Schools need the flexibility to develop innovative ways of accountability for our students. Detention in-school and out-of-school suspensions are used too frequently and inappropriately. They are not effective. Schools are educational institutions and need to focus on the ways of teaching students better ways of behaving. The way schools use suspension and detention teaches students that we don't care and that we prefer a quick fix that doesn't work to the hard work of educating students to their social and civic responsibilities. A system needs to be developed that teaches our children and reinforces the values we want them to have: honesty, respect, dignity, and responsibility to others. This message is not being communicated clearly enough under the current disciplinary systems.

I suggest, as someone has already suggested, developing multidisciplinary committees that include student, parents, teachers, and school board members. This team would be responsible for the development and enforcement of appropriate consequences for inappropriate behaviors, consequences that teach and demonstrate mutual respect and caring for one another. For example, the use of school or community services as a consequence, not unlike that being used by Juvenile Conference Committees in the communities. This would be meaningful. Arguing that “we’ve done it this way for years” is not acceptable. I would suggest that using suspension from class or school be eliminated as a quick fix except in cases of imminent danger to self or others. This is such an important issue that I further recommend that if it is within the jurisdiction of the State Department of Education, a policy or code be enforced that prohibits schools from using this as a means of prohibiting kids from attending class.

Comprehensive in-service training programs informing teachers of procedures regarding the handling of sexual or physical abuse, sexual harassment, violence, suicide ideation or attempts, and crisis situations need to be offered on a regular basis. We need in-service programs that instruct teachers on how to identify early warning signs of dangerous behaviors, about the procedures of what to do once those behaviors have been identified and effective methods of intervention for acting out behaviors in the classroom. Last but not least, training teachers to be aware of and sensitive to cultural differences which will help and be more effective with all students and thus avoid volatile situations. This training and information is as important as

conducting fire drills in schools, and it should be repeated on a regular basis. School administrations need to make this training a priority.

Some of the programs that we are using in the Bloomfield School District that I think are effective as both prevention and intervention strategies, which have also been mentioned, are comprehensive elementary grade school programs. Our student assistant counselors work with the children individually and in the classroom on conflict resolution techniques and social skills training. We have hired mental health specialists to work full-time within the schools. Although schools generally have guidance counselors and child study teams, these staff members usually do not have the clinical training, expertise, or available time to handle the complex and dangerous problems being presented by our children. It has been my experience that this position has been effective in providing crisis intervention and prevention strategies to students, parents, and teachers alike. Therefore, I strongly recommend that other schools consider adding this position. Our children are living in a faster-paced world. They experience stress and face more life and death decisions than we have in the past. Providing them with a clinically trained professional will help relieve some of that stress in critical and potentially life-threatening times.

We are also running, this year, a districtwide violence prevention campaign that involves the community, teachers, and students “to rule out hate and stand up against violence.” We have dedicated an entire day this year to training and workshops on the theme of respect. Our objective is to create an atmosphere of respect in the school and to develop concrete plans that have

students taking responsibility for their behaviors in positive, healthy ways. We will be making this an annual event for our school.

In closing, I would like to ask you to come join us that day and come see what we're doing to help us rule out hate and stand up against violence.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Thank you.

Ms. Edwards.

**MARY JAMES EDWARDS:** Good afternoon.

In preparing for this presentation, I ran by my office because I thought it was important to hear student voices as well as adult voices. In the July, 1998 *React* magazine, which is a part of the Star-Ledger, the Columbia High School, which is located in Mapelwood, mediation team was highlighted. I just want to share a passage from this article before I get into my presentation. I will tell you that I will not follow the script. I am just going to highlight a program that, I think, is very important, and I would like to share it with you.

Jamel's fists were clenched, his teeth grinding, as he marched across the field looking for a fight. Someone had stolen his expensive watch, his jeans, and \$30 in cash, and someone was going to pay. "I wanted to go out, find whoever did it, and get my stuff back whichever way possible." Luckily, he ran into two friends, Jason and Akia Brown (phonetic spelling). "They told me, I wasn't thinking with my head. They calmed me down and said I couldn't let hearsay get in the way of my better judgement." All three are trained mediators at Columbia High School. They say the methods they use to help

classmates settle conflicts without violence aren't perfect, but they've seen positive results time and again, and when they persuade peers to deal with their feelings without their fists, it usually works out.

I bring you greetings from the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program. I just recently attended a national gathering, in New York, over the weekend. We were able to get together and talk about some of the things that are happening in the different sites. The Resolving Conflict Creatively Program has 11 sites, 10 in the United States and 1 in Argentina. The other site here in New Jersey is in West Orange. One of my-- My major job in my school district is to look at ways in which to change the climate in the schools, and the RCCP program has been very helpful in doing that.

Seven years ago, a team of teachers and administrators went out looking for a program because they began to notice how kids were handling themselves in more violent ways, how they were more willing to fight instead of talking things out. So, after looking at several programs, they selected RCCP for a few reasons. I am just going to skip right over to those reasons. It has several components. First, it is K-12 curriculum infused. Oftentimes, we have violence prevention programs that focus on mediation, and only the children trained to mediate and those who end up in the mediation center ever have the opportunities to learn the skills necessary to deescalate a situation.

So by effusing and incorporating the RCCP skills, conflict resolution skills, into the curriculum, the entire school community benefits from it.

We have-- Every year, for the past seven years, we have had teacher training. We average about 25 teachers a year, offering them skills and

strategies where they can either directly teach the RCCP skills or effuse it into the curriculum. For those teachers that have not been trained, we offer a teacher/mentor program where trained teachers work with other teachers providing them with materials and modeling lessons so that even though they may not have the formal training, there are opportunities to have peace education in the classroom.

As I mentioned before, the mediation program is in place in our schools in grades three through twelve. As I sit here now, there is a team from Boston visiting the High School Mediation Center. We've had many visits. We had a team of teachers from Argentina, and we had two visits from Palestinian teachers and Jewish teachers from Israel for the purpose of looking at the program, trying to bring some of the skills back to their own school communities.

Many of the guest speakers talked about the importance of parents being involved in this process. When we talk about the entire school community, we are talking about parents also. We offer two opportunities for parents to receive this type of training. One is through a program called Peace in the Family, where we use the same concepts, strategies, and skills, and teach parents how to create an environment at home that is less violent. The-- Our newest part of our parent training is called Conflict Resolution in Home and School. What is different about this is that not only are parents coming, but they are also bringing the siblings because oftentimes you can work with kids in isolation and parents in isolation, but it is important to bring them together and have them practice. So that is something else that we've been working on this year, and it's in its third year.

I just wanted to highlight some of the ways in which we are looking at violence prevention in our school district. I encourage you to continue to support programs that are proactive and that will intervene before we get to some of the more violent stages in the lives of children.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Thank you very much.

Any questions, Assemblyman Smith? (negative response)

We thank you for your testimony.

The last two witnesses that we have for today are George DeCarlo and Bob Crystal, Board of Education member from Barnegat Township. Bob did present some testimony at our last hearing, but I understand he wants to be heard again.

So, first, Mr. DeCarlo, and then Mr. Crystal.

**G E O R G E D e C A R L O:** Hello, and good afternoon to the committee (*sic*) members. Thank you for letting me speak to the committee on my experience with violence in the public school system and how the system does not properly deal with situations and does not prevent such actions from occurring.

My name is George DeCarlo, and I live in Berkeley Heights in Union County. I worked as a substitute teacher at Watchung Hills Regional High School District, located in Warren in Somerset County, from 1992 through 1994. I am a gay man who also happens to be a legal second-class citizen of the State of New Jersey. As a gay man, I do not enjoy all the rights and privileges of citizenship and residency in the State of New Jersey. Of those rights and privileges, I am at liberty to pursue and exercise with other gays and

lesbians. We are not free from discrimination, bigotry, and violence. All gays and lesbians share this circumstance, homophobia, in all aspects of our society and within each of our communities.

I have come here to share with you a particularly sensitive and important area in which this is most notable. New Jersey's public school system does not demonstrate equality for its gay and lesbian administrators, staff, teachers, and the reason for its existence, its students. Gay and lesbian students are ignored by the public school system as far as positive reinforcement that supports and enhances their self-esteem.

And how is positive self-esteem accomplished? Students need people such as myself, who were teachers and substitute teachers treated in a verbally and discriminatory manner, to tell their story and act as role models. I was the recipient of verbal violence from students regarding my sexual orientation. Then the school, Watchung Hills Regional High School District, in Warren, in Somerset County, compounded this negative behavior in the form of discriminatory action and reprisal as determined by a Finding of Probable Cause from the Division on Civil Rights under New Jersey's Department of Law and Public Safety.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Mr. DeCarlo.

MR. DeCARLO: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: I am going to interrupt you for a moment. I am reading a little bit ahead of you, and I notice an explicative in the next paragraph. I will caution you that this committee--

MR. DeCARLO: Oh, I won't use that.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: --will not permit that, and I will just ask you to address your testimony to the issue at hand and what you identify as the problems and suggest some remedies.

Thank you.

MR. DeCARLO: This situation originated after my reporting of the verbally discriminatory remarks and gestures. Additionally, verbal violence was directed at me by a student calling me a blank faggot and a fag. These actions show a total lack of prevention by the public school system. Adolescents are not taught that being gay or lesbian is not a choice, gay people are mentally healthy, being gay or lesbian is natural, being gay or lesbian is not a lifestyle, as I was told by a school administrator and Board member, it is a life. Gay men and lesbians constitute families, and some of the most talented people are or were gay or lesbian.

Prevention comes in many forms. For instance, the nondiscrimination statement had not been updated since the New Jersey law against discrimination was amended in 1992 to include affectional or sexual orientation. Without this update, what is the community to think? At the very least, the school system will be viewed as defying the law. So it is not surprising that such defiance manifests itself, inciting students and administrators to discriminate and violate another person.

What else does this tell students on how to treat each other and those outside of their group? A process of profiling develops, leading to prejudice and xenophobia. Of course, these attitudes are not only fostered at school. Family and religious organizations teach youth to love but with conditions. These conditions are not founded on science, but on taboos based

on ignorance and hate. But it is up to the public school system, along with the New Jersey Department of Education, to teach correct etiquette in the greater society. Punishment on a case-by-case basis is insufficient. Public schools may consider organizing committees of students, teachers, and parents to arbitrate acts of prejudice, bigotry, and discriminatory behavior on the part of students in order to stop the violence.

The New Jersey Department of Education does not have powers of enforcement unless specifically granted such authority by the Legislature. Therefore, the Department of Education may only advise, consult, and observe. In my case, a suggestion was made that, due to my youthful looks, I should consider teaching in an elementary school. The issue of discriminatory and reprisal actions were pushed aside and ignored. My youthful looks are now the object to be discriminated against. I suppose those teaching master and doctoral level studies need to look ancient in order to communicate with their students. States of sexual orientation, whether they be gay, lesbian, bisexual, generates odd, irrational, pitiful, and disappointing action even from State officials. The need to bury and obfuscate the problem becomes a paramount objective. I cannot but wonder if public school administrators know about violence and put it aside. Are the parents prohibiting the enforcement of the law against discrimination via school boards? These two propositions need investigation.

I am not the only person that has faced such actions. Many in the public school system will not come forward due to the fear of reprisal. Of those that have bravely come forward are Eileen Argenbright, a music and arts teacher. Students from the Upper Saddle River middle school formed a hate

group in opposition to her being a lesbian. Administrators did not want to deal with the violence, and the students were known to have demonstrated such behavior in the past. Also, in North Jersey, is Robert MacDonald, formerly a student at Jefferson High School in Newtown in Sussex County. He suffered violent actions from fellow students. The reason for the violence was that he is a gay male.

Finally, some facts about gay youth: 80 percent of gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth report verbal abuse; 44 percent of gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth report threats of attack; 17 percent of gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth have been assaulted; 66.7 percent of gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth were threatened or injured with a weapon at school in the past year; 20.1 percent of gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth skipped school in the past month because of feeling unsafe on route to or at school; 62.3 percent of gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth were in a physical fight in the past year. These statistics are from Pennsylvania State University and the Massachusetts Youth Risk Survey conducted by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

I thank the Task Force on Adolescent Violence for allowing me to speak and ask that all necessary efforts be made to stop anti-gay and lesbian violence in all its forms within New Jersey's public school districts. Remember, only a handful of the 612 school districts include affectional or sexual orientation in the nondiscrimination policies.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Thank you.

Mr. Crystal.

ROBERT CRYSTAL: Good afternoon.

First off, I would like to thank the Task Force for letting me come back to try to put in a nutshell what I was trying to convey to you last month. I didn't have a lot of opportunity to prepare. I would also like to commend you for holding these hearings. I think they are excellent.

You have heard me speak before, so instead of giving you a long, drawn out speech, let me explain that I am concerned about this because I am a retired police officer out of New York City. Secondly, you all have-- I had seen that you all got a copy of what my entire board had signed. This was my recommendation before them, and they all backed it. However, I think it is important for the record to note that I am not here as a board of education member but as a concerned parent and citizen today.

What I am asking and requesting and suggesting to this Task Force is this. We've seen shootings in towns such as Jonesboro, Pearl, Paducah. These are towns that we never would have heard of if a tragedy such as what took place did not take place. New Jersey had not been touched yet, and I hope that it never will be. That is why I feel it is important for us to become the leaders for the nation. Congressman Saxon wrote me, yesterday, that he is recommending that I be permitted to speak before a committee of Congress such as yours here for the Assembly.

Basically, I am asking that-- We have school officials, teachers, and administrators that presently see signs of violent behavior in very young children, kindergarten through third grade. Some of the behavior is very continuous anger, constant fights, reports of them killing small animals. What I propose -- am proposing is twofold. First, if the administration has the child study team and the child study team feels that this child needs to be evaluated,

that they be permitted to do so. Ninety-five percent of parents would want their child to be evaluated to see if a problem exists. It is the other 5 percent that have either misplaced loyalty to their children or just don't care that we're speaking. The child study team should have the right, under the law, to evaluate that child and give the report to the parent only. It could be held strictly confidential. It's just like if we're in school and I tell you your child is doing poor in math, and you say, "No, he's not." If I don't have a test to back it up, I can't prove it to you. Maybe this will awaken the parents. At that point-- Secondly is that we're calling for another classification for special education for violent children so they can be caught early. We cannot let it get to the emergency state.

I'll put it to you very simply. I do not have the eloquence or the education of many of the prior speakers, so I am going to put it as easy as possible. If a child has a speech impediment and you catch it in kindergarten, first, or second grade, it can be corrected. If you wait until that child is 14 or 15 years old, there's very little chance of ever correcting the speech impediment fully. It is the same thing with violence. If a child has this propensity towards violence and we can catch it early and get them the psychological help they need, possibly place them in a special class or a special school, these children can be saved and so can our children.

Some parents say that they don't want their rights taken away, believe me I understand that. However, you and I, as parents, have the right to know that when we send our children to school that our children are in a safe environment. And we do not need to worry that some other child, without

any realization or knowledge of how terrible his actions are, is sitting up on a hill and shooting down on them, such as in Jonesboro.

I ask the Task Force to please make -- put -- take this into consideration and make this one of your suggestions before the Assembly because we need laws to take the handcuffs of the school administrators so they not only can help these children, but they can help the children that have been killed and wounded. And as I said prior, we have not even begun to see the psychological effects that I have witnessed.

I thank you for your time, and I am sorry that you've been kept to such a late hour today.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: No need to appologize to us, Mr. Crystal.

We thank you for your appearance here today, as well as every other witness who has taken the time to come here.

Assemblyman Smith, do you have any questions?

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: No, none at all.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Once again, we thank everyone who has taken time to come and testify. There will be additional hearings, which notices will be posted appropriately.

Have a good day.

**(HEARING CONCLUDED)**

APPENDIX





Testimony before the  
Assembly Task Force on Adolescent Violence  
William H. Lewis, Jr., Associate Director, Government Relations  
October 27, 1998

NJEA is pleased to have this opportunity to present our perspective on adolescent violence. Our schools and communities must be inseparably joined, if we are to successfully diminish violence and violent criminal acts in and around our schools. State and local government participation in this effort is needed to provide us with the resources, changes in law or regulation to eliminate or significantly reduce violence and the fear associated with it. We thank the task force for its leadership in this area.

During the 1990's we have experienced a troubling growth in violence in our schools, highlighted by school shootings in other states. Absent such high profile cases, research seems to show that there has been a decrease in school violence the last few years. Of course, even one case of violence is too much.

- School staff traditionally have not been trained to handle the growing D;
- De-escalation techniques for anger and violent behavior;
- Gangs - symptoms of a problem and crime increase;
- Search and seizure techniques and the law.

Teacher training in these areas should be part of pre-service teacher preparation programs and offered as in-service training or professional development for those who are already working in the schools. Teachers may decide to be trained in some of these areas as part of the 100 hour continuing education requirement recently put into school regulations.

(CONTINUED)

**NJEA will occupy a leading position in providing the professional development and special training members believe they need in violence prevention, conflict resolution, and classroom management.**

Educators, other school staff, and boards of education want to provide safe schools for the children and communities they serve. We recognize that the establishment of safe schools is inseparable from the issues of violence and crime in the larger community.

**The NJEA Violence Reduction Resource Guide points out that “ To be successful, solutions to the school violence issue must ultimately be pursued in the context of a safe community, not just a safe school. Only the broadest possible coordinated response of educators, parents, community leaders, public and private agencies can produce a long-term effect.”**

We suggest that school planning committees carefully plan for the specific needs of their unique communities and schools. Since there are so many factors involved with juvenile violence and many variations of the population at risk, it is necessary for schools to develop and offer different programs.

The Safe Schools Act of 1993 was supposed to provide funding and technical assistance to school systems that wish to develop safe school plans. Also, federal drug-free school funding included violence prevention. (The High School Magazine, Sept. 1994)

### **Causes of School Violence**

Even though the causes of violence in our schools vary considerably, experts consistently link gang presence and activity, hate-motivated behavior, and drugs to violence in schools.

(CONTINUED)

Even though only a small percentage of students belong to gangs, they may have a big impact on schools because of their involvement with drugs and weapons. The mere presence of gangs in school creates tension in the school.

### **Guns In School**

In 1993, the National School Safety Center survey showed that about 100,000 students take guns to school each day in this country. Some students take them for protection, but NSSC estimates that almost half of the robberies and more than one-third of the assaults on urban youth take place in schools.

That same year a Louis Harris poll showed that 59 percent of our nation's 6 through 12-graders report they can get a handgun if they want one, and 35 percent said they could get a gun in less than an hour. This easy access to guns cut across racial and ethnic lines.

NJEA is very concerned about the easy access that children and youth have to handguns. We applaud gun owners and parents who exercise due caution and safety by locking up firearms and storing ammunition separately away from the gun. Unfortunately, children are still able to access handguns at home and they bring them to school or tragically, they sometimes kill themselves or a sibling or a friend accidentally. Teenage suicide is also related to the access that boys in particular have to handguns.

NJEA supports the efforts of some legislators who work with groups such as CEASEFIRE NJ, to pass legislation that uses modern technology to help make handguns "childproof."

(CONTINUED)

CEASEFIRE NEW JERSEY and HANDGUN CONTROL INC. point out that "a child-proof handgun is one that, by design and manufacture, can only be fired by an authorized user. Child-proof handguns cannot be fired by the curious young child, the depressed teenager, or the criminal who steals the gun."

**NJEA supports this effort to save lives in our state and efforts to protect children and youth.** NJEA support bipartisan legislation, S-113 (Palaiia and Codey)/ A-780 (Weinberg and Tom Smith), which would:

1. Establish a study commission to make recommendations to the legislature and Governor as to the bill's impact on the state.
2. At the direction of the Superintendent of State Police, limit all sales and transfers of handguns 37 months after legislative enactment to those that are personalized.
3. Grandfather all handguns without childproof technology in possession before bill is fully effective. The bill does not apply to rifles and shotguns or to law enforcement officials.

NJEA's goal is not to take away handguns from any licensed owner, but to urge the use of modern, available technology to save the lives of our students and others.

Hate groups which target particular people in society at large also target those same people in schools. The sufferers of this violence are members of ethnic, racial, and religious groups. Changes in the economy sometimes generates a backlash against immigrants, particularly ethnic and racial immigrants. When students fail to understand one another it can result in name-calling, fighting, and violence with direct ethnic, racial, and anti-Semitic overtones. Homophobia in society also results in egregious name-calling and violent behavior directed at students and adults in our schools.

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Schools mirror the general lack of respect for females in our society. Harassment, bullying, date rape, and other forms of victimization of girls are increasing. According to the 1993 Metropolitan Life Survey of American Teachers, 16 percent of girls said they were victims of a violent act in or around school.

A drug sale gone bad, battles over gang or individual turf, and the violent action or reaction caused by drugs can lead to violent behavior by students.

The public has the impression that violence is rampant in our schools because of the news media reports of high profile violent events in our nation's schools. **The reality is that the vast majority of our schools are operating safely and effectively. This is not to say that school violence is not a problem because it is.**

In March, 1998, a survey of school crime conducted by the federal Department of Education's National Center for Education and Statistics using only crimes reported to police at schools, aboard school buses, or at school-sponsored events in all fifty states and the District of Columbia revealed the following:

- 20 percent of middle schools and high schools had at least one serious reportable crime such as rape or robbery during the 1996-97 school year;
- 10 percent of all schools, elementary through high school, had at least one serious crime that year.
- crime is more common at larger schools - A third of the schools with an enrollment of 1000 or more students reported at least one serious violent crime compared with 4 percent to 9 percent in schools with fewer than 1,000 students;
- 43 percent of the schools reported zero crimes, serious or minor.

(CONTINUED)

Mild or moderate violence does not seem as serious as more violent activities, but they can be just as destructive to the learning process as guns, shootings, and death in the opinion of some researchers. The point is that when students are afraid, their ability to learn is disabled. One professor put it this way: "When fear pushes its way in the schoolhouse door, learning goes out the window."

The National Education Association Representative Assembly, the policy making body of NEA, adopted the following resolution:

*"School employees and students must be safe from physical, verbal, and psychological violence. Schools should provide appropriate services within the regular education program or develop appropriate alternative education placement programs for students who are dangerous to other students and education employees. Students must receive due process before placement in any alternative program. Appropriate community agencies should use their authority to reduce and prevent violence in schools and in society."*

NJEA has recommended to our local associations that they facilitate violence reduction by working with the school, the community, and families jointly on specific concerns for their school and community.

**NJEA members can help establish a school safety committee to address the school's immediate problems and begin long-range planning.** It is important to assess the community's problems and their impact on schools, families. They need to identify those involved in violence and criminal activities.

**The school safety committee should develop and implement one plan for continuous action and one plan for crisis management.** The action plan includes things such as: school management, including discipline codes,

(CONTINUED)

crime and violence reporting; off-campus crime, student involvement in planning, and alternative education. It should also address curriculum related to school safety policies, peer mediation, conflict resolution, and multicultural education.

**The safety committee should develop a site-specific safety plan.** Other items of discussion could include whether or not to use metal detectors, eliminate lockers, improve lighting, better oversight of student areas of congregation, and reduce school size.

**Another plan should be the crisis management plan to specify what procedures will be followed in the event of a crisis, such as a shooting on school grounds.** The plan should include how to communicate with the media, parents, staff, and police. It should make provisions for assistance to victims, offenders, and police. It should address counseling for students and staff.

**In the community key leaders must be involved in the process of making schools safe. We suggest the formation of a community task force or board that will oversee the violence reduction effort.** They should design and carry out needs assessment studies, crisis-and long-term action plans that are fit community resources and existing programs, and evaluate the effectiveness of their strategies.

**In families, we want parents to participate in mentoring, reading, and other involvement programs.** School employees can help districts develop child care programs for parents, train school staff to identify, report, and deal with child abuse. Where necessary, schools can help provide training in parenting skills. It is important to focus on the root causes of teenage crime such as low self-esteem and poor social conditions.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak out on this very serious issue of violence in the schools and the community.

# AFT Resolutions on School Safety and School Violence

Approved by the Executive Council on May 4, 1994

\* National Summit on School Safety and Violence

*WHEREAS:* Goal #6 of our National Education goals, endorsed by the President of the U.S., the governors of the 50 states and the Congress states, "By the year 2000 every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning," and

*WHEREAS:* In school systems across the country, incidents of violence are increasing in both frequency and intensity, and

*WHEREAS:* The primary mission of American schools is to teach all students the knowledge and skills needed to become full participants in a democratic society, and

*WHEREAS:* All students in our schools have a right to positive and productive safe and secure learning environments without disruptions; therefore, be it

**RESOLVED:** That AFT calls for schools to adopt codes of conduct for student behavior that enforce school policies under which there is zero tolerance for drugs, weapons, crimes and violence on school campuses, and

That AFT calls for a National Summit on School Safety and Discipline to adopt A National Safe Schools Covenant for every school in America to sign that advocates a policy of zero tolerance for drugs, weapons, crimes and violence on school campuses, and

That AFT sponsor a School Safety and Violence Conference for local leaders on the elements of the Safe Schools Covenant.

\* Alternative Programs and Violence Prevention

*WHEREAS:* Disruptive and violence-prone students require varying degrees of attention and actions ranging from intervention to expulsion, and

*WHEREAS:* School budgets for instructional delivery are already stretched to their limits, and there is insufficient funding to enact programs to counteract the rising tide of violence and disruption in our schools, and

*WHEREAS:* Successful programs are currently in existence in cities but are not being effectively replicated and are insufficient in number of accommodate the growing need for targeted programs and facilities, and

*WHEREAS:* School staff lack adequate training and resources needed to deal with incidents of aggression and disruption, and

*WHEREAS:* Students need additional support in order to learn non-violent methods of conflict resolution, and

*WHEREAS:* Standards of behavior are learned at an early age, prior to a child's first entering school, and

*WHEREAS:* Many children are entering school with little support from home and with experiences that are based on violent methods of resolving conflict and little understanding of how to function in larger group settings, and

*WHEREAS:* Goal #1 of Goals 2000: Educate America Act states, "All children in America will start school ready to learn," therefore be it

**RESOLVED:** That the AFT supports recent federal legislative initiatives represented by the 1993 Safe Schools Act which provides federal funding incentives for the development of local school safety and violence prevention programs, and

That the AFT supports the dissemination of programs and curriculum that have been found to be effective in teaching peaceful methods of conflict resolution, peer mediation and individual responsibility (self discipline), and

That the AFT supports the development, implementation and funding by school districts for training programs that enable school staff to maintain safe and orderly learning environments. and

That the AFT supports a focus on early childhood programs that assist children in developing an understanding of self discipline and on how to get along with peers and adults in a group setting, and

That the AFT supports the establishment and maintenance of alternative educational settings including residential programs for students who are removed from regular classroom environments.

\* Standardized Systems for Enforcing School Safety

*WHEREAS:* American schools must have high standards for academic performance and high standards for student behavior. and

*WHEREAS:* Existing school discipline codes are weak and are not consistently enforced by school administrators and are often misunderstood and undermined by parent and community groups resulting in incidents of violence and chronic disruption going unchecked, unresolved, undocumented, and underreported, and

*WHEREAS:* Problems outside of schools, such as violence, poverty, gangs, family dysfunction and abuse have negative influences on the lives of students and are often beyond the ability of schools to resolve in isolation, and

*WHEREAS:* Parent and community concerns about unsafe and unruly schools and classrooms increase pressure for vouchers and support for profit-making private firms to manage public schools, and

*WHEREAS:* Urban districts, in particular, are currently suffering from the greatest rise in classrooms disruptions, incidents of violence, weapons carrying, verbal abuse and attacks on students and school staff and the number of incidents of school violence has also increased in suburbs and rural areas, and

*WHEREAS:* AFT locals have requested assistance and support from the national union in developing student discipline procedures that do not tolerate classroom disruptions and acts of violence and that establish appropriate punishments for misbehavior and aggression; therefore, be it

**RESOLVED:** That AFT calls on the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice to initiate a process which establishes common definitions of the variety of violent acts that occur in American schools and which will result in the development of a national standardized system of data collection and reporting of incidents of violence that will serve as a basis for measuring progress toward reaching Goal #6 of Goals 2000: Educate America Act, and

That AFT calls for the development of a review of existing due process requirements in order to more efficiently and expeditiously process decisions on placement for disruptive and violent students who cannot function in regular schools and classrooms, and

That AFT calls for legislation that guarantees to school staff the right to know the histories of students who have exhibited violent and disruptive behaviors.

ADDRESS BY THE LATE AFT PRESIDENT ALBERT SHANKER

AFT National School Safety Conference, Feb. 3, 1995

I can't think of a more important topic. Over the last few months and over the next few months, there have been and will be a number of conferences on this issue. I can assure you, all of the other conferences resemble each other, and this one will be very different. It will have a very different point of view.

We have had, over the last decade or more, a national debate on the issue of school quality. And there is a national consensus that we need to do a lot better. We are probably doing better than we used to, but we're not doing as well as other industrial countries. And in order to do well, we are going to have to do some of the things that those other countries are doing, such as develop high standards, assessments related to those standards, and a system of consequences so that teachers and youngsters and parents know that school counts. School makes a difference, whether it's getting a job or getting into a college or getting into a training program.

We're well on the way. It's going to take time, but we're on the way to bringing about the improvement that we need. But you can have a wonderful curriculum and terrific assessments and you can state that there are consequences out there, but none of this is going to do much good in terms of providing youngsters with an education if we don't meet certain basic, obvious conditions. And those conditions are simply that you have to have schools that are safe and classrooms where there is sufficient order so that the curriculum means something. Without that, all of this stuff is nonsense. You can deliver a terrific curriculum, but if youngsters are throwing things, cursing and yelling and punching each other, then the curriculum doesn't mean anything in that classroom. The agenda is quite different.

And so we have a very interesting phenomenon. We have members of Congress and governors and state legislators talking about choice and vouchers and charter schools, and you know what the big incentive for those issues is. Parents are not really pushing for these things, except in conditions where their children seem to be unsafe or in conditions where they can't learn. And then they say, well, look, if you can't straighten things out here, then give me a chance to take my youngster somewhere else. And so we're about to put in place a ridiculous situation. We're going to create a system of choice and vouchers, so that 98 percent of the kids who behave can go someplace and be safe. And we're going to leave the 2 percent who are violent and disruptive to take over the schools. Now, isn't it ridiculous to move 98 percent of the kids, when all you have to do is move 2 or 3 percent of them and the other 98 percent would be absolutely fine?

Now this is a problem which has a number of aspects and I want to talk about them. First, there is, of course, the problem of extreme danger, where we are dealing with violence or guns or drugs within the school. And, as we look to the schools, what we find is that the schools seem to be unable to handle this. We had headlines here in DC just a week ago saying that the mayor and school officials say they don't know what else to do. In other words, they've done everything that they can, and the guns, and the knives, and the drugs are still there. So, it just happens that they have actually said it, but that is, in fact, how many school administrators and school boards across the country behave. They

treat violence as a fact of life, that's what society is like, and they just go through a couple of ritual efforts to try to show that they're doing something. But, basically, they give up.

What we have is what amounts to a very high level of tolerance of this type of activity. Now, of course, the violence and the guns and the drugs have to be distinguished from another type of activity. This other type isn't deadly in the sense that you are going to read tomorrow morning that some youngster was stabbed or shot. And that's the whole question of just plain out-and-out disruption: the youngster who is constantly yelling, cursing, jumping, fighting, doing all sorts of things, so that most of the time of the other students in the class and the teacher is devoted not to the academic mission of the schools but to figuring out how to contain this individual. And in this area, we have an even higher tolerance than we do in the area of violence, where occasionally youngsters are suspended or removed for periods of time.

The reason that we have these high levels of violence and disruption has to do with lessons that the youngsters learn -- and we teach them those lessons, we collectively who are in the school system -- at a very early age. They see some youngster in kindergarten behaving in an atrocious way, and they are all sure that something is going to happen to that youngster. They're looking, and they're waiting for someone to come from heaven or from the principal's office, from somewhere, because they have some sense of justice. They have some sense that when you do something wrong, somebody comes to get you or to do something about it. But what happens? Nothing happens.

And when nothing happens, this little kid who is five or six years old turns to his or her peers and says, "Now look at that, you yellow so and so. You see what I did? You didn't have the guts to do that, did you? You were afraid that something was going to happen to me, right? Well, what happened to me? Nothing." What happens very soon is that the teacher is no longer the leader in the classroom, that youngster is. Because that youngster is now the proud leader in that peer group. The peer group is not afraid that the principal will come. Nobody's going to come. If you didn't do anything when one kid did something, what are you going to do when all of us together are doing the same thing? Now you've got a real problem. Do you kick them all out? No, you can't do that.

And so what we do, at a very early age, is teach these youngsters a very bad lesson and then that moves up all the way through the schools. Now, just think about it. You let one kid into a school with a weapon, and if you tolerate that, pretty soon half of the kids have weapons. Why? Well, the others need them to protect themselves from the first guy. That's their excuse. If you ask most of the kids, they don't want to be carrying the weapons. But they're carrying the weapons because they want to protect themselves. Of course, once they've got them it doesn't turn out to be only protection. And once you get into a situation where all of the youngsters in a class or in a school are like this, whether it's with arms or with disruption, how do you change that? Then you have to close the place, redistribute the youngsters, because you've got an entire culture that says this is the way things are going to be.

Now, I visited a school yesterday for youngsters with learning disabilities. I spoke to the principal, who had been a Washington, DC school principal and is also a professor in a local university here. In that role, she was visiting another public school in the city and she described the situation in that school. There was a youngster who had a history not only of beating up everybody that he could get hold of, but also of being a fire bug. And

the school is in a state of terror. But because this youngster is disturbed and disabled, they can't do anything. There aren't any private schools that want to take this youngster, and yet we are subjecting all of these other youngsters in a public school, who are required to go to school or they'll be violating the law, to a youngster who has this sort of record and puts them at risk.

Last year when Congress was debating the Goals 2000 education program, there were an awful lot of people who said, you know, in addition to having different kinds of standards content standards -- what you should learn -- and performance standards -- how good is good enough -- you ought to have opportunity-to-learn standards. It's not fair to hold kids to these standards unless they've had certain advantages. It's not fair, if one kid has had early childhood education and one hasn't, to hold them to the same standard. It's not fair, if at this school they don't have any textbooks or the textbooks are 15 years old, and in that school they have the most modern books. It's not fair, if in this school they've got computers, and in that school kids have never seen a computer.

Well, I submit to you that if you want to talk about opportunity-to-learn standards, there are a lot of kids who've made it without the most up-to-date textbooks. It's better if you have them. There are a lot of kids who've made it without early childhood education. It's a lot better if you've got it, and we're for that. Throughout history, people have learned without computers, but it's better if you've got them. But nobody has ever learned if they were in a classroom with one or two kids who took up 90 percent of the time through disruption, violence, or threats of violence. You deprive children of an opportunity to learn if you do not first provide an orderly situation within the classroom and within the school. That comes ahead of all of these other things.

Now, I said that this conference was going to be different from every conference that I've been to and every conference that I've read about. I have a report here that was sent to me by John Cole [President of the Texas Federation of Teachers], who went to The Scholastic Annual Summit on Youth Violence on October 17. I'm not going to read the whole thing, but I'll just read enough that you get the flavor of what these other conferences are like:

"So start with the concept that the real victims of violence are those unfortunate individuals who have been led into lives of crime by the failure of society to provide them with hope for a meaningful life. Following that logic, one must conclude that society has not done enough for these children and that we must find ways to salvage their lives. Schools must work patiently with these individuals offering them different avenues out of this situation. As an institution charged with responsibility for education, schools must have programs to identify those who are embarking on a life of crime and violence and lift them out of the snares into which they have fallen. Society, meanwhile, should be more forgiving of the sins of these poor creatures, who through no real fault of their own are the victims of racism and economic injustice.

"Again and again and again, panelists pointed out that the young people we are talking about, to paraphrase Rodney Dangerfield, 'don't get no respect.' The experts assured us that young people take up weapons, commit acts of violence, and abuse drugs because this enables them to obtain respect from their peers. I found myself thinking that we aid and abet this behavior when we bend over backwards to accommodate those young people who have bought into this philosophy. By lavishing attention on them, we may

even encourage a spread of that behavior. Many of these programs are well meaning but counterproductive.

"I don't want to condemn this conference as a waste of time. Obviously we do need programs to work with these young people, and we should try to salvage as many as we can. However, we must somehow come to grips with the idea that individuals have responsibility for their own actions. If we assume that society is to blame for all of the problems these young people have, may we then assume that society must develop solutions that take care of these young people's problems? We take away from each individual the responsibility for his or her own life. Once the individual assumes that he or she has lost control of his own destiny, that individual has no difficulty in justifying any act because he or she feels no responsibility for the consequences."

Now with that philosophy, the idea is not that we want to be punitive or nasty, but essentially schools must teach not only English and mathematics and reading and writing and history, but also teach that there are ways of behaving in society that are unacceptable. And when we sit back and tolerate certain types of behavior, we are teaching youngsters that certain types of behavior are acceptable, which eventually will end up with their being in jail or in poverty for the rest of their lives. We are not doing our jobs as teachers. And the system is not doing its job, if we send youngsters the message that this is tolerable behavior within society.

We are also putting at risk the education of millions of youngsters. Now, you know that's something we wouldn't do as parents. Suppose we had, let's say, four or five kids of our own, and suppose that one of these was a very dangerous and emotionally disturbed youngster, a youngster with a lot of violence. I'll bet that we would do an awful lot to separate that one youngster of ours from the other three or four because we wouldn't want the others to be harmed. We would try very hard to help this youngster, very hard. But, as parents, our first responsibility would be to say, let's make sure that these other kids don't get badly hurt or killed or have something happen to them. That's the first thing we would do. We're not sure whether all of the things that we do for this youngster will work. We're going to try. And we're going to have to do more, in many ways, for this youngster than we do for the other youngsters, who are not so in such trouble. But our first responsibility is to make sure that we don't give that youngster the opportunity to be destructive with the other youngsters.

All we ask of our schools is that they behave in the same way that a caring and intelligent parent would behave with respect to their own children. I doubt very much, if you had a youngster who was a fire bug or a youngster who used weapons, whether you would say, well, I owe it to this youngster to trust him with my other children to show him that I'm not separating him out or treating him differently. Or I'm going to raise his self-esteem by allowing him to do these things. All of these nutty things that we talk about in school, we would not do. So the starting point of this conference, which is different from all of the others, is that I hope that you people join with me in a sense of outrage that we have a system that is willing to sacrifice the overwhelming majority of children for a handful. And not do any good for that handful either. And we need to start with that outrage, because without that we're not going to change this system.

That outrage is there among parents. That outrage was partly expressed in the recent election as people's anger at the way government was working. Why can't government do

things in some sort of common sense way? And this is one of the issues that's out there. Now, what are some of the things that enter into this? Well, part of it is that some people think of schools as sort of custodial institutions. Where are we going to put the kids? Put them here. Or they think the school's job is mostly socialization. Eventually troubled kids will grow up or grow out of this, and they're better off with other youngsters than they are separated. Of course, people who take that point of view are totally ignoring the fact that the central role of schools, the one that we will be held accountable for, is student academic achievement. We know the test scores are bad. And we know that our students are not learning as much as youngsters in other countries. So we can't just say we know we are way behind, but, boy, are we good custodians. Look at how socialized these youngsters are.

People are paying for education and they want youngsters who are going to be able to be employed and get decent jobs. We want youngsters who are going to be as well off or in better shape than we are, just as most of us are with respect to our parents and grandparents. And the academic function is the one that's neglected. The academic function is the one that's destroyed in this notion that our job is mainly custodial.

So our central position is that we have to be tough on these issues, and we have to be tough because basically we are defending the right of children to an education. And those who insist on allowing violence and disruptive behavior in the school are destroying the right to an education for the overwhelming majority of youngsters within our schools.

Two years ago or three years ago, I was in Texas at a convention of the Texas Federation of Teachers. I didn't know this was going to happen, but either just before I got there or while I was there, there was a press conference on a position the convention adopted, and they used the phrase "zero tolerance." They said that with respect to certain types of dangerous activities in schools, there would be zero tolerance. These things are not acceptable and there are going to be consequences. There might be suspension, there might be expulsion, or there might be something else, but, nevertheless, consequences will be clear. Well, that got picked up by radio, television, legislators. I was listening to a governor the other night at the National Governors' Association, who stood up and came out for zero tolerance. It is a phrase which has caught on and is sweeping the country.

I hope it is one that all of you will bring back to your communities and your states, that there are certain types of activities that we will not tolerate. We will not teach youngsters bad lessons, and we're going to start very early. When a youngster does something that is really terribly wrong, and all of the other youngsters are sure that something is going to happen to him because he did something wrong, we had better make sure that we fulfill the expectations of all those other youngsters that something's going to happen. And they're all going to say "Thank God, I didn't do a terrible thing like that or I would be out there, and something would be happening to me." That is the beginning of a sense of doing something right, as against doing wrong.

And we have to deal with this notion that society is responsible, social conditions are responsible. The AFT does not take second place to anybody in fighting for decent conditions for adults and for youngsters and for minorities and for groups that have been oppressed. We're not in a state of denial; we're not saying that things have been wonderful. But when your kids come home and say "I'm doing these terrible things

minutes, when you're finished with Chinese, you go out and run around for fifteen or twenty minutes and so forth. They know that kids need to get some of that out of their systems. We shouldn't punish youngsters for just being fidgety and moving because they can't stand doing something that they can't do physically. And so for those kids who can sit and listen and take it, fine.

But before we declare a kid a major menace because he moves around and disturbs the rest of us, we ought to provide some types of programs where youngsters can move and be more active, so that we don't end up punishing them for a condition that, in a sense, we create. We can't create human beings that can sit still for six hours. We haven't figured out a way of doing that, so we need to say all right, if you can't sit still, here's a way in which you can learn English and history and mathematics in a different way, but you still have to learn. You still don't use foul language, you still don't hit anybody, you don't spit, you don't run all over the place. We don't want to create an artificial situation in which the youngster is blamed for something that is essentially a rigidity that we build into the system.

Now, this is common sense. I'm talking about the way parents would behave with respect to their own children. If my youngster does something wrong, I want my youngster to know it. My youngster is going to pay some price for it, so that he or she doesn't do it again. And I'm not doing this because I hate my youngster or because I get pleasure in punishing, but because I am afraid that if I let this go, there's going to be something else, and something else, and something else, and at some point it's going to be too late. A good school system ought to think the same way, because the schools are in the place of the parent during that period of time.

One of the big problems is school administrators. School administrators are concerned that, if there are a large number of reports of disruptions and violence in their schools, their reputations will suffer. They like to say they have none of those problems in their schools. Now, how do you prove that you have none of these problems in your school? Very simple. Just tell the teachers that if they report it, it's because they are ineffective teachers. If you tell that to one or two teachers, you will certainly have a school that has very little disruption or violence reported. You may have plenty of disruption and violence. So, in many places we have this gag rule. It's not written, but it's very well understood.

As a teacher, I myself faced this. Each time I reported something like this, I was told that if I knew how to motivate the students properly, this wouldn't happen. It's pretty universal. It wasn't just one district or just my principal. It's almost all of them. Therefore, I think that we ought to seek laws that require a full and honest reporting of incidents of violence and extreme disruption. And that would mean that if an administrator goes around telling you to shut up or threatening you so that you're not free to report, I think that there ought to be penalties. Unless we know the extent of this problem, we're never going to deal with it adequately.

Of course, parents know what the extent of it is. What is the number one problem? It's the problem of violence and order in the schools. They know it. The second big problem and obstacle we face is, what's going to happen if you put the kid out on the streets? It reminds me of a big campaign in New York City to get crime off the streets, and pretty soon they were very successful. They had lots of policemen on the streets, and they

drove the criminals away. The criminals went into the subways. Then they had a campaign about crime in the subways, and they drove them back up into the streets. So the business community, parents, and others will say, you can't just throw a kid out and put them on the streets. That's no good. But you could place some conditions on it. To return to school, students would have to bring with them a parent or some other grown-up or relative responsible for them. There is a list of ways in which we might handle it. But we can't say that we're going to wait until we build new schools, or build new classrooms, or have new facilities. The first thing you do is separate out the youngster who is a danger to the other youngsters.

Now, let me give an example. And I think it's one that's pretty close. We know that, when we arrest adults who have committed crimes and we jail them, jail will most likely not help those who are jailed. I don't think it does, and I don't think most people do. However, most of us are pretty glad when someone who has committed a pretty bad crime is jailed. Not because it's going to do that person any good, but because that person won't be around to do the same thing for the next ten or fifteen years. And for the separation of youngsters who are destroying the education of others, the justification is the same. I'm not sure that we can devise programs that will reach those youngsters that will help them. We should try. But our first obligation is to never destroy the education of the twenty or twenty-five or thirty because you have an obligation to one. Especially when there's no evidence that you're doing anything for that one by keeping him there.

Now, another big obstacle is legal problems. These are expensive and time-consuming. If a youngster gets a lawyer and goes to court, the principal or some other figure of authority from the school, usually has to go to court. They might sit a whole day and by the end of the first day, they decide not to hear it. And they come a second day, and maybe it's held over again. It might take three or four days for each youngster. So if you've got a decent-sized school, even if you're dealing with only two or three percent of the youngsters, you could spend your full time in court, instead of being in school. Well, I wouldn't want to do that if I were the principal of the school. And then what does the court do when you're all finished? The court says, well, we don't have any better place to put him, so send him right back. So, that's why a lot of teachers wouldn't report it, because nothing happens anyway. You go through all of this, you spend all of that time and money, and when you're all finished, you're right back where you started. So we need to change what happens with respect to the court, and we have two ideas that we're going to explore that have not been done before.

One of the things we need to do is see whether we can get parents, teachers, and even perhaps high school students to intervene in these cases and say, we want to come before the judge to present evidence about what the consequences are for the other children. When you go to court now, you have the lawyer for the board of education, the lawyer for the youngster, and the youngster. And the youngster, well, he's just a kid and his lawyer says, "This poor child has all of these problems." and the judge is looking down at this poor youngster. You know who is not there? The other 25 youngsters to say, this guy beats me up every day. If I do my homework, I get beat up on the way to school because he doesn't want me to do my homework. So instead of first having this one child standing there saying, "Poor me, let me back in school, they have kicked me out, they

have done terrible things to me." you also have some of the victims there saying, "Hey, what about us?"

You'll get a much fairer consideration if the judge is able to look at both sides, instead of just hearing the bureaucrat from the board of education. None of these board of education lawyers that I've met talk about the other students. They talk about the right of the board of education under the law to do thus, and so what you have is a humane judge who's thinking of the bureaucrat talking about the rights of the board of education as against the child. I think we need to balance that.

There's a second thing we are going to explore. We are all familiar with the fact that most of our labor contracts have a provision for grievance procedures. And part of that grievance procedure is arbitration. Now, you can take an arbitration award to court and try to appeal it, but it's very, very difficult to get a court to overthrow an arbitrator's award. Why? Because the court says, look, you had your day, you went to the arbitrator and you presented all your arguments, the other side presented all their arguments. In order for me to look into that arbitration and turn it over, you're going to have to prove to me that something in this arbitration was so terrible that we have to prove that the arbitrator was absolutely partial or that he broke the law. You've got to prove something outrageous. Otherwise, the judge is going to say, "You've had your day in court."

Why can't school districts establish a fair, inexpensive, due-process arbitration procedure for youngsters who are violent or disruptive? So that when the youngster goes to court, they can say, "Hey, we've had this procedure. We've had witnesses on both sides, and here was the determination. And, really, you shouldn't get into this stuff unless that you can show that these people are terribly prejudiced or totally incompetent or something else." In other words, we don't have to use the court.

We could create a separate school judicial system that had expertise and knowledge about what the impact is on students and teachers and the whole system of these kinds of decisions. Arbitration is a much cheaper, much faster system, especially if you have an expedited arbitration system. There is a system in the American Arbitration Association of expedited arbitration that says how many briefs you're allowed to write and how much time each side can take, and all of that. So we have a legal team and we're going to explore the notion of getting this stuff out of the courts and creating a system that is inexpensive and fair to the youngster and fair to the other youngsters in the school.

Let me point out that a lot of the tolerance for bad behavior is about to change, because we are about to have stakes attached to student academic outcomes. In other words, in the near future, we are going to have a situation where if you don't make it up to this point, then you can't be admitted into colleges. Or if you don't make it here, then you will not get certified for a certain type of employment. But in Chapter I schools, this is going to start very soon. There is a provision in the new Chapter One, now called Title I, and very soon, if Title I schools do not show a substantial progress for students, the school's going to be punished. And one of the punishments is reconstitution of the school. The school will be closed down, teachers will go elsewhere, students will go elsewhere, and the school will open up with a new student body, slowly rebuild. That's one of the punishments. There are other punishments as well. So if you've got a bunch of these disruptive youngsters that prevent you from teaching and the other students from learning, it won't be like yesterday, where nobody seems to care, the kids are all going to

get promoted anyway and they can all go to college, because there are no standards. There are no stakes.

Now, for the first time, there will be stakes. The teachers will know. The parents will know: hey, this school's going to close. I'm going to have to find a way of getting my kid to some other school because of the lack of learning that comes from this disruption. Teachers are going to say, hey, I'm not going to have my job in this school a couple of years from now because they're going to shut it down. I don't know what the rules are, what happens to these teachers, whether other schools have to take them or not. But we are entering a period where there will be consequences and parents and teachers are going to be a lot more concerned about achievement.

One of the other issues that has stood in the way of doing something here is a very difficult one to talk about in our society, and that's the issue of race. And whenever the topic of suspension or expulsion comes up, there's always the question of race. Cincinnati is a good example. The union there negotiated a good discipline code as part of a desegregation suit. And the question was raised, "Well, is there a disparate impact, with more minority kids being suspended than others?" And who are the teachers who are suspending them? Do you have more white teachers suspending African-American kids?

Our position on that is very clear. In any given school, you may have more white kids with infractions or you may have more African-American kids, or you may have more Hispanic kids. We don't know. I don't think anybody knows. But we handle that by saying, "Whatever your crime is and whoever you are, you're going to get exactly the same punishment." If we do that, I'm sure that the number who will be punished will end up being very, very small. Because, as a young kid, if you see that there is a consequence, you will change your behavior.

In Ohio, they have a minimum competency test. When they first put it out, a huge number of students of all ethnic groups failed the exam. Now, the exam is not a very tough exam, it's like a 7th or 8th grade exam for graduating high school, but nevertheless, about 55 or 60 percent passed it three years ago and 40 percent failed it. Now you've got up to 85 or 90 percent passing it. It shows that if you say you're going to stick to it, you're not going to graduate unless you learn this stuff, all of a sudden, all of these youngsters sit down and take it seriously.

The same thing will happen if you've got a discipline code you enforce. Youngsters, who now know there are no consequences, will behave differently once they know the consequences. There's no question about it. So we're not talking about suspending, expelling, or punishing the huge number of youngsters who are now engaged in this sort of behavior. What we're talking about is doing something that changes behavior substantially, so that what we end up with is a very, very small percentage of youngsters who really have some severe problems that you can't cope with. The overwhelming majority of youngsters, who become part of that peer culture because their leader tells them to do it, won't be doing it, because the leader is the kid who's going to be removed.

We have another very big problem, and we're going to try to deal with this in legislation. Under legislation that deals with disabled youngsters, we have two different standards. Namely, if a youngster in this class is not disabled and commits an infraction, you can do whatever is in that discipline code for that youngster. But if the youngster is

disabled and is in that same class (for instance, the youngster might have a speech defect), you can't suspend that youngster while all of the proceedings are going on because that's a change in placement. It might take you a year-and-a-half in court, and meanwhile that youngster who is engaged in some threatening or dangerous behavior has to stay there. This makes no sense. We have a lot of support in the Congress on this, and we think we have a good chance of changing this.

I was just given this clipping today, from the Washington Post (1/29/95) just a couple of days ago. It's a column by Courtland Milloy called "An Education in Self-Help:" "When seventeen-year-old Selima Nelson dropped out of the eleventh grade last year, her mother was understandably upset and wanted to know why. Selima explained that she had witnessed a stabbing and that a crew of girls involved in the crime had threatened to kill her if she talked to police.

Unable to find a safe haven for Selima in the DC Public schools, Edna Nelson ending up in enrolling her daughter in the GED program. Instead of receiving a high school diploma, Selima now has a special citation from the DC Board of Education congratulating her on 'overcoming tremendous obstacles for the sake of your education.' (And that's a quote. Mind you, the innocent kid had to leave school while the others stayed.) It's certainly not the way her parents planned it. But given the violent reality of life for some of today's adolescents and the chaos within the District's public school system, Nelson says it beats a death certificate from the city morgue.

"I received six summons for her to come testify in the case, but I just couldn't let her go," Nelson recalled. At first, Nelson said, she thought Selima was exaggerating the threats, which began after a street fight among some girls in October of 1993. "After all," Nelson said, "the fight was about almost nothing -- a remark one girl had made about another -- and Selima had known most of the girls for most of her life.

"I just couldn't see how girls who used to run in and out of my house, calling me Ma, could turn on her," recalled Nelson, who works as a program manager for academic affairs at the University of the District of Columbia. "Besides, when I had trouble with my girlfriends, we could talk it out."

"I'd say, Ma, you just don't understand," Selima recalled. "It's not like when you were a little girl. Don't you watch the news? They mean business these days."

Nelson said that she eventually realized that "these girls are worse than the boys," when Selima's refusal to testify against the accused perpetrators still didn't result in peace. "The problem wasn't so much with the girl who did the stabbing," Nelson explained. "It was with the girls who were trying to impress the girl who did the stabbing. They were willing to do anything to prove themselves, and by hurting Selima, they thought they could win points with the leader."

DC Police tried to assure Nelson that the stabber would be "put away" if Selima testified. But there was nothing they could do about the others, who were constantly approaching Selima with threats.

One night after a dance, Selima found herself encircled by the crew, who shot menacing stares at her. Feeling helpless and filled with fear, Selima went home and took a bottle of pills from her mother's medicine cabinet. She almost died of an overdose.

While Selima was in the hospital, Nelson kept trying to get her daughter transferred from the school where the crew hung out. But her efforts were in vain. "I was told by

several school principals that my daughter would not be welcome because they felt trouble would follow her and they didn't want any more of that." Nelson recalled. Nelson said several meetings to resolve the matter among adults, including teachers and parents of the girls involved, degenerated into the same kind of behavior exhibited by children. There were anger and accusations and, finally, no communication at all.

After being released from the hospital, Selima remained distraught and refused to go outdoors. The saving grace appeared to be daily phone calls from her 82-year-old grandmother, Eleanor Nelson, who had a sixth sense that something was wrong. Selima did not want her grandmother to know the truth, fearing that the bad news would be too much for her to bear.

So, Nelson said, she began threatening to tell the grandmother everything if Selima didn't summon up the courage to go back to school. It worked, and with help from the DC Board of Education member Sandra Butler-Truesdale, Selima was enrolled in the General Equivalency Diploma program in November.

Meanwhile, charges in the stabbing case were dropped because of Selima's refusal to testify, according to police. She was the only witness who was not involved in the crime, police said. The victim recovered from her wounds but reportedly has dropped out of school. She and Selima had been friends, but the two girls hardly speak to each other any more.

"I'm sorry about that, but I was just too afraid for my child," Nelson said. "All I had asked was for the police to protect my daughter, and they would not. I had asked the school system to transfer her to another school, but they wouldn't take the risk." Nelson said it seemed as if everybody was looking out for themselves, so she had no choice but to look out for her own.

Two weeks ago, Selima was admitted to the University of the District of Columbia, having completed her GED requirements. She now goes to class under the watchful eye of her mother and her colleagues. "This experience nearly killed me in more ways than one," Selima said. "I pray that it is over and that I'm finally on my way."

Well, that's the whole picture. And to return to the theme at the beginning, we have a cry for choice, a cry for vouchers, a cry for charters. It's not really a cry for these things. People really want their own schools, and they want their kids to go to those schools, and they want those schools to be safe and orderly for their youngsters.

It is insane to set up a system where we move 98 percent of our kids away from the two percent who are dangerous, instead of moving the two percent away from the 98 percent who are OK. We need to have discipline codes, we need to have a new legal system, we need to have one standard for all students. We need to have a system where we don't have to wait for a year or a year-and-a-half after a student has perpetrated some terrible and atrocious crime before that student is removed for the safety of the other students. How are we going to do this? We are going to do this, first of all, by talking to our colleagues within the schools. Our polls show that the overwhelming majority accepts these views.

The support of African-American parents for the removal of violent youngsters and disruptive students is higher than any other group within our society. Now very often when youngsters are removed it's because some parents' group or some committee starts shouting and making noise, and the school system can't resist that. Now I think that it's

time for us to turn to business groups, it's time for us to turn to parents' groups. When youngsters commit such acts, and when they've had a fair due-process within the system, we need to have a system of public support, just as we have in the community when someone commits a terrible crime. People say, send that person to jail, don't send him back to us. We need to have a lot of decent people within our communities, when you have youngsters who are destroying the education of all of the others, who will stand up and say, "Look, we don't want to punish this kid, but for the sake of our children, you're going to have to keep that one away, until that one is ready to come back and live in a decent way in society with all of the other youngsters."

I'm sure that if we take this back to our communities, and if we work on it, the appeal will be obvious. It's common sense. And we will save our schools and we will do something which will give us the basis for providing a decent education for all of our children.

QuESTLine A newsletter for school reform leaders from the Educational Issues  
Department of the American Federation of Teachers

March 1994, Vol. 2/No. 2

### Restoring Orderly Schools: What Stands in the Way?

"No matter what kind of standards and curriculum we set up," AFT president Albert Shanker wrote in a recent column, "if we allow one or two kids to stay in a class where they ruin learning for everyone else, we can forget about achieving world-class educational standards."

More than any other problem, the growing lack of student discipline, respect for teacher authority, and respect for the rights of other students to a productive learning environment threatens the academic mission of schools. The 1993 Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher shows that while the majority of teachers still feel safe in and around schools, 35 percent of teachers say real and threatened violence makes them less likely to challenge or discipline students, and 41 percent say these conditions make students less inclined to pay attention to learning. Among teachers who believe their school provides only a poor or fair education, these numbers soar to 68 percent and 62 percent, respectively.

Anecdotally, there's abundant evidence that disorder has undermined learning. We all know of classes -- even entire schools -- where homework is barely assigned because students simply won't complete it, and teachers have no effective authority to compel or cajole completion. And stories are legion of students, particularly in inner-city schools, who are unmercifully teased and harassed for making serious academic efforts.

The lack of student discipline will make it difficult to raise academic standards in other ways, as well -- by driving more good teachers out of the profession and by leading school districts to devote even bigger pieces of their already tight budgets to controlling students instead of improving academic programs. This school year alone, the New York City and Los Angeles school systems between them will spend more than \$100 million on security.

In this issue of QuESTLine we consider how to restore order to our classrooms and our schools.

It's easy for the issue of school disorder to become a horribly complicated discussion about poverty, social breakdown, violence in society, and all sorts of other things the schools can't control. Is there a way to focus the discussion so we can develop some immediate solutions?

That's the right question, because if we don't get an immediate handle on school disorder, a generation of students -- especially the most disadvantaged who are concentrated in

some of the most disorderly schools -- will lose their chance for a decent education. The schools can't solve the multitude of problems that breed violence -- and the community shouldn't expect them to. What schools can and must do is establish order within their walls.

Whatever their personal or social circumstances, students and their parents must understand that when children cross the school's boundaries, rule breaking and disorder won't be tolerated. This idea of responding to all offenses -- even minor ones -- underlies the philosophy of community policing: When small acts of disorder are tolerated, more and worse criminal behavior will follow. As Jackson Toby points out in the current issue of *American Educator*, a school that lets students wander the halls when they're supposed to be in class and fails to clean up trash and graffiti invites students to further test the limits of unacceptable behavior.

"When they succeed in littering or in writing on walls," Toby writes, "they feel encouraged to challenge other, more sacred, rules like the prohibition against assaulting fellow students. If the process goes far enough, students come to think they can do anything."

What would a discipline code based on such an approach look like?

The actual rules and consequences in a school that wants to tolerate no disruptions will differ from place to place because the code has to take into account local concerns and circumstances. The most successful discipline codes are developed through a cooperative effort that brings together a broadly representative group of school and community leaders to tackle the issue. What's important is that the code deals with small infractions as well as large ones; that it ensures that persistently disruptive students are quickly removed from class so they don't disrupt learning for everyone else; and that it is constantly and consistently enforced.

The Portland, Ore., school district, for example, has produced a handbook of student responsibilities and rights that identifies misbehaviors ranging from tardiness and indecent gestures to loitering, pulling fire alarms, and assault. An array of appropriate responses is established for each incident, ranging from such measures as a letter home or a conference with parents to exclusion from extracurricular activities, and on to suspension and placement in a special program.

Another place to look at is Cincinnati, which has adopted a tough discipline code that makes clear to students that certain behaviors won't go unpunished (see box on page 3). Some offenses, such as assaulting staff or other students, now bring automatic expulsion, while a new category of offenses was created -- including disorderly conduct that involves force, defacing property, and directing profanity at teachers and staff -- with penalties of three- to 10-day suspensions. In the past, administrators were allowed more discretion in how they dealt with such offenses.

In Texas, meanwhile, the Texas Federation of Teachers has called on school boards throughout the state to adopt tough "zero tolerance" policies against violence (a student who assaults a teacher, school employee, or another student would be expelled and placed in an alternative high-security setting); against profane and abusive language directed toward teachers or other school staff (offenders would be suspended for the rest of the school year); and against drugs and weapons on campus (possession would lead to criminal charges and permanent removal from campus).

What stands in the way of such policies? The law and its sympathy for students' rights?

The courts have granted students some due process protections, such as the right to be informed in writing about the offenses they're accused of and the right to defend themselves in a hearing in the case of long-term suspensions or expulsions. While certain such rights are appropriate, they have also placed a burden on schools. And too many administrators and school boards have exaggerated the procedural burdens and blamed them for the growing disorder in their schools.

What is often lost is the fact that schools are still well within their rights to exercise necessary control over students so that teachers can perform their duties; students who pose a danger to others or an ongoing threat of disrupting the academic process can be immediately removed.

The law and how it affects student discipline are complex issues that demand much more attention. We can hope that lawmakers and the courts will scale back some of the burdens on schools. But in the meantime, administrators -- and teachers -- need to become better informed and trained about the law so they can take advantage of the legal options that do allow them to enforce effective discipline.

Doesn't the law treat special education students differently?

The courts have created a double standard for the behavior of general education students and for special education students whose disruptive behavior is considered a manifestation of their disability. While schools can use their normal discipline procedures with special education students for many punishments, expulsions and suspensions of more than 10 days are defined as a change in a child's "placement" and thus require a more elaborate and burdensome effort to change the child's individual education plan. Nevertheless, schools aren't helpless in this area. Some have gone to court to obtain temporary restraining orders that keep violent and unmanageable students out of school, at least for a time. And, although cumbersome, it is possible to change a child's education plan if the parents and other school staff can work together to develop an appropriate alternative.

The AFT has made revision of the federal law that creates this double standard in student discipline a top legislative priority.

**New Jersey State Library**

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\* Public support for firm discipline is often lacking because communities -- for good reasons or bad -- don't trust the schools to treat their children fairly. Parents understandably want procedures in place that ensure that their children will be treated fairly and that schools will make reasonable efforts to address the institutional problems that can trigger many discipline problems, such as the teacher who simply lacks the skills to manage her classroom. And yet, if the procedures are interpreted or implemented in ways that make most teachers unlikely to enforce the school's rules -- if they have to spend huge chunks of time documenting student misbehavior and their own responses to that behavior in minute detail -- disorder will inevitably result. What's the right balance of procedures that guarantees both fairness to students and the authority of teachers to quickly remove students who are destroying the learning opportunities of the rest of the class?

\* A court-ordered settlement of a desegregation case in Cincinnati raises some troubling questions about the responsibilities of teachers. The settlement requires schools to maintain statistics indicating the race of the teacher and the student in every discipline case, suggesting that there may be racial discrimination involved in disciplinary actions. Moreover, teachers who don't discipline many students are to be rewarded, and teachers who do can ultimately lose their jobs. While a small percentage of teachers may generate discipline problems because of their poor classroom-management skills, and while teachers should share some responsibility for improving student behavior, they can't be assumed to be at fault every time they discipline a couple of students. Where do we draw that line?

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\* Related to questions about the mission of schools are concerns about the financial burden of educating the most disruptive students. Effective alternatives cost money, and every dollar spent on specially trained counselors and extremely small class sizes for disruptive students is a dollar that can't be used to improve a school's overall academic program. In addition, voters lately seem more inclined to support big budgets for corrections ahead of more money for schools, so it also makes financial sense to shift some of the burden for these students away from schools. Here again, we have to set some limits: What portion of their resources can schools be expected to spend on educating the most disruptive students?

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Reasonable people will disagree about exactly where to draw the lines in answering these questions. But lines must be drawn, and they must be drawn so teachers can remove unruly students from their classrooms and schools can maintain orderly environments. Otherwise, education can't take place. The schools will slip even more toward becoming merely custodial institutions: more students won't get an educational chance; and the pressure for vouchers will accelerate as motivated parents remove their kids from the classrooms and place them in private schools.

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QUESTLine A newsletter for school reform leaders from the Educational Issues  
Department of the American Federation of Teachers

March 1994, Vol. 2 No. 2

## Restoring Orderly Schools: What Stands in the Way?

"No matter what kind of standards and curriculum we set up," AFT president Albert Shanker wrote in a recent column, "if we allow one or two kids to stay in a class where they ruin learning for everyone else, we can forget about achieving world-class educational standards."

More than any other problem, the growing lack of student discipline, respect for teacher authority, and respect for the rights of other students to a productive learning environment threatens the academic mission of schools. The 1993 Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher shows that while the majority of teachers still feel safe in and around schools, 35 percent of teachers say real and threatened violence makes them less likely to challenge or discipline students, and 41 percent say these conditions make students less inclined to pay attention to learning. Among teachers who believe their school provides only a poor or fair education, these numbers soar to 68 percent and 62 percent, respectively.

Anecdotally, there's abundant evidence that disorder has undermined learning. We all know of classes -- even entire schools -- where homework is barely assigned because students simply won't complete it, and teachers have no effective authority to compel or ensure completion. And stories are legion of students, particularly in inner-city schools, who are unmercifully teased and harassed for making serious academic efforts.

The lack of student discipline will make it difficult to raise academic standards in other ways, as well -- by driving more good teachers out of the profession and by leading school districts to devote even bigger pieces of their already tight budgets to controlling students instead of improving academic programs. This school year alone, the New York City and Los Angeles school systems between them will spend more than \$100 million on security.

In this issue of QUESTLine we consider how to restore order to our classrooms and our schools.

It's easy for the issue of school disorder to become a horribly complicated discussion about poverty, social breakdown, violence in society, and all sorts of other things the schools can't control. Is there a way to focus the discussion so we can develop some immediate solutions?

That's the right question, because if we don't get an immediate handle on school disorder, a generation of students -- especially the most disadvantaged who are concentrated in

Some of the most disorderly schools -- will lose their chance for a decent education. The schools can't solve the multitude of problems that breed violence -- and the community shouldn't expect them to. What schools can and must do is establish order within their walls.

Whatever their personal or social circumstances, students and their parents must understand that when children cross the school's boundaries, rule breaking and disorder won't be tolerated. This idea of responding to all offenses -- even minor ones -- underlies the philosophy of community policing: When small acts of disorder are tolerated, more and worse criminal behavior will follow. As Jackson Toby points out in the current issue of *American Educator*, a school that lets students wander the halls when they're supposed to be in class and fails to clean up trash and graffiti invites students to further test the limits of unacceptable behavior.

"When they succeed in littering or in writing on walls," Toby writes, "they feel encouraged to challenge other, more sacred, rules like the prohibition against assaulting fellow students. If the process goes far enough, students come to think they can do anything."

What would a discipline code based on such an approach look like?

The actual rules and consequences in a school that wants to tolerate no disruptions will differ from place to place because the code has to take into account local concerns and circumstances. The most successful discipline codes are developed through a cooperative effort that brings together a broadly representative group of school and community leaders to tackle the issue. What's important is that the code deals with small infractions as well as large ones: that it ensures that persistently disruptive students are quickly removed from class so they don't disrupt learning for everyone else; and that it is constantly and consistently enforced.

The Portland, Ore., school district, for example, has produced a handbook of student responsibilities and rights that identifies misbehaviors ranging from tardiness and innocent gestures to loitering, pulling fire alarms, and assault. An array of appropriate responses is established for each incident, ranging from such measures as a letter home or a conference with parents to exclusion from extracurricular activities, and on to suspension and placement in a special program.

Another place to look at is Cincinnati, which has adopted a tough discipline code that makes clear to students that certain behaviors won't go unpunished (see box on page 3). Some offenses, such as assaulting staff or other students, now bring automatic expulsion, while a new category of offenses was created -- including disorderly conduct that involves force, defacing property, and directing profanity at teachers and staff -- with penalties of three- to 10-day suspensions. In the past, administrators were allowed more discretion in how they dealt with such offenses.

In Texas, meanwhile, the Texas Federation of Teachers has called on school boards throughout the state to adopt tough "zero tolerance" policies against violence (a student who assaults a teacher, school employee, or another student would be expelled and placed in an alternative high-security setting); against profane and abusive language directed toward teachers or other school staff (offenders would be suspended for the rest of the school year); and against drugs and weapons on campus (possession would lead to criminal charges and permanent removal from campus).

What stands in the way of such policies? The law and its sympathy for students' rights?

The courts have granted students some due process protections, such as the right to be informed in writing about the offenses they're accused of and the right to defend themselves in a hearing in the case of long-term suspensions or expulsions. While certain such rights are appropriate, they have also placed a burden on schools. And too many administrators and school boards have exaggerated the procedural burdens and blamed them for the growing disorder in their schools.

What is often lost is the fact that schools are still well within their rights to exercise necessary control over students so that teachers can perform their duties; students who pose a danger to others or an ongoing threat of disrupting the academic process can be immediately removed.

The law and how it affects student discipline are complex issues that demand much more attention. We can hope that lawmakers and the courts will scale back some of the burdens on schools. But in the meantime, administrators -- and teachers -- need to become better informed and trained about the law so they can take advantage of the legal options that do allow them to enforce effective discipline.

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Nevertheless, schools aren't helpless in this area. Some have gone to court to obtain temporary restraining orders that keep violent and unmanageable students out of school, at least for a time. And, although cumbersome, it is possible to change a child's education plan if the parents and other school staff can work together to develop an appropriate alternative.

The AFT has made revision of the federal law that creates this double standard in student discipline a top legislative priority.

But if the law is on the side of orderly schools, why are administrators so loath to exercise tough discipline?

It's certainly true that many administrators are squeamish about removing children from regular classrooms. As one example, according to a recent Detroit Federation of Teachers survey, 100 out of 400 DFT building representatives cited instances in which disruptive students were returned to classrooms, even after assaulting a teacher. An issue of the DFT newsletter in November contained a full page and a half of teachers' horror stories from the survey, ranging from a student being returned to class just one day after hitting his teacher, to students who brought knives to school being allowed to return after a short suspension, to students who had shot other students merely being transferred to a new school.

One key reason why administrators tolerate such unacceptable behavior is that when they push a harder line, they often encounter public opposition -- despite polls showing public support for doing something about discipline and violence in schools. Administrators hear from business people who don't want suspended students hanging around on the streets; from community and civil rights groups who fear that school discipline practices are arbitrary and racist because more minority students are suspended and expelled; from child advocates who worry that the disciplined child is not getting the help he or she clearly needs; and from parents who think schools aren't doing their job if they can't keep their students in line.

Regardless of what the law actually permits, if administrators can't count on community support for their disciplinary actions, they won't exercise their lawful authority. In fact, they're likely to create cumbersome procedures that discourage teachers from disciplining about the most egregious rule-breakers involved in the most airtight cases.

How can we win community support for orderly schools and ensure that tough policies aren't undone by public opposition?

There seem to be four key prerequisites -- some of which we've already mentioned -- that have to be in place for a tougher approach to succeed, both in schools and among the public:

- \* a student discipline code, developed with broad community input, that's regarded by the community as fair and appropriate.
- \* consistent enforcement of the code so that no group thinks its members and no parents think their children are being unfairly singled out for harsh punishment.
- \* a continuum of punishments that allow schools to respond quickly and appropriately to the whole range of student misbehavior and not use a sledgehammer approach across the

board. In-school suspension and Saturday detention, for example, might be more appropriate and productive than out-of-school suspension.

- \* A range of alternative placements for chronically disruptive students. These students don't belong in regular classrooms, but they don't belong out on the street, either. Schools need to develop settings that are more effective in meeting the needs and behaviors of this handful of students.

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Arriving at the public consensus necessary to put these elements into place isn't easy. If it were, many more districts would have working discipline policies. Coming to a consensus requires coming to grips with some tough questions that we've largely avoided -- questions about the role of schools, about what the community can expect from the schools, and about what the schools can expect from students. In this final section, we raise some of these tensions and questions that need much more discussion. Until the community and the schools deal with the hard choices behind these questions, political support for orderly schools will remain slippery.

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## **SCHOOL SAFETY: EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS**

(Information sources are cited in footnotes)

### ***Schools Under Siege***

Every school day, 160,000 students stay home from school because they are afraid. 1

One in eleven teachers has been attacked at school, and 95 percent of those attacks were committed by students. 2

Twenty-nine percent of teachers have considered leaving the profession because of violence and intimidation. 3

Nearly three million crimes occur on or near school grounds every year. 4

American parents are most worried about two school problems: violence and lack of discipline. 5

Seventy-two percent of all parents (and 89 percent of African-American parents) say drugs and violence were serious problems in their local schools. 6

Seventy percent of parents agree with the statement: "School violence has increased because students do not receive proper supervision at home." 7

Forty-eight percent of parents believe that: "Teachers cannot effectively teach their students because of the threat of violence in the schools." 8

A Newsweek magazine survey of 10-17-year-olds found that their greatest fear was being victimized by violence. 9

### ***The Gun Culture***

Every day, 135,000 juveniles carry guns to school. 10

One-quarter of the major school districts now use metal detectors. 11

Attendance rose dramatically in New York City schools equipped with metal detectors. 12

Nine percent of sixth through twelfth graders said they had shot at someone at some time.

--Eleven percent said they had been shot at in the past year.

--Fifteen percent said they had carried a gun within the past 30 days. 13

A recent U.S. Justice Department survey of male, inner-city high school students found:

--One of every five high school students owns a gun.

--Almost 70 percent of students said there was a gun at home.

--Forty-two percent said they had friends who carried guns.

--Forty-five percent of the students said they had been threatened with a gun or had been shot at on the way to or from school. 14

More than one in three young people in this country today have concluded that their "chances of living to a ripe old age are likely to be cut short because of the threat of my being wiped out from guns." 15

### *An Unwelcome Trend*

More than three out of every four schools nationwide -- urban, suburban, and rural -- reported student-on-student violence during the 1992-93 school year. 16

Of 700 cities responding to a National League of Cities survey on school violence, 38 percent cited a noticeable increase in school violence over the past five years. 17

Violence and gang-related activity is the top current concern of urban school leaders, with 82 percent noting this issue. 18

### *The Devastating Effects of School Disorder*

Forty-one percent of teachers say they have lost a lot or fair amount of teaching time because of discipline problems. 19

Thirty-five percent of public school principals indicate that their ability to maintain order and discipline in their school is limited to a great or moderate extent by a lack of or inadequate alternative programs for disruptive students. 20

Students who do not achieve academically are more frequently involved in all types of confrontational behavior. 21

Fifty-one percent of students agree with the statement: "Students often break the rules in my school because they know they can get away with it." 22

Fifty-eight percent of third through twelfth grade public school students believe their school has a problem with vandalism such as graffiti or broken doors and windows. 23

## *Crime and Classrooms*

In the last five years, violent acts committed by juveniles have increased by 124 percent.  
24

Seventy percent of all adult inmates are high school drop-outs. 25

Of the money spent on curbing violence, 94 percent is spent on corrections. Only four percent is spent on prevention. 26

The United States spends more than \$3.2 billion annually to lock up approximately 100,000 children. The average cost per child is more than \$30,000 a year (more than a year's tuition at Harvard or Stanford), according to the Joyce Foundation. 27

Juvenile delinquency officials say that 90 percent of the youths will be re-arrested within two to three years for a similar or worse crime. 28

Graduation ranks for the states with the ten highest violent crime rates: 29

VIOLENT CRIME RATE	GRADUATION RANK
1. New York	43rd
2. Florida	48th
3. California	41st
4. Maryland	28th
5. Illinois	15th
6. South Carolina	43rd
7. Louisiana	50th
8. Georgia	47th
9. Michigan	36th
10. New Mexico	33rd

The American Federation of Teachers is committed to making public schools safe and orderly havens for teaching and learning. AFT pioneered the concept of "Zero Tolerance" requiring automatic expulsion for drugs, weapons, crimes and violence on school grounds. AFT and its locals are working with schools to raise academic standards for students and lower tolerance of unacceptable behavior. For more information about the AFT's efforts and policies, contact John M. Abeigon, at 609-393-2500.

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## Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker

There is a great deal of concern about school violence these days -- and for good reason. Though some people maintain that the media greatly exaggerate the problem, those who work in schools in New York City or Chicago or Baltimore know better. And recent polls and surveys show that a majority of parents and other citizens agree with teachers about its seriousness. However, there is considerable confusion about how to deal with violence in the schools.

A high percentage of parents see the issue in matter-of-fact terms. Schools are places where kids are supposed to learn. Youngsters who consistently threaten the learning -- and even safety -- of others undoubtedly need help, but they have no business in the classroom.

But there are some well-meaning educators and policymakers to whom this is not self-evident. For them, the schools' most important mission is to "save" the violent and disruptive kids.

A report of the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) is a good example of this kind of thinking. "Schools Without Fear" says that schools should be "advocates for all children," but it focuses almost exclusively on the needs and "rights" of disruptive students.

The report tells us that schools should restructure themselves to accommodate violent and disruptive youngsters; they should provide special programs and curricula to teach teachers and other kids how to cope with violent students. Above all, schools should bend over backwards not to exclude violent or disruptive students or even, in most cases, put them out of class. The report acknowledges the value of alternative programs but says that students should be placed there only when other possibilities have been exhausted and with a view to returning them as quickly as possible to their regular classes. The basic formula is: We must not give up on these kids, no matter what.

This sounds very good -- and it is quite right that turning violent and disruptive kids out onto the street will not help them; quite right that they need special programs and alternative facilities. But the kids who are forgotten in this picture are the vast majority of students, who don't make trouble. Why do we place so much value on youngsters who come to class with knives or guns and so little on their classmates who want to learn -- or would give it a try if their classes were not disrupted by violence or fears of violence? What kind of message does it send when youngsters who are chronically disruptive get all the attention? And what does it mean for the future of public education?

John Cole, president of the Texas Federation of Teachers, recently attended the annual Scholastic "Summit on Youth Violence," and what he heard led him to ask some of the same questions.

"The consistent theme," he writes in his report on the conference, "is that society's responsibility is to the perpetrators of violence, and that we should lavish our attention on those who commit the violence, in an effort to save those individuals, without regard to the effect that attention has on other, nonviolent members of society.

"The message," Cole continues, "came through time and time again. Those who commit crimes, abuse drugs or disrupt school are crying out for help, and we should rush to help them. My problem with this line of logic is that if young people learn that the way to obtain help is to strike out in acts of violence, that will become the normal method for seeking special help in our society. By rushing to help these young people, are we not encouraging others to emulate their behavior?"

Cole does not think we should abandon violent young people, but he thinks that absolving them from responsibility is ultimately destructive: "We need programs to work with them, and we should try to salvage as many as we can. However, if we assume that society is to blame for all their problems and responsible for developing solutions, we take away from them the responsibility for their own lives. Once a person assumes that he has lost control of his destiny, he has no difficulty in justifying any act because he feels no responsibility for the consequences."

Cole's conclusion: "If the philosophy espoused at this conference wins the debate over the role of schools in our society, public schools will become the place where we try to salvage lost lives, and private schools will become the place where people send well-behaved children who want an education."

Most ordinary parents and citizens understand this -- it explains why a lot of people who have supported public education are turning, in frustration, to vouchers. And it's time the well-meaning people who believe that schools should put violent kids first realize that they are helping to destroy public education.



New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association

**NJPSA TESTIMONY BEFORE THE ASSEMBLY  
TASK FORCE ON ADOLESCENT VIOLENCE**

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1998**

The New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association believes that every child deserves a safe school environment in which to learn. Our members, the principals, assistant principals and supervisors of this state are directly responsible for ensuring that a safe school environment is established and maintained in every school in New Jersey. Often, this is not an easy task. We face obstacles created by our legal and educational systems, diminishing resources, parental attitudes, time constraints, and limited placement options in dealing with violent and disruptive students. For these reasons, we are pleased that this Task Force has been established and we welcome this opportunity to present our experiences and concerns.

Nothing does more to undermine the educational process for the vast majority of students than violent and disruptive behavior by a handful of students. Intellectual discussions about meeting rigorous, world class educational standards have little meaning for students who fear for their safety. Our members have seen first hand the negative physical, emotional, and educational impact that occurs when students are victimized by violence. We are committed to doing everything possible to stop such incidents from occurring in New Jersey schools.

It is important, however, to resist the temptation to label all public schools as being in a state of "crisis" on school violence. In fact, the most recent NJDOE report on Student Violence, Vandalism and Substance Abuse showed a reduction in all three categories over the previous year. Nationally, the vast majority of violent crimes against juveniles, including 99% of homicides, are committed outside of schools. Generally speaking, 95% of our student population never engages in any violent behavior. For many students living in communities with high levels of crime, the public schools represent a safe haven from violence.

Of course, even one incident of school violence is too many. But public misperceptions about the extent of school violence are counterproductive to devising effective strategies for addressing the problems that do exist. Unfortunately, the fears of parents have been fueled in some respects by national media coverage of several recent shooting tragedies that occurred

outside of New Jersey. These unfortunate incidents have led some in the media to over generalize about the state of violence in all schools thereby increasing potential concerns.

We urge the Task Force to use this opportunity to ensure an informed public debate - one that resists hysteria and accurately portrays the current state of violence in public education. In our view, such a debate will recognize and build upon those strategies that are working well in public schools and address the obstacles school leaders face in addressing school violence and the needs of all students. It will recognize that public schools do not operate in a vacuum, and provide strategies for encouraging parents, law enforcement and other key players to fulfill their role in addressing this societal problem.

Our goal today is not to flood you with statistics on juvenile violence. Instead, we would like to present, through the experiences of one representative school principal, the nature of the problems faced by school administrators in dealing with violent and delinquent students. We also wish to present our recommendations for changes in the current system to enhance school responsiveness and effectiveness in working with our students.

At this time, I am pleased to present Frank Palatucci, the principal of Highland Regional High School.



New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association

**NJPSA Recommendations For Reform  
Presented To The Taskforce On  
Adolescent Violence**

**1. Communication, Clarification and Collaboration between Schools and the Courts:**

- Review and expand the rules and statutes concerning the sharing of information between schools and the courts;
- Draft a Memorandum of Agreement between the courts and schools similar to the Memorandum that exists between law enforcement and school officials. Such a Memorandum should cover the relative jurisdictions of the courts and schools in dealing with delinquent students, the rules for sharing information, joint strategies and preventative programs and strategies to foster a better understanding of the roles and constraints of our respective systems;
- Review the Pennsylvania system of municipal court hearings of juveniles accused of committing less serious offenses. Consider a New Jersey pilot.

**2. School - based reforms:**

- Support increased funding for alternative schools to expand placement options;
- support programs and services to students that make schools a safe haven for our youth. (Peer leadership, conflict resolution, police officer programs, after-school programs, etc.)
- Begin to collect data on the impact of the disciplinary provisions of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in order to prepare our state's lobbying efforts for the next reauthorization. Keep our congressional delegation informed about the consequences of this statute.
- Support S-220 (Sacco, Palaia) authorizing random drug testing of student athletes as a strong deterrent to students from using and/or distributing drugs.
- Initiate and support legislation fostering gun control and empowering school officials and law enforcement to effectively address gun possession in or near school. (S-1212 (Singer, Cafiero))

October 27, 1998

## II. SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS UNDER THE REAUTHORIZED IDEA

### A. SIGNIFICANT DECISIONS CONCERNING DISCIPLINE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS:

1. Goss v. Lopez, 419 U.S. 565 (1975)

Due process requires, in connection with a suspension of 10 days or less, that the student be given oral or written notice of the charges against him, and if he denies them, an explanation of the evidence the authorities have and an opportunity to present his version.

2. Honig v. Doe, 484 U.S. 305 (1988)

The Court will not write a "dangerousness" exception into the statute. The "stay put" provision is unequivocal. The 10-day respite gives school officials an opportunity to invoke the aid of the Courts which are empowered under the Federal statute to grant any appropriate relief.

### B. SIGNIFICANT STATUTES CONCERNING DISCIPLINE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS:

1. New Jersey Zero Tolerance for Guns, N.J.S.A. 18A:37-7, et seq. (Note: N.J.S.A. 18A:37-8: the terminal sentences "The provisions herein shall be construed in a manner consistent with 20 U.S.C. § 1400, et seq. Nothing herein shall be construed as prohibiting the expulsion of a pupil.

### C. INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT AMENDMENTS OF 1997 (IDEA):

1. Section 615 of 20 U.S.C. 1400, et seq. established new procedural guidelines requiring the discipline of handicapped students.
2. Section 615(j) - General Rule requires maintaining the current educational placement pending proceedings for all educationally handicapped students "unless parties agree otherwise".
3. Section 615(k) - Change of placement to an "APPROPRIATE INTERIM ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL SETTING", another setting or ten (10) days of less suspension.

Interim alternative educational setting must:

- a. enable child to continue to participate in general curriculum, although in another setting.
  - b. continue to receive those services and modifications that will enable child to meet goals set out in IEP, including services and modifications described in the current IEP.
  - c. include services and modifications designed to address the behavior described in paragraph (1) or paragraph (2) so that it does not recur.
  - d. School personnel can order ten (10) days or less suspension.
  - e. No manifestation determination review necessary if removal or suspension is for ten (10) days or less.
  - f. Parent can contest even a ten (10) day suspension and seek emergent relief.
4. More than ten (10) day suspension:
- a. Only for weapons, drugs and behavior which is substantially likely to result in injury to child or others.
  - b. Not more than forty-five (45) days.
  - c. Setting must be determined by "IEP Team".
  - d. Interim setting must:
    - i. Continue general curriculum.
    - ii. Continue services to meet IEP.
    - iii. Must receive behavior modification to address the incident in question.
  - e. Manifestation determination review (MDR) must be completed.
  - f. Full parent notification with procedural safeguards.
5. Expedited hearing:
- a. Applies to either ten (10) day or forty-five (45) day placement.
  - b. School district has burden of proof by substantial evidence that the current placement will result in likely harm or injury to child or others.
  - c. Appropriateness of current placement must be considered.
  - d. Reasonable efforts to minimize risk of harm.

# News Release



New Jersey State Department of Education  
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Trenton, NJ 08625

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Contact:

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For Release:

Immediately  
June 4, 1997

## Schools Report Decline in Incidents of Violence, Vandalism

New Jersey school officials have reported fewer incidents of vandalism and violence in the public schools during the 1995-96 school year, according to the annual report, *Violence, Vandalism and Substance Abuse in New Jersey Schools*. The report, required by law, is made each year by the Commissioner of Education to the Education Committees of the Senate and General Assembly.

"This year's report is the first to use a revised reporting system incorporating the use of new reporting forms, clearer definitions of offenses, and a videotape about the system that was used to train local school staff," said Commissioner of Education Leo Klagholz at today's regular monthly meeting of the State Board of Education. "As a result, we now have more reliable data and can begin to track trends in school violence and vandalism with greater confidence."

"It is clear that we are headed in the right direction," said Barbara Anderson, assistant commissioner for the department's Division of Student Services. "One of the keys to students achieving the Core Curriculum Content Standards is a safe learning environment. It is an affirmation of the emphasis we have placed on the implementation of our Safe Schools Initiative that the incidents of violence and vandalism have decreased."

The following are highlights from the 1995-96 report:

- Over the past five years, the number of incidents of vandalism has declined by nearly one quarter to fewer than 9,000.
- The decline of 2,084 (13 percent) in incidents of violence was the first reported since 1989-90.
- Incidents of substance abuse (3,761) leveled off in 1995-96, after having increased in each of the past four years.

The revamped reporting system includes new categories that in later years will serve as a baseline for comparison. The categories and incidents reported are as follows:

- *Firearms* -- 57 incidents of possession and 12 incidents of assault with a firearm were reported.
- *Removal from school* -- 87 students were removed to an alternative setting and 12 were expelled for weapons-related offenses.
- *Bias* -- 214 incidents of bias offenses were reported.
- *Staff as victim* -- 1,067 incidents with staff as victims were reported.

The report also includes an update of activities carried out under the Safe Schools Initiative adopted by the State Board of Education in December 1994. Components of the multifaceted initiative range from support of "zero tolerance" legislation allowing schools to vigorously discipline students involved in weapons offenses on school grounds to the establishment of a statewide network of county alternative education programs for students who exhibit violent or disruptive patterns of behavior that interfere with the education of other students. In addition, the Department of Education has published a guide, *Student Codes of Conduct*, which assists schools by encouraging them to establish and implement policies on positive student behavior.

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JULY 1998

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# School House Hype: School Shootings and the Real Risks Kids Face in America

ELIZABETH DONOHUE,  
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*The Justice Policy Institute is a project of the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice*



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# School House Hype: School shootings and the real risks kids face in America.

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By Elizabeth Donohue, Vincent Schiraldi, and Jason Ziedenberg\*

"THIS RECENT SERIES OF KILLINGS IN OUR SCHOOLS HAS  
SEARED THE HEART OF AMERICA ABOUT AS MUCH AS  
ANYTHING I CAN REMEMBER IN A LONG, LONG TIME."  
— President Bill Clinton, July 7, 1998.

"YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN IT'S GOING TO BE ONE OF YOUR  
KIDS." — A parent, interviewed after the Springfield,  
Oregon school shooting.

## Introduction

**D**uring the 1997-98 school year, the American public was riveted by the images: small town and suburban schools taped off by police-lines, paramedics rushing to wheel tiny bodies away on gurneys and kids being carted off in hand-cuffs. As the national news media poured into Pearl, Mississippi; West Paducah, Kentucky; Jonesboro, Arkansas; Edinboro, Pennsylvania and Springfield, Oregon; the magnified coverage of these highly unusual crime stories turned into what some news outlets described as "an all-too-familiar story" or "another in a recent trend." Even a non-fatal shooting in Richmond, Virginia garnered national headlines in June because it occurred in a high school hallway during final exams.

\* Vincent Schiraldi and Jason Ziedenberg are, respectively, the Justice Policy Institute's director and researcher. Elizabeth Donohue is an intern with the Justice Policy Institute.

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In the following months, policy makers reacted abruptly to what they perceived to be a huge swing in public opinion: a moral panic swept the country as parents and children suddenly feared for their safety at school. As one parent recently put it: "It scares me to death that I'm sending my child to a school...and in light of getting an education, I may end up burying her."<sup>1</sup> A middle school principal from a community that has experienced a 26 percent drop in juvenile crime — a community that hasn't had a murder arrest of an adult or juvenile in two years — warned a reporter after the Jonesboro shooting, "It could happen any place."<sup>2</sup>

But it doesn't happen "any place." Table 1 illustrates that even in the communities in which these tragic shootings have occurred, they are atypical events. Eighty-five percent of all the communities in America recorded no juvenile homicides in 1995, and 93.4 percent recorded one or no juvenile arrests for murder. Three times as many juvenile homicide victims are killed by adults as by other juveniles, and only about 3 percent of U.S. murders consist of a person under 18 killing another person under 18.<sup>3</sup>

*As many kids were killed in just 2 days of family violence and abuse as were killed in the 5 publicized school shootings.*

	1997	1996	1995	1994	1993	1992	1991	1990
Springfield, Oregon	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Jonesboro, Arkansas	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0
Edinboro, Pennsylvania	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Pearl, Mississippi	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
West Paducah, Kentucky	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	0

1 Ann O'Hanion and Susan Levine, "Local Schools Shaken by Killings," *The Washington Post*, March 26, 1998.  
"Ending School Violence," National Public Radio's Morning Edition, June 5, 1998.

2 Ibid.

3 Federal Bureau of Investigation (1996) *Crime in the United States: Uniform Crime Reports*. Washington D.C.: US Department of Justice.

4 Table was compiled by calling the state Uniform Crime Bureaus for each relevant town, community or county.

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The best data on the very specific threat of school-associated violent death reveals that children face a one in a million chance of being killed at school. Other research shows that the number of school shooting deaths have declined slightly since 1992. To give the reader a sense of the idiosyncratic nature of these events, the number of children killed by gun violence in schools is about half the number of Americans killed annually by lightning strikes.<sup>5</sup>

### Child Deaths in America in Context, 1997-98

40	The number of people (including some adults) that were shot and killed in school during the academic year, 1997-98.
11	The number of children shot and killed in Pearl, Mississippi; West Paducah, Kentucky; Jonesboro, Arkansas; Edinboro, Pennsylvania; and Springfield, Oregon.
11	The number of kids who died in two days from family violence (child abuse or neglect at the hands of their parents or guardian). <sup>6</sup>
8	The number of children who die from gunfire every day. <sup>7</sup>
3,024	The number of children who die from gunfire every year. <sup>8</sup>
90%	The percentage of children under age 12 who are killed by adults. <sup>9</sup>
75%	The percent of youths between ages 12-17 who are killed by adults. <sup>10</sup>

This is not to say that our children face no threats to their safety in society or in schools. However, with all the media coverage these school shootings have received, we have not witnessed the kind of reporting or analysis needed to give worried parents or concerned policy makers the context by which to judge the safety of our institutions of learning.

Rather than providing context, the media's linking of these shootings as "a trend" has tended to exacerbate people's fears about the safety of their children and youth in schools.

5 According to "1996 Annual Summaries," by the National Climatic Data Center, Asheville, North Carolina, 1997. 85 people were killed by lightning in 1997.

6 A conservative figure of the number of children killed by abuse and neglect is 2,000 per year. "A Nation's Shame: Fatal Child Abuse and Neglect in the United States." A Report of the U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Washington, D.C., 1995.

7 The U.S. Mortality Detail File, National Center for Health Statistics, Division of Vital Statistics, Rockville, MD, 1995.

8 Ibid.

9 Snyder, Howard N., Sickmund, Melissa and Fox Yamagata, Eileen (1996). Juvenile offenders and victims: 1996 update on violence. Washington, D.C.: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

10 Ibid.

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The result is that misdirected public policy is being generated to safeguard the schools, even though the real threat may lie elsewhere. To remedy the purported "crisis" of classroom violence, politicians have proposed solutions ranging from posting additional police officers in our schools, to eliminating any minimum age at which children may be tried as adults, to expanding the death penalty to juveniles. The Governor of Virginia suggested ending school-based after-hours programs due to the violence, even though a wide spectrum of criminologists, educators and law enforcement officials say that these programs constitute vital crime reduction and community enhancing strategies.

Likewise, concern among school administrators has reached such a fever pitch that children are now being expelled or suspended from school for making fake threats to harm the musical band "The Spice Girls" and "Barney" the purple dinosaur.

The authors agree that there are many threats facing this nation's children and youth that could be alleviated through public policy reform. However, as the risk of school-associated violent death is overblown, we are witnessing a tragic misdirection of attention and resources. This report will seek to catalog the real risks children and youth face in our schools. With this proper perspective in hand, we then hope to refocus the debate over our children's safety and to alleviate the real sources of violence facing our communities and kids.

### *Research Methodology*

In this report, we sought to answer two primary research questions:

1. Is there a trend towards increasing violent school deaths in America?
2. What is the overall incidence of crime, and particularly homicides, in America's schools versus outside of schools?

*Children are now being expelled or suspended from school for making fake threats to harm the musical band "The Spice Girls" and "Barney" the purple dinosaur.*

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Utilizing data and research from the United States Department of Education, the United States Department of Justice, the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports, the Centers for Disease Control, the National School Safety Center, the National Safe Kids Campaign, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Center to Prevent Handgun Violence and the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the Justice Policy Institute sought to get a comprehensive picture of crime and shootings in school as compared to non-school violence, and violence in and out of school over time. As the reader can discern from the report, no one data source gives a complete picture of the school killing issue, but together they offer a more complete analysis than any one or two data sources could.

*Between 1990 and 1995 — homicides in America dropped by 13 percent according to the FBI, but coverage of homicides on the ABC, CBS and NBC evening news programs increased by 240 %.*

Unfortunately, no reliable, scientific counts are maintained regarding the true number of children killed in America's schools each year. The closest academic survey in existence is the data compiled annually by the National School Safety Center since the 1992-93 school year. The Center's data requires two cautionary notes — one definitional and one methodological — with respect to the goal of discerning the true number of children killed in schools and whether there is a trend over time.

In conducting their count, the Center uses a broad definition of "school related violent deaths" which are any deaths, whether they are suicides or homicides and whether they are deaths of adults or children, caused by adults or children in, near or on the way to school. As such, some deaths are included in the count simply because they occur on school property. An example of this kind of methodological bias is a case the Center counted occurring on May 29, 1998 at Stranahan High School in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Nichole Weiser, a 26 year old speech diagnostician was shot and killed in the high school's staff parking lot by Michael Gramming,

## SCHOOL HOUSE HYPE

her jealous boyfriend, who then turned the gun on himself.<sup>11</sup> A similar killing/suicide of two adults on school grounds occurred in Hoboken High School in New Jersey in February. As such, of the 40 "school-related violent deaths" which occurred in the 1997-98 school year, these adult deaths counted as 4, or 10 percent of the total.

Secondly, the Center relies on newspaper clippings as its school related violence death data source. Obviously, the place an issue occupies on the media's radar screen may affect whether a homicide appears in a newspaper or not. Between 1990 and 1995, for example, homicides in America dropped by 13 percent according to the FBI, but coverage of homicides on the ABC, CBS and NBC evening news programs increased by 240 percent.<sup>12</sup> If evening news stories were used as a means of counting homicides in America during that time, a miscount of colossal proportions would have occurred. As such, particularly with regard to the 1997-98 data, what the Center may be counting is a change in reporting of school killings, rather than a change in school killings themselves. The research we collected from the Centers for Disease Control also used newspaper clippings as its counting mechanism, and has employed a broad definition for school deaths.

In both the Students' Reports of School Crime: 1989 and 1995 (U.S. Departments of Education and Justice) and Violence and Discipline Problems in U.S. Public Schools, 1996-97 (U.S. Department of Education) much broader assault and violent crime definitions are used than are generally utilized by the FBI and national law enforcement agencies. The reader should be cautious lest these data create the misperception that violent crime is higher in schools than in the community where the FBI data is the standard.

*If evening news stories were used as a means of counting homicides in America during that time, a miscount of colossal proportions would have occurred*

11 National School Safety Center. Total School-Associated Violent Death Count: July 1992 to Present. Updated June 29, 1998. [www.nssc.org](http://www.nssc.org).

12 Center for Media and Public Affairs. "Network News in the Nineties: The Top Topics and Trends of the Decade." *Media Monitor*, Volume XL, July/August 1997.

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*There is less than one in a million chance of suffering a school-associated violent death defined as both homicides and suicides.*

We raise these limitations not as a critique of the integrity or intentions of the aforementioned research efforts, which should be credited for attempting to creatively make sense of an important phenomenon. Insofar as the data offered herein present a lower rate of homicides and violence in school than is expected, it should be remembered that even these data may present an inflated portrayal of "school associated violent deaths."

**Significant Findings**

*Based upon a review of the available data it is apparent that the recent school shootings were extremely idiosyncratic events and not part of any discernible trend. Ironically, they may have received magnified coverage because of the rarity of these tragic events rather than their typicality. Several recent studies have noted the extremely uncommon occurrence of school related suicides and homicides.*

I. Centers for Disease Control's Study of "School-Associated Violent Deaths in the United States, 1992-1994"

Published in the Journal of the American Medical Association in 1996, this 2 year joint study led by the Centers for Disease Control, *School-Associated Violent Deaths in the United States, 1992-94*, found that the estimated incidence of school-associated violent death was 0.09 per 100,000 student-years.<sup>13</sup> In other words, the researchers found that there is less than one in a million chance of suffering a school associated violent death defined as both homicides and suicides. In contrast, according to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, there are 3.8 murdered juveniles per 100,000 juveniles within the US population — about 40 times the in-school death rate.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 1729.

<sup>14</sup> Sickmund, Melissa, Snyder Howard N., and Poe-Yamagata, Eileen. (1997). *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1997 Update on Violence*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. 1. NB: The 3.8 figure only includes homicides of juveniles, compared to the .09 figure which includes homicides and suicides.

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Furthermore, over the 2 year period, 1992-94, 105 school-associated violent deaths were identified; 76 of which were student deaths. The researchers estimated that 0.62 percent of homicides and suicides among school-aged children were school-associated violent deaths.<sup>15</sup> As such, more than 99 percent of violent deaths of children occurred outside of school grounds during that period.

### II. National School Safety Center's Count of "School Shootings"

According to the data collected through news accounts by the National School Safety Center at Pepperdine University, the number of school associated violent deaths has declined slightly since they began to collect

data in 1992. Their data suggest a 27.3 percent decline in school-associated violent deaths - including homicides and suicides - from the 1992-93 school year through the current school year. Overall, the 40 deaths this school year make it about normal for the 6 year study period.

Again, it warrants noting that even this relatively small figure of 40 school associated violent deaths is larger than the number of children killed in America's schools because it also includes suicides and killings of adults in schools, even when those killings occurred at the hands of other adults.

### III. National Center for Education Statistics' Violence and Discipline Problems in U.S. Public Schools, 1996-97

A recent study published by the National Center for Education Statistics also evidences the relatively safe and stable environment that American public schools provide. During the spring and summer of 1997, a representative sample of principals of 1,234 public

**Table 2**  
Count of School Shooting Deaths

1992-93	55 deaths
1993-94	51 deaths
1994-95	20 deaths
1995-96	35 deaths
1996-97	25 deaths
1997-98	40 deaths <sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Hachur, 1731.

<sup>16</sup> National School Safety Center. *Total School-Associated Violent Death Count: July 1992 to Present*. Updated June 15, 1998. [www.nssc1.org](http://www.nssc1.org). Percentage calculated by the Justice Policy Institute. It is expected that this is a close estimate to the ultimate number of 1997-98 school year deaths because school is recessed for the summer and the 1997-98 counting period ends in August, 1998.

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elementary, middle and high schools in all 50 states and the District of Columbia was surveyed to measure the state of school violence and discipline problems. One of the target areas of the survey included the incidence of crime and violence that occurred in public schools throughout the 1996-97 academic year. Ninety percent of the principals surveyed reported no incidence of serious, violent crime defined as murder, suicide, rape or sexual battery, robbery, or physical attack with a weapon. Furthermore, none of the principals interviewed reported any murders or suicides. The authors did note that the sample was too small to reliably estimate that no suicides or murders were committed in schools nationwide because they are "relatively rare events."<sup>17</sup> (emphasis added).

In this same study, 80 percent of schools reported 5 or fewer crimes of any kind (serious or petty) in their schools during the 1996-97 school year.<sup>18</sup> Approximately 1,000 crimes were reported per 100,000 students in our nation's public schools; 950 of the crimes per 100,000 students were not serious or violent acts and only 50 crimes per 100,000 students were serious or violent crimes, as defined by the researchers.<sup>19</sup>

*Eighty percent of schools reported 5 or fewer crimes of any kind (serious or petty) in their schools during the 1996-97 school year.*

The amount of crime differed according to the instructional level of the school. Secondary schools were found to have a higher incidence of crime than elementary schools. 21 percent of high schools reported one or more serious crimes as compared to 19 percent of middle schools and only 4 percent of elementary schools.<sup>20</sup>

The location of schools was also noted by the authors as a significant variable in determining the incidence of crime within schools. City or urban schools were much more likely than other schools to report serious violent crime with 17 percent of city principals reporting at

17 U.S. Department of Education. +  
18 Ibid., 10.  
19 Ibid., 9.  
20 Ibid., v.

56x

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least one serious crime as compared to 11 percent of urban fringe schools, 8 percent of rural schools, and 5 percent of suburban/town schools reporting at least one serious crime.<sup>21</sup> These statistics flatly contradict the idea that the recent series of publicized shootings are an indication that rural schools are suddenly under siege from a new crime wave, as some articles suggested after the incidents in Springfield, Jonesboro, Pearl and Paducah.<sup>22</sup>

### IV. Student Opinion: Students' Reports of School Crime: 1989-1995, Metropolitan Life Survey

According to a joint study by the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice, students perceive their schools as having low rates of crime. Their survey of students ages 12-19, entitled *Students' Reports of School Crime: 1989-1995*, found only a 0.1 percent change in victimization from 14.5 percent in 1989 to 14.6 percent in 1995.<sup>23</sup> What is particularly significant about this finding is that it covers the years 1992 and 1993, a time when overall juvenile arrests for homicide, rape and serious crimes peaked. Apparently, this crime wave did not wash over America's schools. Over that same time period, violent victimization among students increased from 3.4 percent to 4.2 percent.<sup>24</sup> The study did conclude that between 1989 and 1995, "more students were exposed to certain problems at school," because they were more likely to report violent victimization and exposure to drugs, gangs and guns.<sup>25</sup>

In the Metropolitan Life Survey of *The American Teacher 1993: Violence in America's Public Schools*, the nationally representative sample of students responded overwhelmingly that they believed their schools were safe. Eighty-nine percent of urban students

*Eighty-nine percent of urban students responded that they felt either very safe or somewhat safe at school while 90% of suburban and rural students responded that they felt very safe or somewhat safe in school.*

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>22</sup> Fields, Gary, and Paul Overberg. "Juvenile homicide arrests rate on rise in rural USA." USA Today, March 26, 1998, 11A.

<sup>23</sup> Chandler, i.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 12.

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responded that they felt either very safe or somewhat safe at school while 90 percent of suburban and rural students responded that they felt very safe or somewhat safe in school. Again, this survey was conducted at a time which, we now know, was the national peak of violent juvenile arrests this decade.<sup>26</sup>

*Fifty percent of  
childhood  
unintentional  
shooting deaths  
occur in the home of  
the victim, and  
approximately 40%  
occur in the home of  
a friend or relative.*

These findings closely match readily accessible, but often overlooked, data published in *The Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics*. In the 1996 edition of this encyclopedia of crime statistics, it shows that the proportion of students who reported being threatened or injured by a weapon at school was actually lower in 1996 than it was in 1976.<sup>27</sup>

#### V. Hours and Location of Victimization

Finally, another indication that schools remain a relatively safe haven for our children is the fact that *90 percent of all childhood deaths occur in and around the home and not in school*. According to data compiled by the National Safe Kids Campaign, unintentional shootings among children are most likely to occur at times when children are unsupervised.<sup>28</sup> Peak hours for these shootings are not during school hours but rather after school between 4 and 5 p.m.; during the late afternoon; on weekends; over the summer months of June, July and August; or during the holiday seasons of November and December.<sup>29</sup> Fifty percent of unintentional childhood shooting deaths occur in the home of the victim and approximately 40 percent occur in the home of a friend or relative.<sup>30</sup>

26 Metropolitan Life: Survey of the American Teacher, 1993. *Violence in America's Public Schools*. Project Directors Robert Leisman and Katherine Binnus. New York, New York: Louis Harris and Associates, Inc., 1993: 11.

27 Maguire, K., Pastore, A.L., "Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics 1996," Bureau of Justice Statistics, The Department of Justice, Washington: D.C., 1997.

28 Weister, DW et al. Parents' belief about preventing gun injuries to children. *Pediatrics*, 1993; 89: 906-14, 1995.

29 Ibid.: Choi E., et al. Deaths Due to Firearms Injuries in Children. *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, 1994.; Center to Prevent Handgun Violence. "Child's play: a study of 266 unintentional handgun shootings of children." CPHV, Washington D.C.: 1988 July 2.

30 Ibid.

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Another way of looking at the context of the threat children face during the day is to measure admissions to hospital emergency rooms for "violence related" injuries. In a 1997 U.S. Department of Justice survey of over a million "violence related" admissions to hospital emergency rooms only 6 percent of the recorded "places of occurrence" were said to be a school. By contrast, 48 percent of the injuries occurred at home, 29 percent at work and 15 percent on the streets.<sup>31</sup>

### *Policy Responses*

A number of recent public policy initiatives have been linked to the perception of rising school killings. These policy initiatives indicate that our concern with school shootings to the neglect of other child killings may be focusing attention in the wrong place. These policy responses emanate from every level of government: from the school house to the state house to the White House.

#### *1. Ending Afterschool Programs*

In response to the non-fatal shooting in Richmond, Virginia, Gov. James Gilmore (R) actually proposed reducing the number of nighttime athletic events to prevent an increase in violence. "The shocking pattern of violence that is terrorizing our nation's schools must end," he said. "Students cannot learn and teachers cannot educate in an unsafe environment."<sup>32</sup> In spite of the fact that far more crime is committed outside of school and that schools remain safe havens for students in crime ridden neighborhoods, Gilmore suggested that the violence warranted ending afterschool programs.<sup>33</sup>

*In spite of the fact that far more crime is committed outside of school, and that schools remain safe havens for students in crime ridden neighborhoods, (Virginia Governor) Gilmore suggested that the violence warranted ending afterschool programs.*

31 Rand, Michael R. "Violence-Related Injuries Treated in Hospital Emergency Departments." Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington D.C.: 1997.

32 Baker, Donald P., and Spencer S. Hsu. "Two Are Shot at School in Richmond." The Washington Post, June 16, 1996, A1, A16.

33 —. "After Gunfire, Richmond Faces Fears." The Washington Post, June 17, 1996, B3.

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A wide spectrum of criminologists, teachers and community advocates agree that afterschool programs and events are necessary to create a safe environment because most juvenile offenses occur after school hours. In fact, data from the FBI's National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) show that 1 in 5 violent crimes committed by juveniles occur in the 4 hours following the end of the school day (i.e., between 2 p.m. and 6 p.m.).<sup>34</sup> These programs offer a voluntary safety net that can catch many children at risk and also provide enriching experiences and programs that are key to healthy childhood development.

### 2. *Police Officers in Schools*

President Clinton's reaction to the recent school shootings has been to request that Attorney General Janet Reno and Education Secretary Richard W. Riley find ways for the federal government to provide more police officers in schools. The President also endorsed Representative James H. Maloney's (D-CT) bill to increase the number of law enforcement officers available to deal with crime prevention and school delinquency problems.<sup>35</sup> "I urge Congress to pass his bill as a back-to-school special for America's children," he said.<sup>36</sup> Yet data compiled in this report have shown that more than 99 percent of juvenile homicides are committed outside of schools. The vast majority of youth homicide victims are killed by adults. With a small and stable-to-declining rate of school killings, it is difficult to understand how federal legislation adding more law enforcement officers to schools is a priority except as a response to generally shared misconceptions about homicides in schools.

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### 3. *School Expulsions and Suspensions*

The climate of fear generated by the coverage of these school shootings has been used to justify actions against students by school officials that previously would have been unthinkable. The concern

<sup>34</sup> Siekmund, 26.

<sup>35</sup> "Clinton Wants More Police Assigned to School Brats," *The Washington Post*, June 17, 1996, A12.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

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surrounding these school shootings are leading directly to the expulsion and suspension of students for minor, sometimes even non criminal acts.

- Two elementary school students in Tyrone, Georgia were suspended for composing a list of people they wanted to harm. Targeted victims on the list included the Spice Girls and Barney, the purple dinosaur.<sup>37</sup>
- In Parsippany, New Jersey, a 7th grader was discovered to have a list entitled "People I Would Want Gone," of 20 classmates and teachers. The 13 year old was placed under house arrest and later undergo psychiatric treatment as a result.<sup>38</sup>
- In Mesa, Arizona, 8th grader Raymond Granillo was suspended from school for 9 days for writing a story about an escaped convict who kills a teacher, 2 students and a janitor. The mother of the writer said, "They're overreacting. They're paranoid because of everything that's going around. That's the bottom line."<sup>39</sup>
- A 15 year old from Ocean County, New Jersey was arrested for drawing he made of a man in the cross hairs of a rifle sight. The Pinelands Regional High School freshman was charged with making terroristic threats and was also suspended from school for at least 10 days.<sup>40</sup>
- In North Smithfield, Rhode Island, three 5th graders were suspended for the rest of the school year because they were overheard talking about how to plant a bomb in the building. No explosives or bombing plans were found.<sup>41</sup>

*One survey of a computer database of newspaper stories found that between May 1 and July 1, 1998 there were a total of 216 stories of separate incidents of student suspensions and expulsions.*

A survey of a computer database of newspaper stories found that between May 1 and July 1, 1998 there were a total of 216 stories of separate incidents of student suspension and expulsions, ranging from children writing notes that say, "kill, kill, kill," to a child being suspended for opening up a school computer with a pen-knife.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>37</sup> ~~Editor~~. "Responding to trouble at Metro Schools." The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. May 30, 1998. D 07.  
<sup>38</sup> ~~Managers~~. "Ominous wish list sparks fear in school." The Star-Ledger. June 2, 1998. p. 19.  
<sup>39</sup> ~~Editor~~. "School Suspends Student who penned murder tale." The Dallas Morning News June 1, 1998. 14A.  
<sup>40</sup> ~~Editor~~. "Teen Suspended After Arrest for Gun Drawing." The Bergen Record. May 30, 1998. A05.  
<sup>41</sup> ~~Editor~~. "Smithfield Suspends 5th Grader Over Bomb Threat." The Providence Journal-Bulletin. May 30, 1998. A3.  
<sup>42</sup> This was completed on Westlaw, a legal and legislative database that includes a sampling of newspapers from across the country. The words used were "suspend, expel, school and threat." Given that this does not include all the newspapers in the country, and the fact that these cases could (or should) be covered by the press, this count understates the number of children who may have been expelled during this period.

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Setting aside concerns for freedom of speech, most educators and criminologists would warn against using expulsions and suspensions as a crime control mechanism, unless there is an authentic threat. If anything, kicking kids out of school for pranks will place them in harm's way and may contribute to more intense forms of delinquency as they miss out on education and become social pariahs.

### 4. *Trying Kids as Adults*

Just hours after the Jonesboro, Arkansas shooting, Senator Orrin G. Hatch said, "If we don't pass a juvenile crime bill, the country's going to see more and more of these things [school shootings]." <sup>43</sup> Hatch (R-UT), co-author of the Senate's Juvenile Crime Bill (S-10) with Senator Jeff Sessions (R-AL), has proposed altering current law to jail youthful offenders, including those charged with acts such as running away from home, with adult offenders. The Senate is poised to do this, even though there is a higher recidivism rate among juveniles who are jailed with adults, and juveniles in adult institutions are 5 times more likely to be sexually assaulted than those kept in juvenile institutions. <sup>44</sup> Ironically, in the same legislation, both Senators beat back a spate of gun control measures aimed at reducing accidental and purposeful shootings by youth.

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The Senate juvenile crime bill is just one example of major criminal justice reform being proposed to remedy the "crisis" of school shootings that will fundamentally change the nature of children's rights. Others include:

- A bill in Texas which proposes that 11 year olds who commit serious crimes be eligible for the death penalty. "Current juvenile laws could not have anticipated violent crimes being committed by children this young," <sup>45</sup> said sponsor State Senator James Pitts.

<sup>43</sup> Weisman, Jonathan. "Shooting revives drive to toughen juvenile justice." The Baltimore Sun. March 25, 1996. 12A.

<sup>44</sup> Ziesenberg, Jason and Schiraldi, Vincent. The Risks Juveniles Face When They Are Incarcerated With Adults. July 1997.

<sup>45</sup> Tempierton, Robin. "First, we kill all the 11-year olds." Pacific News Service. May 27, 1996.

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- A bill before the Arkansas legislature that would allow a juvenile court judge to decide whether children of any age should be tried as adults. Introduced after the Jonesboro shooting, State Senator Ted Thomas' bill could see pre-teenage children serving 40 year sentences. "I've gotten more comments from people who...say, 'Just fry the little b\*\*\*\*,' he says."<sup>46</sup>

While the idea of executing the 11-year-old suspect in the Jonesboro school shooting may fit someone's sense of vengeance, it will have dubious, if any, crime control impact. In reality, homicides committed by children under age 13 occur less frequently today than in 1965.<sup>47</sup> According to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports, there were 25 homicides committed by juveniles under age 13 in 1965<sup>48</sup> compared to 16 homicides committed by juveniles under age 13 in 1996 – a 36 percent decline.<sup>49</sup> Again, the real threats facing our children won't be dealt with by putting them in jail, or putting them to death.

*While most children killed by a gun are killed by an adult, kids are killed in gun accidents at 23 times the rate they are killed in schools*

### Conclusions and Recommendations

A much more pressing issue for those concerned about the safety of children in America is the threat of everyday gun violence. As many as 8 kids a day are killed by guns. While most children killed by a gun are killed by an adult, kids are killed in gun accidents at 23 times the rate they are killed in schools. According to the Centers for Disease Control, children in America are 12 times more likely to die from guns than children in 25 other industrialized countries, including Israel and Northern Ireland.<sup>50</sup> While killings by juveniles with guns quadrupled from 1984 to 1994, non-gun killings by youths stayed the same.<sup>51</sup> Put another way, the entire increase in juvenile homicides between 1984 and 1994 was gun-related.

<sup>46</sup> Satter, Linda. "The Kids and the Courts." *The Arkansas Democrat*. Tuesday, June 30, 1998.

<sup>47</sup> FBI. *Uniform Crime Reports for the United States*. 1965. Washington, D.C. U.S. Government Printing Office. 1966..

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

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While America has a homicide rate among its adults and juveniles which is still far too high, the good news from this report is that our nation's school children are well protected from homicides during school hours. Despite the recent shocking school shootings throughout the country, America's public schools remain very safe. The likelihood of becoming a victim of a school-associated violent death is slightly less than one in a million. The chance of a child being violently killed by an adult in their own home or somewhere other than school is far, far more likely. Statistically, as both students and principals have reported, crime does not dominate our schools. Rather than search for policies to make already safe schools safer (maybe, to the point of being overly restrictive on individual freedom and further alienating our youth), we should seek to channel the public energy created by these shootings to take guns out of the hands of children and adults and to provide constructive opportunities for children during peak crime hours.

### *Recommendation 1:*

#### *Expand After-hours programs in schools*

Ironically, one of the most cost-efficient and effective crime prevention strategies policy makers could adopt would be to have kids in America's schools. Contrary to Governor Gilmore's proposal to eliminate afterschool programs and athletic events in order to reduce crime, one way to reduce criminal activity among our youth is to provide enriched afterschool activities. Again and again studies have found that afterschool recreational programs which aggressively recruit youth and sustain participation in their programs hold excellent potential to prevent juvenile delinquency within the community.<sup>52</sup>

*Rather than search for policies to make already safe schools safer...we should seek to channel the public energy created by these shootings to take guns out of the hands of children.*

52. *Guide for Implementing the Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent and Chronic Juvenile Offenders*, ed. James C. Howell, Washington, D.C.: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, June 1995, 95.

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Another example of effective afterschool programs which provide an opportunity for youth to resist being drawn to delinquent behavior are the "Beacon," or full-service, schools operating successfully in New York. As children are increasingly raised in families with both parents working or by single working parents, crime data reveal that the hours between the end of school supervision (3:00 pm) and the beginning of parental supervision (8:00 pm) are peak juvenile crime hours. For many of these children, the alternative to closing schools immediately after the school day ends is leaving children alone on the streets.

Full-service schools address this dilemma by productively occupying children during those peak crime hours in either educational, recreational or counseling activities. By leaving currently existing school open late - which in some communities are the most resource-rich settings in the neighborhood - full-service schools are able to provide a relatively low cost response to juvenile crime that does not restrict children's freedom, provides them with recreational and educational opportunities, and enhances our communities in the process.<sup>53</sup>

*We can do little to stop the 3 dozen child shooting deaths that occur in schools until we take steps to deal with the 3,000 children who die from gunfire every year.*

### **Recommendation 2: Restricting Mass Gun Sales**

We can do little to stop the 3 dozen child shooting deaths that occur in schools until we take steps to deal with the 3,000 children who die from gunfire every year. The issue of taking guns out of the hands of our children (and some adults) is yet another area that has been inadequately addressed nationally, despite both the staggering data on killing of kids and the idiosyncratic school killings. While school shootings in rural communities are misperceived as typical of incidents involving children and guns, most killings of and by juveniles occur in urban areas, too often with illegal weapons.

<sup>53</sup> "Quality Child Care and After School Programs: Powerful Weapons Against Crime." Fight Crime: Invest in Kids. Washington, D.C. 1998.

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A "one-gun-a-month" law which prohibits mass gun sales has proven to be a very effective means of reducing homicides by and of juveniles. Such laws take guns out of the hands of both kids and adults by preventing mass gun purchases and resale on the black market.

For example, since both Virginia and Maryland have instituted "one-gun-a-month" laws, homicides committed by juveniles in Washington, D.C. have dropped by 63 percent, a drop explainable by no other demographic or policy-related factor.<sup>54</sup>

Prior to the enactment of Virginia's one-gun-a-month law, Virginia was a leading supplier of guns seized in homicides in Massachusetts. Since Virginia enacted its law, it is no longer a leading supplier of guns seized in Massachusetts crimes, and the odds of tracing a gun seized in a crime in Massachusetts to a Virginia gun dealer have declined by 72 percent.<sup>55</sup> After Virginia's law went into effect, Boston enjoyed a two-and-a-half year period without a juvenile being shot to death.<sup>56</sup>

*The data contained in this report show that the public and policy makers are done a great disservice if they are led to believe that school houses are a primary locus for juvenile homicides in America.*

**Recommendation 3: Context in the Media**

America cannot set rational public policy in the important area of child killings without better information from the media. No one expects the press to ignore tragic killings of kids, whether they occur on school grounds or in other places. But the data contained in this report show that the public and policy makers are done a great disservice if they are led to believe that school houses are a primary locus for juvenile homicides in America.

<sup>54</sup> Crime and Justice Trends in the District of Columbia. Prepared by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency. Washington, D.C.

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As other school shootings occur and/or the juveniles involved in the previous shootings are brought to trial, the public discourse could tremendously benefit from the presentation of a broader perspective on juvenile killings. To provide greater context to such cases, the media should at least explain: that school killings are not on the increase; that such killings make up a small minority of all killings of and by juveniles; that the specific communities in which these killings occurred generally experience very few killings by juveniles; that children are 3 times more likely to be killed by adults than by other juveniles; and that there is no trend toward younger and younger juvenile killings. These data are readily available, and would tremendously benefit the public's understanding of youth crime.

The recently publicized school shootings could provide a long overdue call to action for America to productively occupy our children and keep them away from guns, but only if our elected officials look in the right place for solutions.

This research was funded by a generous grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The authors would like to thank Jeffrey Butts, Ph.D. of the Urban Institute; Lori Dorfman, DrPH, University of California, Berkeley, School of Public Health; Mike Males, Doctoral Student at University of California, Irvine, School of Social Ecology; and Randall Shelden, Ph.D., University of Nevada, Las Vegas, School of Criminology, for their review and comments on this analysis.

The authors would also like to thank Christine Gralow, Jill Herschman, Amy Rossi, Eli Segal, Wendy Shang and Cheryl Upshaw for their assistance in preparing this report.

*The Justice Policy Institute is a project of the non-profit Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice. For more information on "school house hype," including research links, articles about the shootings and links to crime prevention programs that work, please visit our website at [www.cjcj.org](http://www.cjcj.org) or call us in Washington, D.C. at (202) 678-*



New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association

**NJPSA TESTIMONY BEFORE THE ASSEMBLY  
TASK FORCE ON ADOLESCENT VIOLENCE**

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1998**

My name is Frank W. Palatucci, Jr. I have been an educator for twenty-eight years. I taught English in the Philadelphia Public School System for nearly ten years. I have nineteen years of experience as a building administrator. I have spent fifteen years of that time as a high school principal in three separate districts in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. I am speaking today on my own behalf and on behalf of the Camden County Secondary Principals and Supervisors Association.

I am currently in my seventh year as principal of Highland Regional High School, which is located in Blackwood, NJ in Camden County. Highland is a comprehensive suburban high school of 1,730 students in grades nine through twelve. The building houses 300+ students more than it was designed to hold. Our district is the only one in New Jersey currently on a staggered schedule to accommodate this overcrowded situation.

I am also a parent. All three of my children have attended and continue to attend public schools. The concerns I am expressing to you today are from both vantage points.

I ask you to think of one of your children, one of your grandchildren, or some youngster whom you love. I would like you to think of them in school, eager to learn, struggling with their studies, maturing, learning how to cope with the complexities of new found relationships, getting involved with activities, and all the other things – good and bad – that our young people have to confront each day in school.

Now I would like you to picture them in class, in the hallways, in a lavatory, or in some isolated area of the building with another student in the same school. Place them with a youngster whom, for whatever reason, cannot or will not abide by the same rules of law and common decency that should define us as a society. Would you feel comfortable having your loved one sit next to a violent-prone youngster, an arsonist, a strong-arm thief, a drug dealer, a weapon's offender? Who should be there to protect your loved one? Who should be able to insulate the school and your child from other students and situations like this? The obvious answer is the school's teachers and administrators.

Let me now tell you that the current climate in our state makes it more and more difficult for me, or any other educator, to adequately establish and maintain a safe environment for everyone in the school. Let me make it clear that the teachers and the vast majority of our students want to come to school to exercise their rights to teach and to learn. They are not chaotic madhouses. However, they are frustrated and thwarted by a juvenile justice system that seems to have the scales heavily tipped in favor of the juvenile offender. To be fair, much of this is by default, not by design.

Generally speaking, the juvenile justice system was established sometime around the turn of the century in order to permit judges to handle juvenile matters differently without subjecting youngsters to the experiences in adult court. It was felt at the time that it was inappropriate for juveniles to appear in court like any other adult. The belief was that the juvenile justice system should be more rehabilitative and nurturing in nature rather than punitive.

Whether or not this ever worked is open to question. There is no question that it does not work now. It has evolved into a system that serves no one particularly well. Recent data from the NJ Assistant Attorney General's Office indicate that juveniles (26% of all violent crimes; 33% of all non-violent offences) committed 59% of all crime in New Jersey in 1997. This does not mean that 59% of all the state's juveniles are committing crimes. It does mean, however, that the small number (5%-10%) of juveniles who engage in criminal activity is more active than ever. It also means that the types of crimes committed by these juveniles have become more serious, heinous, and horrible. One only needs to pick up a newspaper to find ample examples of which I speak.

What is not so obvious is what has happened to a system that is no longer equipped, or may never have been equipped to handle the volume and the magnitude of these cases. Because Family Courts are swamped, and because the resources and alternatives are scarce, judges are literally "sentencing" dangerous juvenile criminals back to school. In effect, many schools like mine have become "holding tanks" for young criminals because there is nowhere else to put them.

What exacerbates the problem even further is the slew of new regulations concerning special education students, which literally set up a dual standard of discipline for students for whom the rules simply do not apply any longer, hamstringing educators' efforts to establish and maintain control and order.

Let me give you some specific examples from last school year:

- A student was expelled from our district after being caught in the act of selling drugs. The judge ordered him back to school. After the court hearing, our superintendent had to appear before the judge to explain why the district took this action, and why the district would not readmit the student.
- A student was apprehended with a realistic imitation firearm. The district expelled him. Again, a judge ordered him back to school. Again, after the court hearing, our superintendent had to appear to justify the actions we took.
- Last fall, a student arrived in my office with his court appointed guardian. They had a letter from a Family Court judge instructing that he be "... enrolled in the school district where he resides and begin classes immediately." No other information was presented. After investigating, I learned that within ten days of our meeting the student had been arrested for assault and battery on his mother and assault and battery on a police officer. While in police custody, he attempted to commit suicide. He was sent to the crisis center, appeared in court on the Friday prior to my meeting, placed on probation, and sent to me.

- On a Friday last spring in early April, a juvenile and his court appointed guardian appeared in my office with the same directive to "...be enrolled...and begin classes immediately." Upon investigating the situation I learned that the student had not been in school at all since the previous May – nearly a year. He had been removed from his previous school for having phoned a bomb threat from the school's cafeteria. He also had a string of assaults on his record, one involving the school's principal. He appeared in court on these charges and also a weapon's offence and a shoplifting charge.

I arranged with the guardian to look at summer school and tutoring for this individual, to which they agreed. I attempted to contact the judge that day. He was unavailable. On Monday, I received a call from a court official inquiring why the juvenile was not in school. I explained my concerns.

Within an hour a court order was faxed to me by another Family Court judge. It commanded me to enroll the student immediately or be in contempt of court. In effect, I was under threat of arrest and fine for my reluctance to enroll this person in my building, ignoring the very real threat that he posed to himself and others. The judge who issued the order characterized me as a "cowboy" to our Board's solicitor. I have never met nor spoken to the man.

Examples are not unique to Highland or to South Jersey.

- A student adjudicated delinquent for aggravated sexual assault is returned to the same school attended by his victim. The answer? Move the victim to another school.

Something is radically wrong. Schools are being asked to maintain and preserve basic societal traditions and expectations that society as a whole has either abandoned or failed to do in any other arena. While these may be extreme examples, they are not isolated.

From a principal's perspective, the following conditions have contributed to this:

- Lack of judicial understanding and respect for school responsibilities and resources.
- Lack of communication from court with school officials prior to decisions being rendered, and the resultant negative effects that judicial orders can have on the overall instructional programs in a school.
- School safety issues and at-risk students' criminal behavior, including those who may be classified in special education programs.
- The creation of "anti-heroes".
- Both existing and proposed special education regulations, that make it difficult, and in some cases impossible, to apply the same standards of behavior to classified students. We have, in effect, established a dual standard. Many students realize that the rules simply do not apply to them.

I would also like to offer some suggestions:

- Require that school principals be contacted through the prosecutor's office concerning any court decisions that direct a student to return to school, whether or not the school or district is directly involved in the adjudication. Students should never be returned to school without notice.
- Judges can assign guardianship. However, all educational plans and services should be left to the discretion of the districts. Existing laws and due process rights protect the students and their parents/guardians up to and including the Commissioner of Education.
- Require regular meetings between county principal associations and Family Court judges.
- Expand the range of juvenile crime that can be heard at the municipal court level by empowering local judges. Models exist in Pennsylvania and other states.
- School cases in Family Court should receive priority treatment and/or be "on call" to prevent the loss of valuable instructional time from witnesses – students and teachers.
- Provide resources for alternative schools both inside and outside of districts.
- Review current special education regulations that hamstring school officials' ability to effectively discipline special education students within their existing policies.
- Oppose any changes to special education regulations that further restrict the ability of school officials to effectively discipline classified students.

There is a risk that testimony like this can paint a distorted view of schools. I am not a zookeeper. Highland is a great school with the same sorts of problems that others encounter. Most of our experiences are positive and productive. Most schools work despite rumors and distorted reports to the contrary.

We owe it to our children to protect them and ensure their rights to an education in a violence free environment. We also owe it to at-risk juveniles to meet their needs. The dwindling resources with which schools have to cope make that more and more difficult. "Sentencing" them to school is not the answer. At-risk students have plenty of advocates. I believe that I am one of them.

However, I also believe that I am an advocate for the majority of students who are trying to get the best education that they can in my building. I believe that I am an advocate for teachers and staff members of my building who do their best to provide the kinds of experiences in and out of the classroom that result in solid students and, ultimately, productive citizens. We need your help to make this happen.

I thank you for the opportunity to address you. I also wish to thank the following individuals for their support and guidance:

Debra Bradley, NJPSA  
Congressman Rob Andrews  
Senator John Mattheussen  
Assemblymen George Geist  
Assemblyman Gerry Luongo  
Mr. David Anderson, Administrative Office of the Courts, Office of Public Affairs  
Mr. Daniel Phillips, Administrative Office of the Courts, Office of Public Affairs

Judge Joseph Nardi, Camden County Family Court  
Dr. Daniel Mastrubono, Camden County Superintendent of Schools  
Dr. Gerald Killeen, Superintendent - Black Horse Pike Regional School District

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## TEST YOUR AWARENESS

First read the sentence enclosed in the box below

FINISHED FILES ARE THE RE-  
SULT OF YEARS OF SCIENTIF-  
IC STUDY COMBINED WITH THE  
EXPERIENCE OF MANY YEARS.

Now count the F's in the sentence. Count them only once and do not go back and count them again.

111x

Good morning. It is my pleasure to appear before this task force and, hopefully, I can contribute to your efforts to deal with the problem of adolescent violence.

I'm Jack DeTalvo, Superintendent of the Perth Amboy City Schools. I have thirty years of combined teaching and administrative experience in the New Jersey Public Schools. In addition to serving as Superintendent of one of the state's Abbott districts, I have also served as Superintendent of one of our state's high achieving "J" districts. I want to emphasize that my comments this morning are from the perspective of an "education practitioner." I am not a school psychologist or social scientist; therefore, my remarks reflect my own views based on my limited experience and not a comprehensive study of this problem.

In the Assembly Resolution that established this task force, it was anticipated that you would examine the root causes of violent or threatening behavior of young people and look at some possible solutions to this problem. Let me speak briefly to both of those issues.

- ◆ There is no doubt in my mind that a lack of proper parental supervision is a primary contributing factor to the type of behavior that we are concerned about here. As you know, this problem transcends socio-economic status with far too many parents who view the public schools as a "fluff and fold" industry. They want to drop their kids off at 4 or 5 years old and pick them up after High School graduation. In poorer urban communities, this lack of parental supervision is aggravated by those conditions commonly associated with poverty (i.e. financial problems, dysfunctional families, drug abuse etc.). In wealthy suburbs, you're likely to find some parents spending more time working on their tennis game or tan than they do supervising their children. Quite frankly, I don't know what you or the public schools can do to make parents take responsibility for the supervision of their children. In fact, I believe that government is actually making the problem worse by attempting to substitute technology for parental supervision. Mandating devices like T.V. guardian, the V-Chip, web filters, smart gun technology, metal detectors, and closed circuit video is absolutely the wrong approach. I can introduce you to enterprising twelve-year-olds who will find ways to circumvent any of these technologies in a day or two. More importantly, however, I believe we are sending a very bad message

with these well - intentioned efforts. We are giving those parents who don't or can't take an active role in supervising their child, a great excuse to justify their neglect. We are also setting a standard that says we expect kids to exhibit this type of bad behavior. Whatever you do to address this problem of violent adolescent behavior, I would urge you not to continue the trend of letting parents off the hook by substituting governmental regulation for parental supervision.

- ◆ Another major contributing factor to violent or threatening behavior by young people is the failure of parents, our institutions, and adults in general to hold young people accountable for their actions.

Just recently, I read a couple of news reports about adolescents who were caught illegally possessing firearms in school. These students will probably end up classified as emotionally disturbed and attending a special school at a cost to the taxpayer as high as \$50,000 a year. This is not an effective deterrent to such behavior by other young people nor is it a just punishment for breaking the law and endangering others. Students who possess deadly weapons should be mandatorily incarcerated!! Adults who do not take reasonable measures to keep firearms out of the hands of children should also face mandatory incarceration. Students who act in a violent or threatening manner must be punished, and severely. Parents, or other adults, who contribute to those actions must also be held accountable.

By letting certain behaviors go unpunished or punished with a mere "slap on the wrist," we are teaching young people that they may literally be able to get away with murder.

Certainly, trying more juveniles as adults when they commit serious crimes would be a step in the right direction. However, I'm not sure that the Legislature has any control over that determination.

- ◆ I want to point out to this task force that I did not initiate my appearance here this morning. Several people who have visited the Perth Amboy Schools urged me to attend this hearing and speak a little about our situation in Perth Amboy. The Perth Amboy Schools provide an exemplary safe and orderly environment for learning

and, when I say exemplary, I mean exemplary compared to any school district not just urban schools. Obviously, many factors contribute to our success in Perth Amboy and we realize that no district is immune when it comes to random violence. However, we believe we've taken some steps to reduce that potential and I'll share those with you.

- ◆ We still have a good number of teachers, administrators, police officers, and citizens in the City of Perth Amboy who are not afraid to confront young people when they are misbehaving. All too often adults see young people, in and out of school, involved in some inappropriate conduct and they look the other way. We need to support teachers, police, and citizens who care enough to question kids when they see something that looks suspicious or out of the ordinary.
  
- ◆ Another thing we do in Perth Amboy is punish kids severely for any offense against another person or property. I've attached a copy of our long-term suspension policy for your information. We've had this policy for several years and we use it. I can assure you that, even though we don't apply this policy often, it does serve as a deterrent to violence, threatening behavior, graffiti and theft in our schools. The policy has not been challenged legally but certainly it could be. I would ask you to consider legislation that would guarantee that such policies would withstand any legal challenge. In addition, I would ask you to investigate legislation that would allow that such policies could be applied to classified youngsters. As you probably know, a separate standard exists for discipline of special education students by law. This must change! No student should expect to be held to a lower standard of conduct regardless of his or her handicap or learning disability. In the real world the law applies equally to everyone. School rules should be the same!
  
- ◆ Another lesson we've learned in the public schools is that 99% of our serious problems occur entering school, at dismissal, during lunch, or during the change of classes. The reason is obvious i.e. large numbers of students interacting. We, in the public schools, know that these are the times that we must intensify supervision and watch students closely to ensure the safety of all students. I would suggest to you that you take a hard look at the way shopping malls, video arcades, mega-movie complexes, and other places where young people congregate deal with security and

supervision. Some communities are only now becoming sophisticated enough to deal with these issues through local Zoning Boards. I think there could and should be some statewide standards for these types of establishments. Incidents, just within the last year or so, at both the Freehold and Monmouth Malls would seem to indicate that there is a necessity for some governmental entity to take a leadership role in demanding that these magnets for groups of adolescents are safe and intensely supervised.

- ◆ A major factor in our success in Perth Amboy has been our close relationship with the local police, specifically the members of the juvenile detective bureau and the patrol officers who routinely work special events (football games, etc.). I don't want to give the impression that we have a police presence in the schools, because we don't. Fortunately, such a presence isn't necessary because our cops already know what is going on among the students and many times they are actually advising us as to what or whom we should be watching. This kind of involvement with young people by local law enforcement and cooperation with the public schools is critical for safe schools and safe communities. Local police departments must have the resources to dedicate the necessary manpower to dealing with the potential problems that can occur with this age group of students. These officers must be well trained and have the ability to be both a friend, as well as, an intimidating force to young people. They also need the patience to do the necessary follow-up on trivial and petty complaints since this often leads to them becoming familiar with those young people who have the potential for committing serious crimes. If you agree with me that local law enforcement is a critical part of the solution to this problem, I would recommend the Perth Amboy City Police as a model for you to look at.

In closing, I would like to invite the members of the task force to visit the Perth Amboy Schools, specifically our Junior High and High School, during school hours. Before you come to any conclusions about the problem of violent or threatening behavior by adolescents, I think it is incumbent upon you to get out into the schools and communities to see first hand what is and what is not working. Thank you for your time.

# Policy

## Board of Education Perth Amboy

SECTION - 500  
STUDENTS

### 538. Long-Term Suspension

The Perth Amboy Board of Education recognizes its responsibility to provide an environment in the public schools conducive to academic achievement. The Board considers a "safe and orderly" atmosphere as an essential element that must exist for learning to take place. The Board of Education is also cognizant of the fact that chronically disruptive students deprive the student population of learning opportunities and create an unsafe environment where students and staff cannot accomplish the educational goals of the district. In an effort to insure that students and staff may pursue the academic objectives of the district, the Perth Amboy Board of Education supports the following procedures for dealing with chronically disruptive students:

1. Definition

Any student who commits any two (2) of the following acts shall be deemed to be "chronically disruptive."

- a. Assault upon another student that results in physical injury.
- b. Verbal abuse of a staff member.
- c. Willful disobedience as defined in State Statutes.
- d. Theft, destruction or defacing of school property or property of a staff member or student.

2. Principal's Recommendation

Upon the second offense as defined above, the Building Principal may recommend to the Superintendent of Schools that the offending student be suspended from school for the remainder of the school year in which the offenses occurred.

3. Superintendent's Recommendation

Upon a written recommendation from the Building Principal, the Superintendent of Schools shall recommend to the Board of Education in a formal motion with a confidential attachment listing the name of the student, that the student be suspended for the remainder of the school year in which the offenses occurred.

4. Board of Education Action

The Board of Education shall act upon the recommendation of the Superintendent as soon as possible. The student shall be suspended pending action of the Board.

# Policy

## Board of Education Perth Amboy

SECTION - 500  
STUDENTS

### 538. Long-Term Suspension (continued)

5. A chronically disruptive student who is suspended for a part of any school year shall receive no credit for any classes attended up to the date of the suspension.
6. Chronically disruptive students who are suspended shall not be provided with an Alternative Program.
7. Students suspended in accordance with this policy shall return to school at the beginning of the next school year and shall be placed in the grade level that they were in at the time of the suspension.
8. This policy shall take effect immediately upon adoption by the Board of Education.

Date Adopted: October 3, 1996

**TESTIMONY BEFORE JOINT HEARING  
ON SCHOOL VIOLENCE  
OCTOBER 27, 1998**

Good morning. My name is Tim Brennan. I am the Superintendent of Schools in Parsippany-Troy Hills, and I thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

Violence has always been a problem in our society. It has ebbed and flowed over the 200-plus years of our existence, and most recently has taken a somewhat disturbing tack in the extreme behavior exhibited by children in places like Oregon and Arkansas.

Some national statistics show that school violence is decreasing. I do not trust this information. In New Jersey it is compiled from the Violence and Vandalism Forms submitted by local school districts. Two years ago, when the data were reported publicly, the schools who reported most honestly were lambasted most in the press. I hear informally that people are loathe to subject their school districts to that kind of negative publicity, and, therefore, have raised the threshold on which they report, for example, fighting in the schools. This phenomenon will undoubtedly level out and the data should become more reliable in the future.

Other evidence indicates a logical connection to violence. Where there is drug abuse there is usually violence, and drug abuse is on the rise in our society. The visual imagery carried into children's homes electronically and relentlessly by television and video game cartridges makes violence into a colorful and exciting trapping of adventure and an acceptable method of conflict resolution.

Despite these trends, children may actually be safer in school than they have been in the past. Strong policies on weapons, elementary programs on conflict resolution, peace keepers, the addition of guidance counselors to many elementary schools and heightened awareness by staff members may be contributing to, if not a reduction in violence, at least a leveling off. However, even one student in emotional pain can circumvent all the programs and cause harm in the schools. Included with my testimony is a reprint of an essay I wrote for *Newsweek* magazine last spring about an incident which occurred in our school district. Using our incident as a case study, several conclusions can be drawn:

**Every school in New Jersey should have a Crisis Management Policy** and conduct a simulation of how it would work in an actual emergency. There is no way that a school district is going to design or invent a policy or procedure when something like this happens. ~~The~~ first problem is that rumors spread rapidly. They're far worse than what's actually happening and can cause panic. They may even cause collateral events which are as bad or worse than the original crisis.

The media has become a source to which people turn for safety, for accuracy and when they want to get things done. Almost from the start the media will be on the scene, and within hours they will be reporting live from the school parking lot. If they get advance information, they will supplement it until they have a story. They may make the story public prior to the school's being able to put into effect any kind of an action plan.

At a meeting last spring, I asked prosecutor John Dangler of Morris County, a tremendous resource and a person who cares deeply about preventing school violence, whether the events in Arkansas or Oregon could be separated from other incidents. He reported back that they could not, and that every incident of school violence must be treated seriously. **Therefore, each crisis must be dealt with on an individual basis.** That means preparation, commitment, execution and follow-through.

The third problem is that while the majority of parents continue to be very cooperative, a significant minority now threaten legal action as an opening response to being told of a problem and throw up every road-block possible. This may make staff feel that if they report trouble based on early symptoms, they will later have this held against them.

In some cases, the lawyer for the student who is excluded from the school or dealt with under the policy, may say that there was no crisis at all, but simply an over-reaction in the face of national uproar. Teachers or counselors who tried working with the child earlier may be cited as examples that the school knew all along that the child was behaving this way. News coverage may be cited as making the child a victim. **It is imperative that the school have built a progressive body of medical evidence, beginning with examination by school personnel, and progressing to psychiatric and projective testing, as deemed appropriate.**

Drugs and violence live next door to each other. While the drug prevention programs in our schools are well designed and staffed by competent professionals, they are becoming less and less effective in preventing drug trafficking and use in our communities. It is time to add something new to the mix: school-based negative consequences. Our law enforcement and judicial systems are backlogged by the epidemic which has resulted in overwhelming numbers of cases. The result: charges are dropped against so-called minor offenders and the students are back in school within days, virtually unpunished and ready to continue their ways. I believe that **schools should institute zero tolerance policies which rehabilitate such students at an alternative educational setting.** The message here is clear—we will stand by our students, but not at the expense of the learning environment of our comprehensive high schools.

Finally, the best solution is prevention. **Elementary schools should each have a guidance program which allows for timely intervention into the symptoms which may lead to violent outbursts. A full time guidance counselor is the best method of guaranteeing this oversight.** In addition, continuation of programs such as Peacemakers and conflict resolution should be supported in schools.

By deciding in advance what we will do in a crisis, by building an atmosphere of safety and trust, by identifying the early signs of trouble, and by having a strong deterrent to drug use, we can make a difference in the lives of children. Again, thank you and good luck in your important work.

*Tim Brennan*  
10/27/98

## ***Board of Education***

### ***Township of Parsippany-Troy Hills***

#### CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Board of Education is concerned with the emotional well-being of the students attending its schools, the staff and parents. Recognizing that crises do arise, the Board of Education wishes to ensure that appropriate action is taken immediately. In order to do this a crisis management plan has been developed to successfully manage crises that impact on the emotional well-being of students. The crisis management plan integrates and utilizes district and community resources in a comprehensive manner.

Replacing current Policies 533 and 533.1 adopted and revised 1988.

Date Adopted: 2/23/95

## Board of Education

### Township of Parsippany-Troy Hills

#### CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

##### I. AWARENESS AND PREVENTION PROGRAM

It is essential for students and staff to develop an awareness of crises and learn how to prevent them.

The following recommendations should be made part of regular school operations:

- A) Emphasize the aspects of the curriculum which deal with crises.
- B) Conduct in-service programs for the staff on crisis awareness, prevention and management.
- C) Conduct programs for students on crisis awareness, prevention and management.
- D) Conduct programs for parent(s) on crisis awareness, prevention and management.
- E) Provide information and resources regarding crisis awareness, prevention and management (i.e., Managing Sudden Traumatic Loss In The Schools or New Jersey Adolescent Suicide Prevention Program).
- F) Make everyone knowledgeable about district policy and procedures.
- G) Review the district policy annually and make any revisions necessary.

##### II. OBSERVATION BY STAFF MEMBER OF A CRISIS

- A) Crisis is defined as:

Any event in the school and/or school community that may lead to severe emotional distress, psychological trauma or severe and prolonged stress. Situations include (but are not limited to) death of a student, staff member or family member, attempted suicides, series of deaths, school violence or threats of violence.

## Board of Education Township of Parsippany-Troy Hills

- B) Suicidal crisis is defined as:

Verbal or written communication or expression of intent, recent past consideration, excessive morbid preoccupation, morbid wishes or desires or speculative consideration about suicide.

Evidence of self harm or mutilation that lacks a clear and reasonable explanation even if there is a denial of suicidal intent.

Reports from other students or other third party regarding a student's verbal expression or actions.

- C) In the event of a crisis the safety of the student must be considered during this time:

Contact should be maintained with the student, particularly if there is a possibility of the student leaving school.

### III. THE REFERRAL PROCESS

All crises must be reported without any delay and without exception to the school administrator.

- A) The staff member, counselor or teacher who observed or spoke to the student in crisis or has knowledge of a crisis will immediately contact the school administrator directly. A firsthand report is critical in gathering relevant information.
- B) The school administrator will assemble a crisis management team and follow up on the case.
- C) The crisis management team will be available throughout the crisis. This will provide the student direct contact with support personnel particularly if supervision is necessary.

## Board of Education

### Township of Parsippany-Troy Hills

#### IV. COMMUNICATION

Once the student's safety is assured and interim support is in place:

- A) The crisis management team will determine if contact with emergency psychiatric services is necessary and who will serve as liaison. Emergency psychiatric service providers may include community psychiatrists, emergency services, both private and hospital based, or the student's therapist if the student is currently involved in counseling and such therapist is appropriate for the current crisis.
- B) The parent(s) must be contacted and notified of the crisis and of the team's determination. If a determination is made that the student should be released directly to the parent(s), the parent(s) will be requested to come to the school immediately.
- C) If the parent(s) are reluctant to pick up the student or are not in agreement with the team's recommendation regarding emergency services, the building administrator has the authority to call any agency, organization and/or professional that may provide assistance (i.e., Division of Youth and Family Services).
- D) If a determination has been made that emergency psychiatric services are needed, the parent(s) should be notified that they must provide documentation that a student may return to school.
- E) The school administrator will be responsible for notifying the Superintendent of Schools immediately of any crisis. In the event the Superintendent is not available, the Assistant Superintendent must be notified.
- F) Notification should also be provided to the Director of Special Services by forwarding a copy of the crisis management report (attached).

## Board of Education Township of Parsippany-Troy Hills

### V. FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

Prior to the return of the student, the school administrator shall meet with the crisis management team and other staff members, when appropriate, to discuss a plan of action that addresses the needs of the student returning, other students and/or staff.

Information, if available, should be obtained from any professionals, agencies and/or organizations with which the student was involved. This information should be shared with the appropriate staff members. Any recommendation and/or information must be considered in relation to the school's responsibility, district policy and legal mandates.

If the crisis involves the death of a student and/or staff member, the following actions are recommended:

- A) Verify the facts of the crisis.
- B) Notify the Superintendent and appropriate district personnel immediately.
- C) Take action immediately to deal with student and staff anxiety, stress and distress.
- D) Conduct faculty and/or student meetings as soon as possible to provide information and support. This will help to prevent rumors and reduce anxiety.
- E) Involve staff members such as guidance counselors and special services to provide support and assistance.
- F) Involve "outside" agencies, organizations and/or individuals if appropriate (e.g., Northwest Covenant Community Mental Health Center).
- G) Inform parent(s) through parent meetings, telephone calls and/or written communication.

ADOPTED: 2/23/95

REVISED: 9/1/98

CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

CRISIS MANAGEMENT REPORT

Part I (To be completed by referring staff members)

Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Nature of Crisis: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Referral From: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Staff Member)

Nature of Referral: (Initial observation or interview with student that led to crisis referral)

1. Intervention In School:
2. Contact With Parent:
3. Emergency Contact(s): (If Any)
4. Outcome:
5. Follow-up:

Submitted By: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Staff Member Signature)

School Administrator: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

126x

**ASSEMBLY TASK FORCE ON  
ADOLESCENT VIOLENCE HEARING**

**Testimony of the  
Plainfield Public Schools  
Plainfield, New Jersey 07060**

**Presenters:**

**William E. Gary  
Dianne Ianniello  
Louis Lopez  
Dr. John Sills**

**October 27, 1998**

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# Public Schools of Plainfield



DEPARTMENT OF PUPIL PERSONNEL SERVICES  
AND SPECIAL EDUCATION  
925 Arlington Avenue  
Plainfield, NJ 07060  
(908) 753-3290

TO: Members of Assembly Task Force on Adolescent Violence

FROM: William E. Gary, Director  
Plainfield Public Schools

RE: Testimony on Youth Violence

DATE: October 27, 1998

The Plainfield Public School District take pride in being asked to testify before the Assembly Task Force on Adolescent Violence.

We hope that our presentation will be helpful in your effort to combat incidents of violence in the state and the country. We are proud to say that we recognize the need for safe and orderly schools and our district has been active in developing strategies, and reviewing other efforts to create a safe environment for all students.

Safe Schools was identified as one of the major goals in Fall, 1977 by District LINCC, a group comprised of district administrators, staff, community members, parents and students who are active in the district's efforts of systemic school reform. The increase in student disruption in the Plainfield Public Schools parallels state and national trends. Our focus will continue to be creating a safe environment where learning is the primary focus one in which academics and high achievement can be concentrated. The Safe Schools Committee involved schools, families and the community in working together to assess students' and schools' needs. Our goal is to promote strategies that increase students' abilities to reduce or overcome the risks they face while at the same time reducing factors that place students at risk of committing violence or becoming victims. Our research-based plan recognizes that many of the factors that threaten schools safety such as fighting, disruptive behavior, weapons, etc., must be addressed by school policies and structures such as a discipline code, prevention efforts, intervention programs, and addressing the Social Development strategies of children.

Our Safe Schools Committee formed four teams consisting of Policies, Procedures, and Practices, Staff Engagement, Parent and Student Engagement; Government and Community Linkages. An existing discipline code was revised after a series of meetings with all stakeholders. The new code was distributed to all staff and was sent home with each child accompanied by a sign-off sheet which parents were required to return. A "teach-in" was held in every classroom throughout the district to enable students in grades K-12 to have a thorough understanding of behavior expectations and sanctions that would be enforced for violations.

Our district believes that careful use of data is necessary to monitor the success of a program. In Spring, 1998, surveys were distributed to parents, staff and students in grades three, seven and nine. The results were analyzed and will serve as a baseline for first year data. In addition, a Discipline Reporting Form will be consistently used throughout the district beginning in Fall, 1998, which was collaboratively developed. The computerized information entered by each school will help identify the most problematic behaviors so that specific strategies needed may be implemented.

Traditional approaches addressing only behavior and not its causes cannot in isolation produce a safe school environment. Schools cannot address the primary roots of violence that may stem from characteristics of the individual or conditions at home or in the community. A safe environment comes from the establishment of a framework that includes prevention, a comprehensive safety and crisis plan and the combined efforts of everyone in the schools as well as families and the community. A continuum of efforts that includes classroom management, social and emotional learning, conflict resolution, peer mediation, intensive counseling, and sometimes alternative placement is necessary for schools to be safe.

Dr. Deborah Prothrow-Stith, assistant Dean of Harvard School of Public Health addressed the entire staff of the Plainfield Public Schools at our opening day in-service meeting. Dr. Prothrow-Stith has been instrumental in developing violence prevention programs aimed at anti-violence television programming, curricula and other educational tools. Her presentation was a good jump-start point to have us focus on violence prevention for the 1998-99 school year.

Beginning in September, 1998, all staff will be trained in a classroom management program with the expectation that more orderly classrooms will provide the climate that allows students to achieve the district's high expectations of academic and social performance. This will be layered later this with a collaborative effort involving Dr. Maurice Elias of Rutgers University to provide the social and emotional learning skills that children need to help avoid disaffection, dropping out and other self-destructive behavior.

Such programs will allow schools to build the safe environment in which children can sort out their feeling, put aside their hassles and appreciate a learning environment that will provide lifelong benefits that children miss out on when they are too angry, hurt or scared to participate in the learning process. Financial resources are a roadblock to providing the in-depth training necessary for staff, students and parents however we will continue to have safe schools as a district priority.

Our Safe Schools plan has been successful in creating community linkages with probation, the juvenile justice system and the police. Probation officers work with Middle and High School Administrators as case managers of involved students. In addition, the Probation Officers are invited to sit on Pupil Assistance Committee Meetings when students are referred to the committee for intervention strategies.

The Plainfield Public School District is committed to creating a safe school environment with a positive school climate that will enable our students to develop academically and socially.

**PLAINFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
504 MADISON AVENUE  
PLAINFIELD, NEW JERSEY 07060**

**K-12 SCHOOL DISTRICT  
ENROLLMENT 7,362**

Plainfield recognizes the increase nationally in school disruption and violence by school aged children. In order to create a safe and orderly school system, the community, school officials, staff and students developed several strategies in order to counteract potential disruption in the Plainfield Schools. There was a movement to evolve a culture that promoted a safe school environment.

We have used or have plans to utilize all of the strategies listed below to enhance our chances to have a safe, violent free environment for all of our students.

The Plainfield Public School District believes that by having safety as a district priority, and by educating our community, staff and students about the perils of violence, we will significantly impact violence in our schools.

**Listed here are strategies that we utilize to foster a safe school environment:**

**No. 1: Safe Schools is a District Priority.**

Safe and orderly schools are a high priority for all Plainfield Public Schools. If our schools are safe and orderly students can focus on learning. Parents and the community will have a high level of confidence in our administrators and staff, and as a consequence we will have better schools.

**No. 2: Safe Schools has been identified – Strategic School Plans.**

Comprehensive plans to have safe and orderly schools was identified early on, even prior to the acts that took place in Kentucky, Louisiana and Oregon, as one of our six goals in the District's Strategic Plan.

**No. 3: Review of the Discipline and Weapon Possession Policies by Safe School Committee.**

The Safe School Committee meets on a regular basis to ensure that all of our policies are in compliance with the Federal Gun-Free School Zone Act. The district has revised and updated policies to reflect compliance and more importantly our priority to have safe and orderly schools.

**No. 4: Review of the student handbook at all schools.**

Administrators and teaching staff to periodically review policies and student handbook with students and the Parent Teacher Organization at their school.

**No. 5: Teacher Training and Staff Development given high priority by the Board of education in the areas of student behavior management.**

Training for all staff in classroom management. Conflict Mediation Training for all staff inclusive of administrators, teachers, security guards, custodians and secretaries are held.

**No. 6: Partnership with the City Council, Mayor, and Police.**

Plainfield has established a viable partnership with the Mayor and other city agencies to work jointly to ensure that Plainfield students have safe and orderly schools.

Police actively enforce school curfew regulations and merchants adhere to the district's request to deny student access during school hours,

**No. 7: Placement of Juvenile Court Officials and Representatives from the Division of Youth and Family Services on Sight.**

Plainfield has established a liaison with probation officers, parole officers, DYFS caseworkers and other agencies to have on-sight access to our identified youngsters who require more intensive and collaborative supervision.

**No. 8: Implement Comprehensive Extra-Curricular Programs.**

Through our use of our School-Based program, Plainfield attempts to provide a full array of programs for our students during and after-school. We are providing students with after school tutoring, mentoring, recreation, counseling, pregnancy prevention, on-site health care, substance abuse counseling and other services as needed.

**No. 9: Pupil Assistance Committee organized in all schools.**

A team of educators, typically composed of a special educator(s), a regular educator(s), and/or a counselor(s) from that building, meets with the educator identifying a student for pre-referral attention. The team, along with input from the teacher calling attention to the student's needs, pinpoints the specific targets for improvement. Goals and objectives for the student in the regular classroom are formally or informally determined, and on-site intervention strategies are agreed upon. With consultant assistance from the pre-referral team, the classroom teacher conducts adjusted behavior and teaching approaches for the student for a specific length of time, which may be for several weeks up to a few months. The student's progress is documented and communication continues between the pre-referral team and the classroom teacher. Based on student performance in response to pre-referral intervention strategies, decisions are made as to the student's ability to succeed in the regular classroom with adjustments in instruction, materials, testing, etc. We also utilized counseling as an intervention strategy and our School-Based Youth Service Program provides support for behaviorally involved students.

**No. 10: Disciplinary Review Committee.**

Implemented by the Plainfield Board of Education to enable our schools to have an efficient, expedient and thorough process of reviewing disciplinary infractions at the school level.

The Disciplinary Review Committee, in consultation with the Superintendent, provides the initial step in determining whether or not the case would require a formal hearing based on evidence and evaluative data received.

**No. 11: Identification of Disaffected and Disruptive Students to track repeated or potential offenders.**

Guidance Counselors will work with school staff to identify students who are Disruptive or Disaffected. Plans are developed to provide counseling, referral service and in-school support for this population.

**No. 12: Implementation of Peer Counseling.**

Peer mediators are trained and available to work with students, particularly, ninth graders and new entrants.

**No. 13: Uniform Visitor Screening.**

All Plainfield Schools are required to have a system in place that require all visitors to sign in, indicate who they are visiting and wear a visitor's badge.

**No. 14: Picture Identification Badges are required at the high school for all staff and students.**

Identification pictures are encouraged at the high school to identify enrolled students and non-enrolled student visitors. It is viewed as a helpful tool to manage and control the volume of students, staff and visitors that frequent the high school.

**No. 15: Campus Access to Students and Visitors**

At the high school where we have student drivers, there is a designated parking lot that is gated and locked during school hours. Identification tags are given out to all staff and student drivers to prohibit abuse by others and to discourage trespassing by outside students.

**No. 16: Implement alternative placements for at-risk students.**

Plainfield has implemented an enrichment program that work with middle and high school students who have been unsuccessful in their mainstream program. The students are clustered in smaller classes and profit from closer supervision and more structure. Counselors work with these youngsters on a more intense basis to help them understand their difficulties in school and give them the tools to cope better on their return to mainstream classes.

**No. 17: Exploration of a Uniform Dress Codes.**

Involvement of students and parents in the development of a dress code for one pilot elementary school. Review impact of the dress code on school discipline, school pride and adherence to rules.

**No. 18: Viable Community Service for Student offenders.**

We have formed a viable partnership with agencies that includes the YWCA, YMCA, Black United Fund, Neighborhood House, YAM, Mayor's Youth Task Force and other agencies, to provide opportunities for our students to perform community service as part of sanctions received from the schools.

**No. 19: Develop Comprehensive Crisis Manual/Crisis Plan.**

The committee has developed a user friendly crisis manual that identifies community resources and agencies that provide services for our students.

The district crisis manual also outlines procedures to adhere to when confronted with crisis situations.

**No. 20: Assertive Discipline Training.**

Part of the Safe School Initiative will include providing Assertive Discipline Training for all classroom teachers. A safe school environment begins in the classroom. When the classroom teacher provides a framework to teach students to choose responsible behavior, students will be more able to focus on academics. Teachers will be provided with a greater, more in depth approach to classroom behavior management program that will help them to confidently create an optimal classroom environment conducive to learning.

It is our hope that through Assertive Discipline Training, teachers will be provided with the skills that will empower them to meet their own professional goals and the needs of their students.

The training available for teachers will cover the following areas:

1. Becoming Assertive and Determining a Plan.
2. Putting Your Discipline into Action.
3. Dealing with Chronic and Severe Discipline Problems.
4. Applying Assertive Skills to Problem Situations.

**No. 21: Middle School Peer Mediation Program.**

The goal of Maxson School's peer mediation program for the 1998-99 school year was modified to reflect changes in the school community. Within a two-year period, the student population increased from 550 seventh and eighth grade students to 1000 sixth, seventh and eighth grade students. It was decided that to effectively promote peer mediation as an effective approach to solving conflicts, the entire student body would need to be educated in the processes of conflict resolution and peer mediation. It was further decided that selected students, rather than school staff, would provide the training to the students. On August 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>, fifteen students who had served as mediators during the 1997-98 school year were invited to attend a two-day conference.

The purpose of the conference was to allow the students to design the program they would use to teach their peers about conflict resolution and peer mediation. The students were provided with a variety of materials including films, audiocassettes, books and reproduced materials obtained from the New Jersey Bar Association. Ms. Sands from the Law Resource Center addressed the students and provided them with training tips. The students designed a ninety-minute presentation that they will present to all Maxson students during the first half of the school year. The students also decided that an additional thirty to forty students would need to be trained as mediators this school year. The mediators will assist in the training of the new mediators. To date, students have begun the in class training and thirty-five additional mediators have been identified and have begun the training process.

**Crisis**

**Intervention**

**Manual**

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**PPS** Plainfield  
Public  
Schools

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# THE CRISIS INTERVENTION MANUAL

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PLAINFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DEPARTMENT OF PUPIL PERSONNEL SERVICES  
AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

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LARRY LEVERETT ..... SUPERINTENDENT

LINNEA WEILAND ..... DIRECTOR, CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

WILLIAM E. GARY ..... DIRECTOR

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**NOVEMBER 1, 1996**

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*Support children as they Grieve - Now and Later.*

*For when a child is traumatized by a crisis, we must remember that as they reach different developmental stages they will again ask, Why? Perhaps a graduation may trigger depression.*

*Young people grieve for what might have been.*

**T**his Crisis Manual was developed in conjunction with the Redesign of Alternative Education by the Bridges Subcommittee of the Alternative School Program Committee. It was coordinated by Ms. Louise Yohalem, Director of the School Based Youth Services Program.

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This manual incorporates the procedures developed by the earlier Pupil Crisis Manual which was developed by the Elementary Guidance and Substance Abuse Staff, in coordination with Mr. Andrew Morris, Secondary Supervising Coordinator with specific thanks to Mr. William E. Gary, Director of Pupil Personnel Services and Special Education, Mrs. Frances Stromsland, Elementary Supervising Coordinator and Ms. Catherine Johnson, Secretary.

*Special thanks to Dr. Larry Leverett, Superintendent of Schools and Mr. William E. Gary, Director of Pupil Personnel Services and Special Education for their input and guidance.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This manual was developed so that all staff of the Plainfield Schools would be able to competently and appropriately respond to serious problems which affect our students. To enable us to react in a crisis, this manual has been developed; it spells out, step-by-step, exactly what to do. This introduction explains how to use this manual.

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## What is a Crisis?

**C**risis situations are caused by specific events: civil unrest, an explosion, war, a terrorist act, an automobile accident. They can also be more individualized, resulting from divorce, separations, illness, family fights or abuse. They will push people out of control. Crises disrupt the flow of everyday life and take the individual by surprise. Fear of the unknown forcefully presents itself: What will happen now? What will happen to me? Will I survive? Maybe I will die! Whatever the cause, some form of personal and perhaps social phenomenon will follow. Without a specific plan of action designed to deal with a crisis, an already distressful condition can and probably will get worse before it gets better.

This manual will provide specific plans for dealing with crises that are individual in nature.

## Why the School Must Address a Crisis

**W**e live in a society that is becoming increasingly complex; these complexities affect all children. Because the children spend six hours a day, five days a week, 180 days a year in school, they bring their problems with them. It is imperative to develop a crisis plan within the school system. When school personnel are prepared to deal with crises, students can continue to grow emotionally, intellectually and physically.

With proper preparation, a crisis can then be used to unite students and staff in building confidence and cohesiveness among themselves and within the larger public community. The failure to respond and meet the needs brought on by a crisis can only cause disruption in the classroom, the school and within the larger community.

## First Response Strategies to a Crisis

- Stay with the child and be supportive
- Help with alternate solutions and to arrive at a solution
- Use reflective listening - rephrase what you are hearing the child say in your own words and check that your understanding is correct; it's all right to just listen if the child is finding the right solutions

- 
- Do not make promises that are unrealistic or tell the child what he/she wants to hear
  - Establish physical contact - a gentle touch, an appropriate hug
  - Express interest
  - Give help and assistance

More detailed information on Methods of Intervention can be found in the Appendix.

## How to Use This Manual

**C**risises are each defined in their own section, with a description of the indicators which can alert the school personnel to the specific crisis. How to respond, specific protocols, follow-up procedures and resources are included for each crisis. *Referral agencies and resources are listed in the order in which they should be used.* For more in-depth information, a bibliography and additional information, there is an appendix at the end of the manual. A list of community agencies with individuals to contact and services available is also included in the appendix.

For easy reference, general indicators/symptoms are found at the beginning of the Crisis Intervention Section to help the user find the most appropriate section.

## Definition of Parent

**A**s used in this manual, the word "parent" should be interpreted as parent, guardian or other legally supervising adult.

## Confidentiality/Parental Permission

**S**tudents, regardless of their age, are protected by confidentiality laws; in some instances, confidentiality laws supercede parental notification. Students of any age may receive treatment for issues related to reproductive health without parental permission. Student records may not be released without the written permission of the parent or, in cases where the student may consent to his/her own treatment, that student's consent. Students may not receive any medical treatment, other than emergency treatment, without parental permission.

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## Confidentiality Laws

### **F**amily Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974:

Written parental consent, signed and dated, is required before a school administrator can share information in student records.

Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act mandates the confidentiality of name-recognizable records of any student who receives special educational services.

N.J.S.A. 26:5C et seq

## Informed Consent

**N**ew Jersey Law, N.J.S.A. 9:17 A-1 states that minors have the right to consent to their own pregnancy-related care, and medical care for their child. This has been interpreted to include minors seeking abortion, since the procedure is related to pregnancy. See appendix for more specific information.

## Mandated Reporting

**T**he first person who *suspects* or becomes aware of child abuse - physical, emotional or sexual - is mandated by law to report the case to the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) at 412-7900. All school personnel are mandated reporters. By law, the mandated reporter is protected from having his/her identity revealed. There is no penalty for an unfounded report of abuse.

## Need to Know

**P**ersonnel who "Need to Know" are defined as those who are involved in direct service to/with a student. Consent forms should specify any individuals to be informed by name and by title.

\*There is no need for anyone at school to know the HIV status of pupils or employees. Pupils, their parents or guardians and employees are under no obligation to inform school personnel regarding their HIV status and cannot be required to do so.

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In some cases, however, a parent may share this information in order to obtain health care or educational support for their child. Where the principal, teacher and nurse are comfortable as advocates for HIV infected pupils and respectful of their right to confidentiality, parents may find that disclosure benefits the child." *HIV Policy and Practice in New Jersey Schools. 1966. Pg.7*

## Universal Precautions

**A**ll staff are to follow universal precautions. Do not touch the blood, urine, saliva, sweat or feces of another individual without putting on latex gloves. If latex gloves are not at hand, use an article of clothing or piece of newspaper as a barrier between yourself and the body fluid. If you come into contact with another person's body fluid, thoroughly wash that part of your body with soap as soon as possible.

*May 1996 New Jersey Administrative Code Title 6. Education 6:29-2.5 Routine procedures for sanitation and hygiene when handling body fluids*

"(a) District boards of education shall develop written policies and procedures for sanitation and hygiene when handling blood and body fluids in conformance with N.J.A.C. 8:61-1.1(j) and in conformance with Centers for Diseases Control Guides, 'Recommendations for Prevention of HIV Transmission in Health Care Settings,' MMWR Supplement, August 1987, and "Update: Universal Precautions for Prevention of Transmission of Human Immunodeficiency Virus, Hepatitis B Virus, and Other Bloodborne Pathogens in Health-Care Settings" from MMWR, June 24, 1988, vol. 37, No. 24, pp. 337-382, 387-388.

(b) District boards of education shall make available to school personnel, compensated and uncompensated (volunteer), training and appropriate supplies for the handling of blood and body fluids, whether or not pupils or school staff with HIV infection are present. School nurses, custodians and teachers in particular should have knowledge of the proper techniques in the handling and disposal of materials.

## School Teams

**E**ach school must have clearly defined teams to respond to specific emergencies and ongoing special needs.

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## **Crisis Team**

**T**he School Administrator is in charge of the School Crisis Team which can not be delegated to anyone else. The school administrator is the one person the community holds responsible for action taken and not taken and makes many decisions in response to a tragedy. The building administrator should have an administrative designee to act in his/her stead. This person must be clearly identified to all staff as the designee so as to avoid delays and hesitancy in responding to the needs of individual students. However, the school administrator or his/her designee does not operate in isolation in developing or implementing a crisis plan or crisis team.

## **Crisis Intervention Team Members**

- School Administrator or Designee
- Guidance Counselor
- Substance Abuse Coordinator
- School Nurse
- Designated Faculty Members

### Functions of the Crisis Team

- Develop a school crisis plan
- Inform and prepare school staff
- Inform off-campus resources, when appropriate
- Implement plan during a crisis
- Review plan periodically

## **Pupil Assistance Committee (PAC) Members**

- Building Administrator
- Guidance Counselor and School Nurse
- Teachers
- Child Study Team Liaison

### Functions of the PAC

- Assist students with academic and behavioral problems
- Preliminary action to referral to Child Study Team

<b>INDICATORS</b>
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<b>SYMPTOM</b>	<b>SEE</b>
Abrupt behavior change	Depression; Substance abuse; Sexual abuse
Academic failure	OPS/Bridges
Acting out behavior	Child abuse; Family erosion
Alcohol & controlled dangerous substance use	OPS/Bridges; Sexual abuse
Anger	Divorce/separation; Violent death
Anxiety	Death & dying; Death of parent; Violent death, Family erosion
Apathy/Disaffected Behavior	Divorce/separation; depression
Attempted suicide	Suicide
Avoidance of bathrooms	Sexual abuse
Avoidance of physical activity	Pregnancy; Sexual abuse
Avoidance of social situations	Harassment; Sexual abuse
Bizarre behavior	Substance abuse; Death & dying; Suicide
Burns	Child abuse
Change in friends (to drug using)	Substance abuse
Change in physical appearance	Depression; Substance abuse; Pregnancy
Confusion, sudden disorganization	Death & dying
Contract failure	OPS/Bridges
Curiosity re: a death, need for information re: death	Death & dying
Crying	Death & dying, Depression; Family erosion; Death of parent; Violent death
Defiance of school rules	OPS/Bridges
Depression	HIV/AIDS; Suicide; Death of parent
Disbelief	Family erosion
Disorganized	Family erosion
Disruptive behavior	OPS/Bridges
Emotional outbursts	Family erosion
Exaggerated startle reflex	Trauma of fire
Extreme agitation	Harassment; Sexual harassment
Extreme mood swings	Depression
Failing grades	OPS/Bridges; Substance abuse; Death of parent, Violent death
Failure to communicate	Substance abuse
Fear	Child abuse; Family erosion
Frequent absences	AIDS; Depression; OPS/Bridges; Violent death
Frequent use of lavatory	Pregnancy; Sexually Transmitted Infection
Grief	Death of parent or loved one
Genital discomfort	STI; Sexual abuse
Guilt	Violent death; suicide
Hostility	Family erosion

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Hypervigilance . . . . .	Trauma of fire
Inability to think clearly . . . . .	Family erosion
Imitability . . . . .	Depression; Trauma of fire
Isolated. . . . .	Depression; Sexual abuse; Sexual harassment; Family erosion
Itching, squirming . . . . .	STI
Juvenile Justice involvement . . . . .	OPS/Bridges
Lack of stamina . . . . .	AIDS
Lethargy . . . . .	Divorce/separation
Lying . . . . .	Sexual abuse
Negative behavior . . . . .	Harassment; Sexual harassment
Neglected appearance . . . . .	Child abuse; Depression; Substance abuse
Opposite behavior than usual . . . . .	Sexual abuse
Paranoia . . . . .	Family erosion
Passive/withdrawn . . . . .	Child abuse; Sexual abuse
Perfectionist . . . . .	Sexual abuse
Phobias/ separation anxiety . . . . .	Divorce/Separation
Poor attendance . . . . .	Child abuse; Depression; HIV/AIDS
Poor concentration . . . . .	Substance abuse; Trauma of fire; Death of parent
Poor self image . . . . .	Child abuse; Depression; Sexual abuse
Pregnancy . . . . .	Sexual abuse
Rashes . . . . .	STI
Reclusive . . . . .	Suicide
Recurrent recollection of event . . . . .	Trauma of fire
Repeated injuries . . . . .	Child abuse
Reticence . . . . .	Harassment; Sexual harassment
Run away . . . . .	Family erosion
Sad expression . . . . .	Divorce/separation; Violent death
Secretive . . . . .	Suicide
Self mutilation, excessive body piercing. . . . .	Sexual abuse
Severe injury . . . . .	Child abuse
Sexually provocative behavior . . . . .	Sexual abuse
Sexually transmitted infection . . . . .	Sexual abuse
Shame . . . . .	Violent death
Shock . . . . .	Family erosion; Violent death
Sleepy . . . . .	Pregnancy; Substance abuse; fire trauma
Suicidal ideation . . . . .	Depression; Suicide
Swearing/Threats/Yelling. . . . .	Family erosion
Troubled thoughts (guilt, anger, extreme sadness) . . . . .	Death & dying; Death of parent
Upper respiratory problems . . . . .	AIDS; Asthma
Use of chemical substances . . . . .	Drug abuse; OPS/Bridges; Sexual abuse
Voiced, written expression of suicide . . . . .	Suicide
Violence toward a particular person . . . . .	Harassment; Sexual harassment
Wearing oversized/outdoor clothing. . . . .	Pregnancy
Weight gain . . . . .	Pregnancy; Depression
Weight loss (extreme) . . . . .	Depression
Withdrawn . . . . .	Divorce/separation; Depression; Family erosion; Child abuse; Suicide

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## AIDS

**Definition:** Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. A specific group of symptoms and opportunistic infections including a positive test for HIV. [Human Immunodeficiency Virus] (Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Review Vol. 41/No. RR-17; see appendix)

Students and school employees with AIDS may not be excluded from school unless their physical condition warrants exclusion.

**Indicators:** May have no specific physical indicators  
Frequent absences due to illness  
Upper respiratory problems  
Lack of stamina, fatigue  
Need for regularly administered medications

**Protocol:** All staff members must follow universal precaution measures.  
[N.J.A.C. 6:29-2.5]  
(See Introduction)

Students with AIDS are protected under the New Jersey Confidentiality Laws [N.J.S.A. 26:5C *et seq*]\*

Medications should be administered by the school nurse. The classroom teacher does not need to know about the HIV/AIDS status of the student but should be informed about the student's need to be excused for medication.

**Follow-up:** Educate *EVERYONE* about this issue.

**Referral Agencies:** School Based Youth Services Program: 753-3192  
Planned Parenthood of Greater Northern New Jersey: 756-3765  
Hyacinth AIDS Foundation: 755-0021  
NJ AIDS Hotline: 1-800-624-2377.

\*[N.J.A.C. 8:57-2.5 Exceptions to communicable disease classification of AIDS and HIV  
(a) AIDS or HIV infection shall not be considered a communicable disease for purpose of admission to, attendance in, or transportation in any of the following:  
1. Nursing homes and other health care facilities;  
2. Rooming and boarding homes, and shelters for the homeless;  
3. Ambulances and other public conveyances; and  
4. Educational facilities.



## **BRIDGES OUTPLACEMENT SERVICES (OPS)**

**Definition:** Disaffected/disruptive student has difficulty realizing success in school-within-school Middle School Enrichment Program (MSEP) and Plainfield High School Enrichment Program (PHSEP). The Student Review Committee (SRC) recommends another placement for student based upon their findings.

**Indicators:** Student behavior has not improved and/or has deteriorated in the following areas:

- Academic failure
- Disruptive/violent behavior
- Continued defiance of school rules
- New involvement with juvenile justice system
- Excessive absenteeism
- Continued involvement with alcohol/controlled dangerous substances
- Failure to successfully complete behavioral contract

**Protocol:** Students aged 13 -15:  
Pupil Advisory Committee (PAC) refers to child study team

Students aged 16 - 18:  
SRC refers to:  
Plainfield Adult Learning Center  
Union County Vocational & Technical School, Adult High School  
Venture and Venture  
Edison Prep/Job Corps  
Youth Challenge Program (Fort Dix)  
Union County Alternative Education Program at Kean College (\$9,000)  
Hillcrest Academy (with contract \$11,000 per student)  
Team leader in each program responsible for forms

**Follow-up:** SRC recommends thirty (30) day home instruction while seeking placement with the appropriate school/agency  
During interim, placement completed with verification from PAC  
Monitoring continued periodically throughout the year

### **Referral Agencies:**

Child Study Team - William Gary, Dir. Special Services: 753-3477  
Plainfield Adult Learning Center - Carole Beris, Dir: 753-3350/3366/3499  
Union County Voc & Technical Adult High School - John Crowley, Dir: 889-2904  
Venture and Venture - John Downs, Dir: 561-9600  
Edison Prep/Job Corps -  
Sue Macer, Exec. Coord.; Tonya Smith, Act. Dir. 985-4800  
Youth Challenge Program (Fort Dix) - William Barksdale, Dir: 609-562-0583  
Union County Alternative Education Program, Kean College -  
Madeline DiMario, Adm: 289-1935  
Hillcrest Academy - Ed Hartnett: 233-9317, ext. 31

## CHILD ABUSE

"Any person having *reasonable cause* to believe that a child has been subjected to child abuse, or acts of child abuse, shall report the same promptly to the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS), by telephone or otherwise." (N.J.S. 9:6-8.10)

**Definition:** A broad spectrum of abuse and neglect situations exists. Some forms are easily recognized and are treatable; others, such as emotional abuse, are only now being defined and recognized. There are four forms of child abuse: physical, emotional, sexual and neglect.

**General Indicators:**

- Poor self image
- Acting out behavior
- Repeated injuries
- Passive withdrawn behavior
- Neglected appearance
- Poor attendance

Physical Abuse: The non-accidental injury of a child.

An injury that requires treatment outside the range of normal corrective measures.

Any punishment that involves hitting with a closed fist or instrument, kicking, inflicting burns, or throwing the child.

Emotional Abuse & Neglect: Excessive, aggressive, or unreasonable parental behavior that places demands upon a child to perform beyond his/her capabilities. Sometimes, emotional abuse is not what a parent does, but what the parent doesn't do. Children who receive no love, no care, no support and no guidance will carry those scars into adulthood. Usually not a single physical attack or single act of deprivation or molestation, neglect is usually a pattern of behavior that takes place over time. The longer the abuse continues, the more serious it becomes and the more serious is the injury to the child.

Sexual Abuse: See separate listing.

**Protocol:** Any abuse, or *suspicion of abuse* must be reported to the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) by the person who discovers or suspects the abuse. The information must be treated as highly confidential.

**Local Office:** 412-7900

**Toll-free 24 hour hot line:** 1-800-792-8610

DYFS will need the following information:

- a. name and address of student
- b. Name and address of parent
- c. Age and sex of student
- d. Nature and extent of injuries or description of neglect, if observable by nurse.
- e. Any other information that might be helpful in establishing the cause of injury.

Inform the building administrator following the call.

**Follow-up:** Refer to Guidance counselor or School Based psychologist for 60 days after the initial report.  
After 60 days, a final report should be filed with the Crisis Intervention Team

**Referrals:** DYFS: 412-7900  
School Based Youth Services: 753-3192  
Cardinal Health Center: 226-2520  
United Family & Children's Society: 755-4848

## DEATH and DYING OF STAFF MEMBER or STUDENT

- Definition:** Students' reaction resulting from the death of a staff member or student.
- Indicators:** Anxiety displayed in a variety of ways:  
Out of character behavior and/or statements in period following the death  
Troubled thoughts and feelings related to guilt, anger or extreme sadness  
Crying in public, sudden disorganization, confused wandering in halls  
Callous disregard for others' feelings  
Intense curiosity about the details of the death  
Expectation to be informed about the loss and the school's planned response.
- Protocol:** Staff or students with first knowledge of the death should inform school administrator  
Principal locates Crisis Team members and convenes meeting  
Notify Superintendent of plan to be used  
Schedule staff meeting for all staff as soon as possible to provide accurate information, allow staff to express their feelings, inform of plan  
Determine how students will be informed:  
Middle & High Schools - read prepared formal statement during home room  
Elementary Schools - teachers read statement in class with Principal and/or Crisis Team member present.  
Determine need for faculty meeting after school during which the following may be provided:  
additional information  
helpful handouts/parent notification  
teacher referrals solicited  
Crisis Team answers questions  
resource information on community agencies  
School Crisis Team meets for assessment, critique and possible additional plans  
Crisis Team collects all data on the death and strategizes method of crisis counseling  
Counselors/Crisis Team members may meet with classes and friends with which student(s) were involved  
If necessary, seek services of District Child Study Team
- Follow-up:** Crisis Team monitors students for potential acute effects for 60 days  
If extreme anxiety continues, refer to School Based counselor
- Referrals:** Child Study Team - William Gary: 753-3290/753-3538  
School Based Youth Services: 753-3192  
United Family & Children's Society: 755-4848  
American Institute for Marriage & Family Counseling: 757-3410  
Jersey Center for Counseling & Psychotherapy: 757-3410  
Muhlenberg Hospital Mental Health Crisis Counseling: 668-2244  
Resolve Community Counseling Center: 322-9180  
Union County Psychiatric Clinic: 756-6870  
Union County Youth Services Bureau: 298-7800

## DEATH OF A STUDENT'S PARENT OR LOVED ONE

**Definition:** Student's reaction to the death of a parent or loved one.

**Indicators:** Grief  
Anxiety  
Depression  
Troubled thoughts and feelings  
Lack of concentration  
Crying in public, sudden disorganization, confused wandering in halls  
Slipping academic performance

**Protocol:** Staff or student with first knowledge of the death should inform school administrator  
Principal locates Crisis Team and convenes meeting  
Crisis Team collects and verifies data and develops plan for support of student  
Inform teacher(s) of student and all other staff  
Exempt student from testing for two weeks; arrange for make-up tests if necessary  
Exempt from homework for two weeks or minimal homework  
Crisis Team member or Guidance Counselor hold discussion with class(es) to inform about death, help to understand issues of death and needs of classmate

**Follow-up** Crisis Team or Counselor monitors student and close friends/family for 60 days  
If extreme anxiety continues, refer to School Based counselor

**Referrals:** School Based Youth Services: 753-3192  
United Family & Children's Society: 755-4848  
Resolve Community Counseling Center: 322-9180  
Union County Psychiatric Clinic: 756-6870

*SEE APPENDIX FOR FURTHER READING ON CHILDREN AND LOSS, DEATH AND GRIEVING*

## DEPRESSION/SEVERE EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS

**Definition:** Taking a more pessimistic view of the world, possibly because of an accumulation of negative events or disappointments. Most investigators agree that mood disorders in children are fundamentally similar to mood disorders in adults. Depression may be mild, moderate or severe.

Major Depressive Disorder (Single or Recurrent) is twice as common in adolescent and adult females as in adolescent and adult males. Episodes of this disorder often follow severe psychological stressors such as death of a loved one or divorce. Psychosocial events may play a more significant role in the precipitation of the first or second episodes of Major Depressive Disorder and may play less of a role in the onset of subsequent episodes.

**Indicators:** The following behaviors observed over a minimum of two weeks:  
Abrupt changes in behavior - excitability to withdrawn  
Extreme mood swings - frequent crying to unrealistic goal setting, high flying  
Changes in physical appearance - extreme weight loss or gain, poor personal hygiene  
Disaffected behavior - unusual lack of interest in participation  
Sense of worthlessness  
Sharp decrease in attendance  
Irritability  
***Suicidal ideation - i.e. frequent talking/writing about death; belief that others are better off without them - NOTE: THIS IS SEVERE DEPRESSION; Refer to Muhlenberg Hospital, Elizabeth General Hospital or Dr. Durant. See: "Suicide" Protocol.***

**Protocol:**

1. Refer to guidance counselor, SAC or social worker
2. Counselor evaluates severity of problem to determine if problem is mild, moderate or severe.

MILD	MODERATE (2 strong indicators)	SEVERE (3-4 strong indicators)
1. Counselor follow-up with supportive counseling	1. Counselor follow-up with supportive counseling	1. Counselor follow-up with CIT/PAC/MHT
	2. Notify nurse, parent, referring staff, school principal	2. Notify nurse, parent, referring staff, school principal
	3. Refer to School Based psychologist for evaluation	3. Refer to School Based psychologist for evaluation

**Follow-up:** Guidance counselor to serve as case manager.  
Note stating that child is capable of returning to school

**Referral Agencies:** School Based Youth Services Program: 753-3192  
Dr. Nancy Durant: 757-9762  
Muhlenberg Regional Hospital: 668-2244 or 668-2599  
Elizabeth General Hospital: 965-7600  
United Family and Children's Society: 755-4848

## **DIVORCE AND/OR SEPARATION**

Divorce may hinder children's social, emotional and intellectual development, particularly in areas of self esteem and self-control. Parents who are divorcing often give their children less time and attention at a time when their children are likely to need it more. It is not unusual for children of divorce to develop academic, social and emotional problems. Further, many parents take on the role of both mother and father at a time when, due to personal and economic stress, they are least able to provide the support their children need.

**Indicators:** Anger  
Withdrawn  
Sad expression, apathy  
Phobias, separation anxiety  
lethargy

**Protocol:** Refer to counselor for supportive counseling  
Refer to School Based Youth Services Program

**Follow-up:** Counselor will continue to provide supportive counseling

**Referral Agencies:** Counselor will determine if appropriate

## FAMILY EROSION

**Definition:** The incarceration or hospitalization of a family member which may be the result of such events as police intervention, shootings, assaults, robbery, suicide, missing children, gang fights, fire, etc. Because these events are so severe, they may result in students bringing a variety of behaviors into school that can have a negative impact on their academic, emotional and social performance.

**Indicators:** Phase One:

Anxiety, fear, shock, withdrawal, disbelief  
Strong emotional outbursts, i.e., crying, yelling, swearing, making threats  
Physical illness

Phase Two:

Disorganized behavior  
Inability to think clearly  
Belief that "everyone is against me; or, no one cares about me"  
Hostility toward those who care about student  
Distances self  
Sulky, pouting, withdrawn  
May run away

Phase Three:

Physical acting out

Phase Four:

Tension Reduction

**Protocol:**

Persons with first knowledge contact Crisis Team  
Crisis Team interviews child  
Crisis Team contacts Plainfield Police Department or Hospital to verify and gather information about the event  
Crisis Team contacts parent to articulate support, concerns and discover needs  
Explore any agency involvement with parent  
Refer to Guidance Counselor to assess emotional status  
Guidance Counselor and Crisis Team make recommendations regarding support services needed and available.

**Follow-up:**

Monitor student and situation closely  
Guidance Counselor sees student at least once a week for 60 days  
Document follow-up from Support Services  
Refer to School Based Counselor if more counseling is needed

**Referral Agencies:**

School Based Youth Services Program: 753-3192  
Plainfield Action Services: 753-3524  
Plainfield Police Department: 753-3131  
Interfaith Council for the Homeless: 756-1401  
Union County Legal Services: 354-4340

## HARASSMENT

**Definition:** "A one time or repeated pattern of unprovoked aggressive behavior of a physical and/or psychological nature carried out by an individual or group against an individual or group with the effect of causing harm or hurt. All forms of harassment meet the standards of being unwelcome, unwanted and uncomfortable in the view of the recipient. They all have the effect of creating a hostile environment. Harassment, in addition to the more obvious forms of physical harassment - hitting, poking, tripping, etc. - and intimidation, may also be manifested through: peer pressure, name calling, teasing, verbal challenges, dares, threats, verbal attacks, belittlement, social exclusion, spreading malicious rumors."

Unchecked harassment can result in severe permanent mental and emotional damage.  
Board Policy #5145.7; PERSONNEL Code 4111.2; 4211.2 [See Appendix]

**Indicators:** Demonstrates clear sensitivity to unique individual difference.  
Reticence [avoidance of harasser(s)]  
Actual compliant  
Various types of negative behavior  
Agitated to point of violence against harasser(s)

**Protocol:** Notify District's Affirmative Action Officer, Dir. of Human Resources 753-3160  
Report incident of harassment  
Investigate for validity - notify both sets of parents  
Document & file  
Conflict resolution  
Counsel individuals  
Punitive measures assigned to harasser if appropriate

**Follow-up:** Refer to Guidance Counselor, School Based counselor; United Family & Children's Society

**Referrals:** School Based Youth Services: 753-3192  
United Family & Children's Society: 755-4848

## HIV POSITIVE

**Definition:** Confirmed, positive HIV test.  
Legally, it is the parent[s]' decision to divulge a child's HIV status.  
[N.J.A.C. 8:61-1.1 (g)]

**Indicators:** There will be no physical indicators.  
Student may be depressed  
Possible frequent absences

**Protocol:** All staff members must follow universal precaution measures.  
[[N.J.A.C. 6:29-2.5]  
[See Guiding Principles]

HIV positive students are protected under the New Jersey  
Confidentiality Laws. [N.J.S.A. 26:5C et seq]

Refer to HIV/AIDS support group at School Based

(Information can be shared, only with the written consent of the pupil's parent or guardian, with those who need to know the status to determine the educational program for the student.)

**Follow-up:** Educate *EVERYONE* about this issue.

**Referral Agencies:** School Based Youth Services Program: 753-3192  
Planned Parenthood of Greater Northern New Jersey: 756-3736  
Hyacinth AIDS Foundation: 755-0021  
NJ AIDS Hotline: 1-800-624-2377.

## HIV POSITIVE PARENT/PARENT LIVING WITH AIDS

United Family & Children's Society will provide support services for children at risk of being orphaned or homeless because their parent(s) are ill with AIDS. Person with first knowledge of a student's need for life planning because of AIDS related issues should refer the family to United Family & Children's.

**United Family & Children's Society 755-4848**

## HOMELESSNESS

**Definition:** The loss of shelter or immediate threat of loss of shelter for a student and/or his/her family.

**Indicators:** Actual report of homelessness  
Erratic attendance  
Tardiness  
Repeated wearing of the same clothing  
Poor hygiene, unclean appearance  
Falling academic performance  
Defensiveness

**Protocol:** Person with first knowledge notify Guidance Counselor or Crisis Team  
Crisis Team interviews child, contacts parent(s)  
Explore any agency involvement with parent

	<u>Child Alone Under 16</u>	<u>Family/Child Alone Over 16</u>
Temporary Emergency Shelter	DYFS: 412-7900	YMCA: 756-6060
Permanent Shelter	DYFS: 412-7900	Interfaith Council for Homeless 756-1401

To arrange for emergency food, contact School Based: 753-3192  
Guidance Counselor makes recommendation regarding support needed and available

**Follow-up:** Guidance Counselor follows up to make sure appropriate services have been rendered  
Guidance Counselor sees student once per week for 4 weeks

**Referral Agencies:** Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS): 412-7900  
YMCA: 756-6060  
Plainfield Action Services: 753-3524  
Interfaith Council for the Homeless: 756-1401  
School Based Youth Services Program: 753-3192

## NATURAL DISASTER

**Definition:** Great destruction, hardship or loss of life from natural causes, e.g. flood, hurricane, tornado, etc.

**Indicators:** No specific indicators.  
Becomes known through news media, word of mouth or report to school

**Protocol:** Inform all staff of the disaster  
Call assembly or arrange for counselors to meet with groups of students.  
Refer affected students to Guidance Counselor  
Total school to be involved in any way needed, *i.e.* provide food and clothing  
Replace books and other school property  
Arrange make-up tests, homework follow-up

**Follow-up:** Guidance Counselors continue to work with students  
Assess need to continue to meet after 60 days  
Refer traumatized students to School Based counselor

**Referrals:** School Based Youth Services Counselor: 753-3192  
Red Cross: 756-6414  
United Family and Children's Society: 755-4848  
Interfaith Council for the Homeless: 756-1401  
YMCA Homeless Shelter: 756-6060

## PREGNANCY

**Definition:** The state of carrying a developing baby.

**Indicators:** Weight gain  
Enlarging breasts  
Increase in size of waist and abdomen  
Wearing oversized or baggy clothes  
Wearing outer clothing in school  
Covering abdomen with hands, books, clothing  
More frequent need to use lavatory  
Sleepy  
Avoidance of physical activity  
Questions about pregnancy, childbirth, labor, etc.

**Protocol:** Refer to nurse or guidance counselor to investigate validity  
Refer to School Based Pregnancy Prevention Specialist  
If student is planning to continue pregnancy, refer to School Based Teen Parenting Program  
At physician's discretion, student may be excused from physical education  
Student should not lift or move heavy objects

**Follow-up:** Doctor's note recommending home instruction  
Implement home instruction

**Referral Agencies:** School Based Youth Services Program: 753-3192  
Cardinal Health Center: 226-2520  
Plainfield Neighborhood Health Center: 753-6401  
Planned Parenthood of Greater Northern NJ: 756-3736  
WIC: 753-3397  
Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Mentoring: 753-3388

**NOTE:** The parents of a pregnant student may not be notified of the pregnancy without the express permission of the student, regardless of her age. The pregnant student may receive any treatment which is medically necessary in regard to the pregnancy. [N.J.S.A. 9:17 A-1. See Appendix]

**NOTE:** Parenting skills classes and support services are also available to teen fathers. Refer to School Based Youth Services Teen Pregnancy Prevention Specialist.

## SEXUAL ABUSE

"Any person having *reasonable cause* to believe that a child has been subjected to child abuse, or acts of child abuse, shall report the same promptly to the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS), by telephone or otherwise." [N.J.S. 9:6-8.10]

**Definition:** Any sexually inappropriate touching by any adult or person who has power over the child. This may be as simple as touch or fondling or as extreme as violent rape. May also include any inappropriate sexual attention such as flashing, sexually suggestive language, exposure to pornographic pictures or videos.

**Indicators:** Poor self image; poor body image - eating disorders  
Behavior that is opposite usual behavior  
Sexually provocative behavior - in adolescents, promiscuity  
May be best student in class - work up to, or beyond capacity; desperate to please - perfectionist  
Reluctant to participate in play or group activities  
Lying  
Use of chemical substances  
Avoidance of bathrooms  
Genital discomfort  
Sexually transmitted infection  
Pregnancy  
Excessive tattooing, multiple body piercing, self-mutilation

**Protocol:** Any suspicion of sexual abuse **must** be reported to Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) **by the person who discovers or suspects the abuse.**

**Local Office:** 412-7900  
**Toll-free 24 hour hot line:** 1-800-792-8610

DYFS will need the following information:

- a. Name and address of student
- b. Name and address of parents
- c. Age and sex of student
- d. Nature and extent of assault and description of injuries if observable by nurse

The information must be treated as highly confidential.

Inform the building administrator following the call.

The child must be supervised until DYFS takes over.

**Once disclosure is made, do not ask for any additional information.**

Assure child that he/she was not responsible for the abuse

If abuse is disclosed openly during class:

1. reassure student
2. if possible, take to private office and call DYFS
3. if you cannot leave class, tell student you will talk to her/him as soon as class is over; then call DYFS

**Follow-up:** Guidance counselor refers to School Based counselor  
Refer to Union County Rape Crisis Center: information, support groups  
Educate *EVERYONE* about sexual abuse prevention

**Referral Agencies:** DYFS: 412-7900  
School Based Youth Services: 753-3192  
Union County Rape Crisis Center: 233-7273  
United Family and Children's Society: 755-4848  
RESOLVE: 322-9180

## SEXUAL HARASSMENT

**Definition:** "A one time or repeated pattern of unprovoked aggressive behavior of a physical and/or psychological nature carried out by an individual or a group against an individual or group with the effect of causing harm or hurt. All forms of harassment meet the standards of being unwelcome, unwanted or uncomfortable in the view of the recipient. They all have the effect of creating a hostile environment. . . Sexual Harassment includes, but is not limited to the following:

1. Unwelcome leering, staring, sexual flirtations or propositions.
2. Unwelcome sexual slurs, threats, verbal abuse, derogatory comments, sexually degrading descriptions or remarks that imply incompetence as a characteristic of gender.
3. Basing consideration for transfer, assignments, evaluations, or promotions upon submission to unwanted sexual pressure.
4. Displaying sexually suggestive objects or materials in the schools such as drawings, pictures, etc., as well as telling sexual jokes, stories or making gestures.
5. Unwelcome spreading of sexual rumors.
6. Unwelcome touching of an individual's body or clothes in a sexual way.
7. Cornering or blocking of a sexual nature of normal physical movement."

**Board Policy # 5145.7; PERSONNEL Code 4111.2; 4211.2 [See Appendix]**

**Indicators:** Reticence [Avoidance of harasser(s)]  
Actual complaint  
Various types of negative behavior  
Agitated to the point of violence against harasser

**Protocol:** Notify District's Affirmative Action Officer, Dir. of Human Resources 753-3160  
Investigate validity - Notify both sets of parents \*  
See policy  
Educate **EVERYONE** about the issue  
If victim is traumatized, refer to counseling  
Punitive measures for harasser if appropriate

\* Each reported incident must be investigated, documented & filed.

**Follow-up:** Refer to Guidance Counselor, School Based counselor

**Referrals:** School Based Youth Services: 753-3192  
GAYLY-NJ for gay/lesbian issues: 201-285-1595  
United Family and Children's Society: 755-4848

## **SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIs)**

[Also called Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)]

**Definition:** A variety of contagious infections which are mainly spread through sexual contact. The most common STIs are chlamydia, gonorrhea, genital warts (HPV), syphilis, crabs, scabies. Students with STIs may receive treatment without parental notification.

**Indicators:** Skin rashes  
Chronic itching  
Frequent visits to the lavatory  
Squirming due to genital irritation, itching  
Questions about STIs

**Protocol:** Refer to school nurse.

**Follow-up:** Educate *EVERYONE* about STI prevention

**Referral Agencies:** School Based Youth Services Program (for education): 753-3192  
Cardinal Health Center: 226-2520  
Plainfield Neighborhood Health Center: 753-6401  
Planned Parenthood of Greater Northern NJ: 756-3736

**NOTE:** The parents of students with STIs may not be notified; students may receive medical treatment for STIs without parental permission. Several STIs must be reported to the Department of Health. [N.J.A.C. 8:57 *et seq*]

## SUBSTANCE ABUSE

- Definition:** The use of illicit drugs and alcohol.  
Individuals who use these drugs can become addicted. This dependency results in an inability to function as the addicted individual becomes increasingly debilitated. Addiction causes the user to need more and more drugs to function, often resulting in an inability to learn, hold a job or to be a proper parent.
- Indicators:** Abrupt changes in behavior and attitude  
A change of friends to those who use drugs  
Failure to communicate  
Failing grades  
Altered personal appearance  
Poor concentration  
Some bizarre behavior.
- Protocol:** Staff, teacher: Observe drug use behavior  
Inform Building Administrator or designee
- Administrator: Have school nurse examine student to evaluate if he/she is using or under the influence of drugs.  
Inform parent; recommend immediate medical treatment from physician or clinic; if no appointment, parent must take student to Muhlenberg Hospital.  
Administrator must complete Hospital Referral Form to take to Muhlenberg Hospital with student  
Call Hospital at **668-3015** and advise that student and parent are on the way to the Emergency Room  
If parent is not available, Building Administrator takes student to the hospital with or without parental consent  
School Administrator stays with student until triage is completed. The administrator arranges for student's home to be called until school closes if the parent is not available.
- Follow-up:** Administrator: Use Substance Referral to refer student to Substance Awareness Coordinator.  
Student is suspended from school in accordance with the established District Policy on Substance Abuse
- Referrals:** External services will be arranged by SAC as required

## SUICIDE

**Definition:** The act of or an instance of taking one's own life voluntarily and intentionally, by a person of sound mind.

**Indicators:** Voiced or written intent to engage in a suicidal act  
Has attempted a suicidal act  
Reclusive  
Depressed  
Withdrawn  
Secretive  
Bizarre behavior

**Protocol:** Person with first knowledge of a possible student suicidal attempt/threat contacts crisis team  
Parent/guardian *immediately* contacted and told to come to school  
immediately to take student to emergency room for psychiatric screening  
Prior to leaving school:  
- Call emergency treatment center and inform of student referral

### **Elizabeth Gen'l Medical Center Suicide Crisis Intervention: 629-8128**

If parent is unreachable, administrator takes student to hospital accompanied by security personnel  
Administrator must stay with student until arrival of family member/guardian

### **Attempted Suicidal Act**

If the student has attempted a suicidal act, notify School Nurse  
School nurse will assess situation and respond accordingly  
Notify Administrator of all proceedings. Administrator assists as necessary

**Administrator:** Notify parent/guardian and request they immediately report to school or emergency treatment center

**Follow-up:** Based upon student medical screening, school nurse/guidance counselor will determine time frame needed for follow-up  
Counselor will maintain contact with the student's family during any absence from school and assist family in obtaining any support services, *i.e.*, home instruction  
Upon return to school, counselor shall assist student and monitor closely for a minimum of six (6) months

**Referrals:** Elizabeth General Medical Center Suicide Crisis Intervention: 629-8128  
Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center: 668-2599  
School Based youth Services Program: 753-3192  
United Family & Children's Society: 755-4848  
Options Program/Red Cross: 754-6414

## TRAUMA OF FIRE

**Definition:** Loss by fire is an event that is outside the range of usual human experience that would be markedly distressing to almost anyone. Fire may cause a serious threat to one's life, and/or physical integrity; serious threat or harm to one's children, spouse or other close relatives and friends; sudden destruction of one's home or community or seeing another person who has recently been or had been seriously injured or killed as the result of an accident of physical violence. When a fire occurs, it is indeed a community crisis.

**Indicators:** Irritability or outbursts of anger  
Difficulty concentrating  
Hypervigilance  
Exaggerated startle response, i.e., hearing a fire truck siren  
Displaying of anxiety when exposed to events that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the trauma, i.e., children playing with matches  
Recurrent and intrusive distressing recollection of the event  
Recurrent dreams of the event  
A sense of reliving the experience  
Difficulty in falling or staying asleep

**Protocol:** Anyone who first learns of the fire should contact the building administrator or designee  
The building administrator or administrative designee should contact the Crisis Intervention Team [CIT] and report all information  
The CIT should contact the student's parent to articulate support, concerns, explore needs  
Explore any agency involvement with parent  
Refer to Guidance Counselor to assess emotional status  
After Guidance Counselor assessment, Counselor and CIT should discuss and make recommendations relative to support services available.  
Depending on severity of loss, counselor may arrange class discussion, assembly or small group sessions for entire school [See: Natural Disaster]  
Provide food and clothes  
Replace books and school property  
Arrange make-up tests, home-work follow-up

**Follow-up:** The student and situation should be closely monitored. The student should be seen by the Guidance Counselor at least once weekly or whenever necessary for a period of sixty (60) days. Follow-up from support services should be documented.

**Referrals:** School Based Youth Services Counselor: 753-3192  
Red Cross: 756-6414  
United Family & Children's Society: 755-4848  
Interfaith Council for the Homeless: 756-1401  
YMCA Emergency Shelter: 756-6060

## VIOLENT DEATH

**Definition:** Student(s)' reaction resulting from the death of a family member, staff member or friend as a result of suicide or homicide. Particularly in the case of suicide, immediate intervention is essential to prevent the possibility of "copycat" attempts.

**Indicators:** Anxiety  
Shock and numbness  
Sadness, crying  
Anger  
Shame  
Guilt ("Did my behavior cause this? Could I have stopped it?")  
Frequent illness  
Slipping academic performance

**Protocol:** Staff or student with first knowledge of the death should inform school administrator  
Principal or administrative designee locates Crisis Team members and convenes meeting  
Maintain the structure and order of school routine  
Schedule staff meeting as soon as possible to provide accurate information, allow staff to express their feelings, inform of plan to be used  
Arrange for counselors to meet with students in their classrooms to present accurate, consistent information  
If death was to family member, exempt from testing, homework for two weeks; arrange for make-up tests if necessary  
Determine need for faculty meeting after school during which the following may be provided:  
    additional information  
    helpful handouts/parent notification  
    additional counseling  
    Crisis Team answers questions  
    resource information on community resources  
School Crisis Team meets for assessment, critique and possible additional plans  
Crisis Team collects all data on the death and strategizes method of crisis counseling  
Counselors/Crisis Team members may meet with classes, family members, friends of individual involved  
If necessary, seek services of District Child Study Team

**Follow-up:** Crisis Team monitors students for potential acute effects for 60 days  
Encourage students to talk about the person, express feelings verbally, through journals, artwork  
Refer traumatized students to School Based counselor  
Assess need to continue to meet after 60 days

**Referrals:** Child Study Team: 753-3477  
Dr. Nancy Durant: 757-9762 (Suicidal)  
School Based Youth Services Counselor: 753-3192  
United Family & Children's Society: 755-4848  
Muhlenberg Hospital Mental Health Crisis Counseling: 668-2244  
Elizabeth General Hospital: 965-7600  
Resolve Community Counseling Center: 322-9180  
Union County Psychiatric Clinic: 756-6870  
Union County Youth Services Bureau: 298-7800

## APPENDIX

### AIDS

#### Definition:

MORBIDITY AND MORTALITY WEEKLY REVIEW Vol. 41/No. RR-17

APPENDIX B. Conditions included in the 1993 AIDS surveillance case definition

- Candidiasis of bronchi, trachea, or lungs
- Candidiasis, esophagela
- Cervical cancer, invasive\*
- Coccidioidomycosis, extrapulmonary
- Cryptococcosis, Extrapulmonary
- Cryptosporidiosis, chronic intestinal (> 1 month's duration)
- Cytomegalovirus disease (other than liver, spleen, or nodes)
- Cytomegalovirus retinitis (with loss of vision)
- Encephalopathy, HIV-related
- Herpes simplex: chronic ulcer(s) (>1 month's duration); or bronchitis, pneumonitis or esophagitis
- Histoplasmosis, disseminated or extrapulmonary
- Isoporiasis, chronic intestinal (>1 month's duration)
- Kaposi's sarcoma
- Lymphoma, Burkitt's (or equivalent term)
- Lymphoma, Immunoblastic (or equivalent term)
- Lymphoma, primary, of brain
- *Mycobacterium avium* complex or *M. kansasii*, disseminated or extrapulmonary
- *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, any site (pulmonary\* or extrapulmonary)
- *Mycobacterium*, other species or unidentified species, disseminated or extrapulmonary
- *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia
- Pneumonia, recurrent\*
- Progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy
- *Salmonella* septicemia, recurrent
- Toxoplasmosis of brain
- Wasting syndrome due to HIV
- CD4+ T-cell count <200\*

\*Added to definition 1/93

N.J.A.C. 8:57-2.5 Exceptions to communicable disease classification of AIDS and HIV

- (a) AIDS or HIV infection shall not be considered a communicable disease for purposes of admission to, attendance in, or transportation in any of the following:
1. Nursing homes and other health care facilities;
  2. Rooming and boarding homes, and shelters for the homeless;
  3. Ambulances and other public conveyances; and
  4. Educational facilities

## **Informed Consent**

N.J.S.A. 9:17A-4 states that a minor may consent to medical or surgical care or treatment for venereal disease, sexual assault, drug use or alcoholism.

"the consent to the provision of medical or surgical care or services by a hospital, public clinic, or the performance of medical or surgical care or services by a physician, licensed to practice medicine, when executed by a minor who is or professes to be afflicted with a venereal disease, or by a minor who, in the judgment of a treating physician, appears to have been sexually assaulted, shall be valid and binding as if the minor had achieved his or her majority, as the case may be. . . In the case of a minor who appears to have been sexually assaulted, the minor's parents or guardian shall be notified immediately, unless the attending physician believes that it is in the best interests of the patient not to do so; however, inability of the treating physician, hospital or clinic to locate or notify the parents or guardian shall not preclude the provision of any necessary emergency medical or surgical care to the minor."

"The consent of no other person or persons, including but not limited to a spouse, parent, custodian or guardian, shall be necessary in order to authorize such hospital, facility or clinical care or services or medical or surgical care or services to be provided by a physician licensed to practice medicine or by an individual licensed to provide treatment for alcoholism. . ."

## WHAT HAPPENS TO CHILDREN WHEN THEY EXPERIENCE CRISES

When trigger events occur and children are in crisis, they go through a series of behavior changes. These changes in behavior may be confusing and difficult for people to understand. These changes also indicate that children greatly need our help.

### PHASE ONE:

**Anxiety.** When trigger events occur, children are usually hit by a strong wave of anxiety. They are "upset." This state of anxiety may be seen in behavior ranging from fear, shock and disbelief to strong emotional outbursts such as crying, yelling, swearing and making threats. The youth may even become physically ill. He/she may want to be alone and may go to his/her room or rush out of the house.

### PHASE TWO:

**Disorganized Behavior.** The second phase may best be described as disorganized behavior. The youth does not seem to be thinking clearly. He/she may say things like, "Everyone is against me. No one cares about me. The school and your home and this stupid program stinks. I'm going to run away." He/she does not take into account that you and the members of your staff have been patiently and honestly working with him/her for a long period of time.

The youth may demonstrate aggressive or impulsive behavior. He/she may "throw a fit," break property, run away, lock him/herself in his/her room, yell or swear.

He/she may also express hostility toward those who care about him/her. He/she may say hurtful things to people. He/she may sulk, be silent, pout, physically remove him/herself from the family, run away or stay in his room.

Other youths may react to the trigger event differently and show extreme dependence on other people, especially the foster parents and caseworker. He/she may say, "I don't know how to handle this situation. I'm so upset that I don't know what to do. You have to do something to make it right for me. Solve the problem for me."

Other may "regress" and start behaving in "old ways" once again. In an emergency, a person who has quit smoking may start again; a youth who is toilet trained may start soiling him/herself; or a youth who has completely stopped using drugs may "get high."

### PHASE THREE:

**Physical Acting Out.** The youth who is experiencing a serious emergency may, in a real sense, lose control and act out physically against him/herself or others.

If the intense emotions go unchecked or unmanaged and continue to increase, physical violence may be the result. The child may strike out at others or he may do physical damage to him/herself by cutting, pulling out hair or eyebrows or burning.

PHASE FOUR:

Tension Reduction. Emergencies do not last forever. The child, parents and caseworker are usually able to set a course toward resolving and managing even the most serious problems. As the youth begins to understand the situation fully and take positive steps to cope with the emergency in a responsible, constructive manner, his/her emotional tensions are reduced.

## METHODS OF INTERVENTION

During the course of an emergency, people have two important functions:

1. **Being there.** Knowing that you are with him/her and supporting him/her is very important to the youth. If you are there, he/she is not alone. A youth can face and manage just about any crisis **IF HE/SHE KNOWS THAT HE/SHE IS NOT ALONE.**
2. **Helping the youth to think her/his way through the emergency.** You have gained a great deal of experience by living. You can "loan" your thoughts and ideas to the youth. Perhaps by having you think with her/him, she/he can understand and choose a successful solution, one that she/he might not have grasped all by her/himself.

The following list contains methods of intervention which individuals can use to help children resolve emergencies:

### **Use effective listening skills**

Listening is critically important whenever parents assist young people in crisis. Listening helps the youth to discharge his/her emotional energy and consequently helps him/her regain control and use his/her thinking abilities more effectively. As the person listens and clarifies and summarizes, the youth discharges energy and "talks through" the problem. By talking through the problem, the youth comes to more fully understand the emergency and can begin to manage it in a positive, responsible manner.

Listening is an individual's primary tool for helping youth manage emergencies.

### **Apply the methods and principles of Reality Therapy**

Help the child to understand what he/she really wants and how his/her actions are either helping or hindering. Assist him/her to develop a plan. The Reality Therapy process will help the child to think clearly about the emergency and the possible consequences of his/her actions.

### **Use planned and purposeful ignoring**

The individual must size up and evaluate the youth's behavior and reactions to the emergency. On occasion, the emergency will be resolved quickly and with few, if any, interventions by the individual. Sometimes, just being there as a possible resource and really listening will be enough to enable the youth to solve the problem him/herself.

### **Touch**

Just being near the youth sometimes has a calming, reassuring effect. An appropriate hug or a gentle touch often confirms the individual's concern and support. Through touch, the individual can show that they care.

## **Express Interest**

Becoming involved and actively showing interest in the problem or the tasks will make it clear to the youth that you care and they, the child, need not feel he/she is alone. When the individual gets involved in doing something with a child (listening, helping with school work, or working together on a project), the staff is in an excellent position to redirect the youth to a more realistic style of thinking and/or behaving.

## **Give help and assistance**

Some of the most violent tantrums occur when a child runs into a wall on the way to reaching an attempted goal - such as completing school work, putting on make-up, or building a model. Occasionally a youth will go to pieces when he/she is blocked by some obstacle. If the child is stopped the minute before the tantrum begins and given some help getting over that hurdle, the whole tantrum may be avoided.

## **Appeal to the child for a behavior change on the basis of:**

- a. Personal relationships: "Look, Bob. We've been through a lot together and I thought that our relationship meant more to you than this. Let's see if there is another way of managing this so that what we've been able to build together isn't ruined."
- b. Physical Reality: "Sam. I know that you are embarrassed and angry. But that guy is a big football player and a wrestler. I think that if you got into a fight with him it would be bad news."  
OR "I know that you would like to be home with your mother for Christmas and that you would also like to be here with us. But, Susan, one person simply cannot be in two places at one time. I guess it's either one or the other."
- c. Undesirable consequences of the act: "Yes, Jane. I know that you are angry and hurt about what your mother said. But what do you think the long range effect would be if you called her right now when you are so hurt and angry. You might say things that you don't really mean and the relationship might be damaged permanently. Let's think about it some more, OK?"
- d. The child's self-pride: "Sure, she told lies about you. And I know that telling all sorts of lies about her would . . .well . . .get even. But that would put you on the same level as she is. How would you feel about yourself then?"

## **SUMMARY**

**TO RE-EMPHASIZE ONE POINT:** In emergency situations or crises, the future may seem very bleak and hopeless to the youth. An individual can be a help to the youth by:

1. understanding and hearing the pain and hurt caused by the emergency; and
2. keeping in mind that even during the worst crisis of all time, actions can be taken which can improve the current situation.

Certainly, emergencies are a threat to a child's self-esteem and cause pain and suffering. However, the emergency also offers the promise of a possible solution and an opportunity for growth.

## MANAGING AN EMERGENCY: PRINCIPLES OF INTERVENTION

There are six principles of intervention for helping youth effectively manage emergency situations. These principles will help to guide the school staff's thinking and actions while they assist the youth to successfully resolve the situation.

1. **Don't panic.** Panic will not help resolve the problem. In fact, panic hinders the problem resolution process. Panic is very contagious. If you allow yourself to become infected by the youth's panic, he/she will recognize through your panic reaction that his/her emergency is **SO BIG** and **SO SERIOUS** that it upsets you. He/she fears that no one will be able to help him/her out of such a powerful emergency. The first rule for effectively helping youth in an emergency is: **DON'T PANIC!** Keep as calm as possible.

2. During an emergency children may think, "Oh, this is terrible! This is the end of the world! There is absolutely no way that I can get things back to normal again. I'll have to live like this forever and ever."

Although the youth may honestly believe these thoughts, nothing could be further from the truth. The second guiding principle of intervention is for people to remember that **crises don't last forever**. Think along these lines: "Sure, everything seems all botched up right now. I understand that you don't see any light at the end of the tunnel. However, we will make decisions and take actions which will help to make things better than they are now. Maybe we won't work things out to your 100% satisfaction, but **WE WILL WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE THINGS BETTER.**"

3. When a youth is involved in a crisis, people will be most effective if they **maintain a helpful attitude**. In the middle of an emergency is not the time to be thinking of discipline or punishment. The successful staff member helps the child through this difficult experience and assists the youth to regain control of him/herself physically, mentally and emotionally. He/she needs your help to re-establish rational thinking and effective behaviors.
4. A vital element of helping youth through an emergency is to assist the youth to **express, discharge or drain off emotional or physical energy**. Staff members must help the youth to talk about his thoughts and feelings. The parent must not block this discharge of emotions. The youth will begin to think clearly again only after this emotional energy has been discharged. Helpful individuals are those who maintain a **"NON-DEFENSIVE"** and **"NON-JUDGMENTAL"** attitude toward children.

During an emergency is no time to lecture the youth about the bad judgments he has made. Do not tell him/her that he/she has brought all this trouble upon himself. Avoid saying, "I told you so," or asking such probing questions as, "Why did you do this?" or "Why are you so upset?"

Those methods of intervention are **NOT HELPFUL**. They will block the discharge of emotions and escalate the emergency.

5. Individuals who are successful helpers to young people in crisis will not **IMPOSE** solutions or **INSIST** on specific methods of coping or managing during the emergency. Imposing a solution upon the youth may cause his emotional energy to increase and may even provoke a violent outburst.

**The successful person will be able to gently guide the youth as he works through the pain of the emergency.**

6. **Showing an acceptance** of the youth's solutions for the emergency may be the most difficult aspect of the helping him/her resolve the crisis. Effective solutions must not only be grounded in reality, but must also relate to the child's capabilities and needs. Throughout their lives, people have accumulated considerable experience in managing emergencies. Perhaps you can "see" the solution which would quickly resolve the problem. Even so, the youth must be encouraged to struggle, work out and achieve his own solution. Even when the youth's solution is not the best one possible, the understanding person will make concessions for the youth's taste patterns and abilities.

## CHILDREN'S VIEW OF DEATH

### AGES THREE TO SIX

1. Think death is reversible ( *i.e.* Bible stories and cartoons). They may ask many questions about when the 'dead' person will return. Need explanations they can understand of what 'dead' means.
2. Tend to connect events that are not related. ("Grandpa is sick. Mama said my whistle was making his headache worse. Gandpa died - I made him die. Mama says she has a headache. Is she going to die too?") Need to know the difference in being sick and *very sick*, old and *very old*. ("Mama said Grandpa died because he was old. 'Daddy, how old are you?")
3. Grieve intermittently; may cry and then be seen happily playing within the next 15 minutes.
4. Need to be told the truth about the death, about what the adults are feeling and why, and that it is O.K. to cry because "we are all sad."

### AGES SIX TO NINE

1. Most can understand that death is final, but still want to believe (and may pretend) that they person will return. (*magical thinking*).
2. Need detailed explanation of how person died. They are both fascinated by and afraid of death. When one parent dies, are very fearful of other parent dying. Need explanations about their own and others' sad feelings.
3. May think that they caused the death (*magical thinking*). Hyperactivity can result from failure to resolve grief/guilt.

### AGE NINE TO TWELVE

1. Know that death is final. More aware of how a death of someone close may affect their daily lives. May feel embarrassed or 'different'.
2. Feelings very close to those experienced by adults - sadness, anger, guilt. Adults should assure children that these are normal feelings and allow them to express and talk about their feelings.
3. May show more anger, guilt, and overt grief than younger children or may be reluctant to show any emotion. May feel responsible for the death in some way (*magical thinking*).

# CHILDREN AND GRIEF:

## Living With Loss

### STAGES OF GRIEF

<u>STAGE</u>	<u>TYPE OF BEHAVIOR</u>
Shock	Appears inactive, expressionless, numb Exhibits denial, disbelief Feels disorganized Loses appetite
Fear	Feels terror Panics in absence of parents Feels helpless Fears something will happen to loved one or self Develops physical symptoms, sleep disturbances
Anger	Resents others and self Exhibits uncooperative and rude behavior
Guilt	Blames self for loss Has lowered self esteem
Depression	Feels empty Appears unhappy and cries excessively Yearns or searches for lost object or person Withdraws, is silent
Acceptance	Has experienced separation or loss and is able to cope Feels hopeful Reorganizes life and focuses on the present

The expression of grief may differ with each individual yet follow a broad common framework. No matter what type of loss is experienced, the same process must be gone through each time, although the length and intensity of the experience will differ. The stages of grief are not necessarily in a particular order, for individuals may flow back and forth between stages. These phases of grief normally last from 8 months to 2 years after the loss.

## PERCEPTIONS OF DEATH

Keep in mind that each child is unique in his/her understanding of death. The process is a very individual one and the ages given below are flexible. However, the following categories do provide some general guidelines.

### 1. Early Childhood

Before age 6, most children believe death is gradual, happening to the very old. It is seen as reversible (*i.e.*, when the cartoon character gets smashed, peels back up and bounces back to life.) Young children are often concerned about physical needs of the deceased (*i.e.*, food, warmth).

### 2. Middle Childhood

By age 6 - 10, most youngsters comprehend the finality and universality of death. Death is often personified in a scary form (*i.e.*, skeleton, monster). There may be questions regarding the death process and rituals after death. Some children assume that the deceased is "watching over them." This can be a problem if the child feels he/she must become PERFECT for the deceased.

The child should feel that someone is there to listen. Any information given should be clearly given so that the child's imagination does not conjure up his/her own explanations.

### 3. Pre-adolescence

From the ages of 9 - 12, youngsters may exhibit some of the following:

- need to verbalize
- need for reassurance
- predominance of guilt feelings
- concerns for surviving parent
- understanding of "forever"
- acceptance of the inevitability of death
- humorous attitude toward death
- indifferent attitude toward death

### 4. Adolescence

During the teenage years, you may notice the following:

- concern that they caused the death
- humorous attitude toward death
- embarrassment about death
- little regard for peers' losses
- neglect of responsibilities
- withdrawal
- outrage, expressed anger
- difficulty expressing sadness
- feeling of immortality, experimentation with danger

It is important to note the extremes in the adolescent behaviors, clearly indicating mixed emotions regarding death.

Teenagers may tend to give the impression that they "have it under control," when in fact, the opposite may be true. Communication is crucial, although it may be tough to get past the barriers.

#### 5. Young adults

Over the age of 20, loss can be very difficult and confusing for an only child or the caretaker. Young adults have begun to come to grips with their mortality. If they haven't experienced loss earlier, facing a death may be overwhelming.

# HELPING TEACHERS ASSIST IN STUDENT BEREAVEMENT

## Basic Notes to Teachers on Grief Work

Any death in a school is like a death in the family. There is a concept called "Group Survivorship." The term describes the phenomena typically present when anyone experiences the death of someone close to them. It will be common for a teacher to observe the following group-survivorship needs in students:

- Troubled thoughts and feelings related to guilt, anger, and sadness
- A desire to be recognized as "survivors" who have experienced a loss
- A wide range of behaviors from crying in public and disorganized, confused wandering about the halls to a somewhat callous disregard for others' feelings
- An intense curiosity about the details of the death
- An expectation to be informed about the loss and the school's planned response
- A wish to participate in a memorial service coupled with a general lack of awareness about mourning rituals
- A need for directions on how to assist each other to deal with a loss

## Group Discussion Guidelines

The following topics are issues generally raised in any discussion with young people who have experienced any loss in the school community:

### TOPICS

### CLASSROOM TEACHER OR GROUP LEADER CAN:

#### MEMORIES

Review the deceased's life. "tell me what you remember about \_\_\_\_\_." "Remember when \_\_\_\_\_ did this?"

#### CAUSES (Why)

Review the circumstances of the death. Reframe their representations. (e.g., Some will want to blame parents, teachers, or friends. Emphasize that the real truth is that suicide is the wrong solution to pressures which all of us experience in life

#### WHAT WILL HAPPEN (What's next?)

Shape their expectations about the ritual of mourning. Some have never been exposed to the grieving process (e.g., what they will see; what to do and say; hints on note writing etiquette).

#### WHAT CAN WE DO (How to help)

Shape their responses, *i.e.*, what they could do for themselves and others because this had happened. Help them focus on being mutually supportive; encourage their pursuit of school programs to combat losses such as the one experienced by the school community.

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## SUGGESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AFTER A LOSS

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- Writing a eulogy
- Designing a yearbook page commemorating the deceased
- Honoring the deceased by collecting memorabilia for the trophy cabinet
- Writing stories about the victim or the incident
- Drawing pictures of the incident
- Debating controversial issues
- Investigating laws governing similar incidents
- Creating a sculpture
- Creating a class banner *in memorium*
- Building a fitness course, a sign for the school, or a bulletin board in memory
- Discussing ways to cope with traumatic situations
- Discussing the stages of grief
- Conducting a mock trial if laws were broken
- Starting a new school activity, such as a SADD unit, if a child was killed by a drunk driver
- Encouraging students to keep a journal of events and of their reactions, especially if in an ongoing situation
- Placing a collection box in the class for notes to the family
- Urging students to write the things they wish they could have said to the deceased
- Practicing alternatives for coping with depression, if suicide is involved
- Analyzing why people take drugs and suggesting ways to help abusers, if substance abuse related

## RESPONDING TO THE MEDIA

The following guidelines are presented for working with the press when a school has experienced a crisis.

### Crises and Emergencies

In an emergency, Community Relations (753-3654) should be notified after appropriate administrative and security offices are called. At the request of the principal, community relations will provide assistance with news media inquiries.

The superintendent will designate an official spokesperson for the school district when an emergency occurs.

The community relations officer has the primary responsibility to receive and answer requests from the news media. Staff members should not make any commitment to the media to speak, appear or be interviewed. Such requests shall be referred to the community relations officer who will assess the opportunity and, after consultation with the superintendent of schools, will designate a spokesperson.

*Policy and Procedures on Public Communications (#1100)  
Adopted by the Board of Education of the City of Plainfield  
at its Business Meeting of March 15, 1994.*

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Bogden, James F., MPH Principal Author and Fraser, Katherine. *Someone at School has AIDS*. National Association of State Boards of Education, 1996.

### Child Abuse

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Underwood, Maureen M, ACSW and Dunne-Maxim, Karen, MS, RN. *Managing Sudden Violent Loss in the Schools. New Jersey Adolescent Suicide Prevention Project*. New Jersey State Department of Education, New Jersey State Department of Human Services & UMDNJ-CMHC. 1993. Contains a very comprehensive bibliography of additional readings, and guidance for preventing crises and how to respond to them.

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### Family Erosion

Lamb, F., Dunne-Maxim, K. & Gaffney, D. "Postvention for Educational Systems" in Rotherham-Borus, M., Bradley, J., Obolensky, N., Editors. *Planning to Live: Evaluating and Treating Teens in Community Settings*. Tulsa Oklahoma National Resource Center for Youth Service. 1990.

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Kirst, M.W., *Improving Children's Services*. Vol. 72., no.8. 616-618. 1991.

Nelson, George, ed. National Urban League. *Stop the Violence. Overcoming Self-Destruction*. New York. Pantheon. 1990.

## SCHOOL & COMMUNITY RESOURCES

### ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

#### Child Study Team

Evergreen School  
1033 Evergreen Avenue  
753-3477  
William Gary, Director of Special Services

#### BRIDGES - Out Placement Program

Student Review Committee in each school

#### Plainfield Adult Learning Center

301-303 East 2<sup>nd</sup> Street  
Contact person - Carole Beris, Director  
753-3350 or 3366.  
Two secondary school completion options:  
1. Adult High School - 120 credits and HSPT required to graduate  
Flexible scheduling - classes are offered both day and evening.  
2. GED preparation classes are offered both day and evening.

#### Union County Vocational & Technical School, Adult High School

1776 Raritan Road  
Scotch Plains 07076  
John Crowley - 908-889-2904  
120 credits and HSPT required to graduate  
10 credits in vocational education; 110 credits in academics  
25 courses  
Classes are held 3 - 6:30 p.m. Monday - Thursday  
Students must attend minimum of twice per week  
14 week Fall and Spring semesters with 7 week intercession  
Summer sessions with double time for classes.  
Accepts classified students

#### Venture & Venture

400 Park Avenue  
561-9600  
Entry level occupational skill training including:  
word processing, general office clerk, receptionist; attitudinal experiential training included  
Prerequisites for all programs.  
Youth and young adults from Union County  
John Downs, President  
\$3900 - Eligible students paid for by J.T.P.A.

#### Edison Prep/Job Corps

500 Plainfield Avenue  
Edison 08818  
16 -19 year olds  
GED and Job Training Program  
Sue Macer, Ed. Coordinator  
Tonya Smith Acting Director  
985-4800

#### Youth Challenge Program

Residential program at Fort Dix  
16 - 19 years old  
5 month program leads to GED and \$2,200 stipend  
Return to County of residence with mentor  
Contact - William Barksdale 609-562-0583  
Must be drug-free  
No pending court dates

#### Union County Alternative Education Program

Kean College  
East Campus  
Union  
289-1935  
Madeline DiMario, Administrator  
\$9,000 per student  
Disaffected students with chronic absenteeism, aggressive or violent behavior, involvement with alcohol or drugs, involvement with juvenile justice system, home or family problems; failing grades.  
Provides individualized program, counseling.

#### Union County Educational Services Commission

Hillcrest School  
Currently serves Elizabeth students only  
Possibility of new program with sufficient registration  
Ed Hartnet - 233-9317, ext. 31  
\$11,000 per student

## AGENCIES

There are many mental health, social service and day care agencies who provide services to the schools through grants or other links. The agencies listed below are linked to the Plainfield schools through grants or other service agreements.

### HEALTH CARE AGENCIES

#### Cardinal Health Center

Trailer in High School parking lot  
226-2520

Immunizations, Complete physical examinations, Urgent care, Pregnancy testing and referral, Family Planning Counseling and referral, Sexually Transmitted Disease treatment, Screening and referral for dental services, Mental Health referrals.

Monday - Friday 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

#### Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition

City Hall Annex  
510 Watchung Avenue  
753-3388

Outreach services to link pregnant women with prenatal and reproductive health care

#### Hyacinth AIDS Foundation

700 Park Avenue  
755-0021

Anonymous HIV counseling, testing and referral

HIV outreach education and information; Speakers' Bureau

Support groups

HOTLINE 1-800-433-0254

#### Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center

Park Avenue & Randolph Road  
668-2000

Full service hospital

Indigent health care

Marjorie Proudman, MSW

#### Plainfield Neighborhood Health Center

1700 Myrtle Avenue  
754-6701

Primary health care; City well baby and inoculation clinic; pregnancy tests and prenatal care; sexually transmitted disease [STD] clinic for City; HIV/AIDS testing & counseling; HIV case management.

Satellite at Plainfield High School provides check-ups and treatment for illness and injury for students with parental permission;

well baby care for infant/toddler day care babies.

#### Planned Parenthood of Greater Northern NJ

123 Park Avenue  
756-3736

All services confidential: reproductive health care; contraceptive services; STD testing, counseling and treatment, including HIV; HIV outreach; sexuality education/resource center.

#### Tri County Visiting Nurses Association

427 West 7<sup>th</sup> Street  
756-2436

Services for under 16 and pregnant

Home visits for high-risk pregnancy

Home care for older family members

### MENTAL HEALTH

#### School Based Youth Services Program

925 Arlington Avenue (HS North Wing)  
753-3192

Louise Yohalem, Director

Individual, family and group counseling, recreation, tutoring, job training and placement, referrals for social services, medical treatment and long-term therapy

#### Dr. Nancy Durant, Psychiatrist

925 Kensington Avenue  
757-9762

Consultant to District; counseling for students in crisis.

#### STEPS Recovery Program

Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center  
Park Avenue & Randolph Road

668-2095/2394

Ana Guerra, Program Coordinator

Adolescent Substance Abuse Services

#### Elizabeth General Medical Center

654 East Jersey Street  
Elizabeth

629-8128

Suicide Crisis Intervention

#### Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center

Randolph Road & Park Avenue  
Plainfield

668-2599

Emergency Suicide Intervention

**Options Program**

Red Cross  
332 West Front Street  
754-6414  
Support for children of alcoholic parents  
treatment of alcohol and drug abuse  
Girl's Club

**United Family and Children's Society**

305 West 7<sup>th</sup> Street  
755-4848  
Mental health services; counseling; teen  
parenting programs; adoption services  
Drug counseling  
Ralph Perrone, Director

**Union County Psychiatric Clinic**

117-119 Roosevelt Avenue  
756-6870  
Marylou McCarty, Social Worker

**RESOLVE Community Counseling Center, Inc.**

1830 Front Street  
Scotch Plains  
322-9180  
Mental health services, specializing in rape,  
sexuality issues

**NON ACADEMIC EDUCATION****School Based Youth Services: Teen Parenting Program**

Plainfield High School (North Wing)  
925 Arlington Avenue  
753-3192  
Contact - Danice Stone  
Teen Parenting Program, MELD & TEAM  
Ongoing parenting education for teen  
mothers and teen fathers

**Good Beginnings**

654 West 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
769-1689  
Contact - Sally Ann Benjamin, Director  
Classes in nutrition, parenting skills,  
HIV/AIDS  
Support groups  
Women of all ages; must be less than 4  
months pregnant to enroll  
Referrals for prenatal care, other assistance;  
child care available for participants

**SOCIAL SERVICES****School Based Youth Services Program**

Plainfield High School, North Wing

925 Arlington Avenue  
753-3192

Louise Yohalem, Director  
Referrals from Guidance Counselors,  
teachers, self-referral  
Case management, intraschool and  
interagency referral and follow-up  
Programs include: individual, family and  
group counseling; crisis intervention and  
conflict mediation; recreation; special  
events; job training and placement; teen  
parenting skills program and day care;  
tutoring; mentoring; "For Dads Only"  
program; volunteer program.

**City Welfare Office**

City Hall Annex  
510 Watchung Avenue, First Floor  
753-3100  
Information and referral for financial and  
medical aid  
(Aid to Families with Dependent Children,  
MEDICAID)

**Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS)**

700 Park Avenue  
412-7913  
Report family violence, sexual abuse,  
neglect and abuse  
YWCA respite program  
Al Dawan, Director

**Food Stamps**

754-8060  
(Must call for appointment)  
Food assistance program

**GALY-NJ**

(Gay and Lesbian Youth in New Jersey)  
(201) 285-1595  
Support services for gay, lesbian and  
bisexual youth

**Healthy Mothers/Healthy Babies Coalition**

City Hall Annex  
515 Watchung Avenue  
Patricia Pettway, Coordinator  
753-3388  
Information and referrals for all services  
related to reducing infant and maternal  
mortality.

**Interfaith Council for the Homeless**

120 West 7<sup>th</sup> Street  
756-1401  
Shelter for homeless  
Educational programs include Lifeskills,  
parenting and HIV/AIDS  
Melinda Allen-Grote

**YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association)**  
518 Watchung Avenue  
756-6060  
Ronnie Taylor-Hill, Social Worker

**Plainfield Action Services**  
City Hall Annex  
510 Watchung Avenue  
753-3524  
Rental and Utility assistance  
Emergency food  
Youth Employment  
Bilingual Day Care Center

**Plainfield Police Department**  
753-3131  
To report a crime, family violence  
Police Athletic League recreational programs

**Union County Legal Services**  
60 Prince Street  
Elizabeth  
354-4340  
Legal representation for housing, health,  
domestic violence and consumer matters.

**Union County Rape Crisis Center**  
233-7273  
Assistance for victims of rape, date and  
acquaintance rape, incest.  
Support groups

**WIC (Women, Infants and Children)**  
City Hall Annex  
510 Watchung Avenue  
753-3387  
Free nutritious supplemental food  
Nutrition education  
Referral to health care

## **HISPANIC AGENCIES**

El Centro Hispanoamericano  
525 East Front Street  
753-8730  
Contact: Jacques Howard, Director

Plainfield Bilingual Day Care Center  
225 West 2<sup>nd</sup> Street  
753-3124  
Contact: Eva J. Rosas-Amirault, Director

## **City Hall Divisions with Hispanic Contacts**

Community Relations & Social Services  
510 Watchung Avenue  
753-3525  
Contact: Maria Lopez

Plainfield City Welfare  
510 Watchung Avenue  
753-3101  
Contact: Nydia Velez

Alertop/Alcohol Rehab/Drug Counseling  
753-3404  
Contact: Hernan Pulido

City Clerk's Office  
515 Watchung Avenue  
753-3222  
Contact: Celenia Bermudez or Lourdes Jimenez

Municipal Court  
753-3078  
Contact: Carmen Gonzalez or Florence Martinez

Human Resources/Personnel  
515 Watchung Avenue  
753-3401  
Contact: Irma Garcia

Police Department  
753-3017  
Contact: Captain Edward Santiago

W.I.C. (Women, Infants & Children)  
510 Watchung Avenue  
753-3397  
Contact: Lesbia Garaa or Evelyn Vazquez

## **Other Agencies**

Division of Youth & Family Services (DYFS)  
700 Park Avenue  
412-7900  
Contact: Celia Wendall

STEPS RECOVERY PROGRAM  
Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center  
Park Avenue & Regional Road  
668-2394  
Contact: Ana Guerra

QM Language Education Services  
7-9 Watchung Avenue, Suite 209  
412-9700  
Contact: Mariana Jimenez

Hyacinth AIDS Foundation  
755-0021  
Contact: Luis Velez

Primera I. Bautista  
754-7305  
Contact: Francisco Salvador Orellana

Planned Parenthood of Greater Northern NJ  
123 Park Avenue  
756-3736  
Contact: Margareta Patel  
Center for Family Life Education  
756-3765  
Contact: Elizabeth Amaya

St. Marys Church  
524 West 6<sup>th</sup> Street  
Reverend Francisco Ponce

Plainfield Health Center  
1700 Myrtle Avenue  
753-6401  
Contact: Dalila Flores

Interfaith Council for the Homeless  
756-1401  
Contact: Denise Moore

Good Beginnings  
654 West 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
Contact: Gisela Molinare

**Hispanic Churches**

Spanish Presbyterian Church  
525 E. Front Street  
756-3888  
Contact: Humberto Castro

10.96

**PROCEDURE MANUAL FOR STUDENTS REFERRED  
TO DISCIPLINARY REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**Plainfield Board of Education  
504 Madison Avenue  
Plainfield, New Jersey 07060**

**Prepared  
By  
William E. Gary  
Director  
Pupil Personnel Services  
Revised: February, 1998**

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## **PROCEDURES FOR HOLDING DISCIPLINARY REVIEW COMMITTEE HEARINGS**

The Plainfield Board of Education in its continued effort to implement an efficient, expedient, and thorough process of reviewing disciplinary infractions that warrants a review by the Disciplinary Review Committee (DRC) revised The procedures developed in July, 1986. The revision date is February 2, 1998.

If it is determined by the principal and/or his/her designee that the student's violation of the School's Discipline Code was of a nature that it merited the actions of the DRC, efforts are made to immediately initiate the hearing by the DRC.

The DRC's role, in consultation with the Superintendent, is to provide the initial step in determining, on the basis of evidence and evaluative data gathered, whether or not the case would require a formal hearing.

## **NOTIFICATION PROCEDURES IN PREPARING THE DRC HEARING**

1. Student is found to have committed an act that requires suspension from school.
2. The principal and/or his/her designee write up suspension notice detailing nature of the offense.
  - a. Principal/Designee attempt to notify parent/guardian by telephone of the student's suspension. If parent is not immediately available, notify person designated as emergency contact.
  - b. Notification of police by school official, if necessary and required.
  - c. By the close of the day of the suspension, written notification that a student has been suspended shall be forwarded to the parent/guardian, to the Superintendent, and to other departments that may be involved.
  - d. Principals notify the Superintendent of Schools of the nature of the offense committed and the intent to refer the case to the DRC.
  - e. If it is determined that the case is appropriate for a Disciplinary Review Hearing, the Administrator In-Charge will make plans to hold a DRC Hearing within five days after suspension, if possible.
  - f. The Principal/Designee establishes a date for the DRC hearing.
  - g. The Board Secretary is notified of the suspension date and pending DRC hearing date.
  - h. The Board Secretary makes contact with the Board Attorney and requests that an expulsion hearing date be arranged within the twenty one (21) day requirement to hold the hearing.
  - i. Written notification of dates involved in the DRC process is forwarded to the Board Secretary.
  - j. Principal/Designee sends certified letter concerning DRC hearing to parent of student which details the hearing and their Rights for Due Process.
  - k. Principal/Designee notifies the Student Advocate Counselor.



- i. Parent and student are dismissed until decision is made by the committee.
  - j. The Committee has the following options, after considering presented and available information, witness testimony, parent and student testimony and discussion, and committee deliberations:
    - 1) By concensus, the Committee refers to the School Administrator for disposition; or
    - 2) Defers for continuation by request of Administrator, Student Advocate/Counselor, or parent or student; or
    - 3) By concensus, the Committee recommends and imposes consequences, remedial action and terms for student to return to school; or
    - 4) By concensus, the Committee recommends that the Board of Education hear the case for expulsion; or
    - 5) The Principal has the final authority for the Committee's recommendations.
  - k. Parent and student return to the hearing to hear and comment on the Committee's recommendations.
  - l. Principal/hearing moderator adjourns the hearing.
4. Procedure followed after the DRC hearing include the following:
- a. Suspending Administrator prepares a report of the hearing which includes:
    - 1) the name of the student,
    - 2) persons present,
    - 3) the charge(s),
    - 4) case summary, and
    - 5) resolutions or recommendations.

This report is sent to all attendees (not witnesses) and to the Superintendent and Director of Pupil Personnel Services.

- b. If it is the decision of the Committee to recommend to the Superintendent that the Board of Education hear the case as an expulsion, the Principal will immediately notify the Board Secretary, Superintendent and Director of Pupil Personnel Services, the Board Attorney and the Board Secretary will arrange a hearing date and notify the Principal.**
- c. After receipt of the date for the expulsion hearing, the Principal/ Designee will send a certify letter of notification to the parent that Explains the procedures and date and time of the hearing.**
- d. The Principal/Designee arranged for a hand delivered letter of notification to go to the parent/guardian of the student involved in the expulsion procedures.**

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PLAINFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Plainfield, New Jersey 07060-1593  
Policy

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5131.7

WEAPONS AND DANGEROUS INSTRUMENTS

The Board of Education prohibits the possession and/or use of firearms, other weapons, or instruments which can be used as weapons from school property, on a school bus, at any school function, or while enroute to or from school or any school function.

For the purpose of this policy "weapon" includes but is not limited to those items enumerated in N.J.S.A. 2C:39-1r. The principal shall make the final determination that a particular object is a dangerous instrument in any case where there is a question of its possession or use posing a threat to students, staff or property.

Any pupil who is convicted or adjudicated delinquent for possession of a firearm or a crime while armed with a firearm or found knowingly in possession of a firearm on any school property, on a school bus, or at a school-based function shall be immediately removed from the school's regular education program pending a hearing before the board to remove the pupil from the regular education program for a period of not less than one calendar year.

The principal/designee shall be responsible for the removal of such a pupil and shall immediately report the removal to the chief school administrator. The chief school administrator may modify a pupil's removal on a case-by-case basis. The principal shall also notify the appropriate law enforcement agency of a possible violation of the New Jersey Code of Criminal Justice.

A student found or observed on school property or at a school event in possession of a weapon or dangerous instrument other than a firearm shall be reported to the principal/designee immediately. The principal shall immediately inform the chief school administrator/designee and appropriate law enforcement officials with all known information concerning the matter, including the identity of the pupil involved.

The chief school administrator shall determine at the end of the year whether the student is prepared to return to the regular education program in accordance with procedures established by the Commissioner of Education.

Disciplinary action shall be taken against students who possess, handle, transmit or use firearms, other weapons, or dangerous instruments. As in all disciplinary cases, due process will be provided (see policies 5114 Suspension and expulsion and 5131 Conduct/discipline). A violence and vandalism report shall be filed whenever a student is found to be in possession of a firearm, other weapon, or dangerous instrument.

WEAPONS AND DANGEROUS INSTRUMENTS (continued)Remotely Activated Paging Devices (Beepers)

No student shall bring or possess a remotely activated paging device on any property used for school purposes without the written permission of the board.

Implementation

The board directs the chief school administrator to develop regulations to implement this policy.

<u>N.J.S.A. 2A:4A-60 et al.</u>	Disclosure of juvenile information; penalties for disclosure
<u>N.J.S.A. 2C:33-18</u>	Remotely activated paging device; sale, lease or give to person under 18; exceptions; authorization by physician or surgeon or operator of legal commercial enterprise; violations; seizure and forfeiture
<u>N.J.S.A. 2C:33-19</u>	Bringing or possessing remotely activated paging device by student on property used for school purposes without express written permission of school board; disorderly persons offense
<u>N.J.S.A. 2C:39-1</u>	Definitions
<u>N.J.S.A. 2C:39-5</u>	Unlawful possession of weapons
<u>N.J.S.A. 2C:39-6</u>	Exemptions
<u>N.J.S.A. 18A:6-1</u>	Corporal punishment of pupils
<u>N.J.S.A. 18A:36-19.2</u>	Student locker or other storage facility; inspections; notice to students
<u>N.J.S.A. 18A:37-1</u>	Submission of pupils to authority
<u>N.J.S.A. 18A:37-2</u>	Causes for suspension or expulsion of pupils
<u>N.J.S.A. 18A:-37-2.1</u>	Assaults by pupil upon teacher, administrator, board member or employee
<u>N.J.S.A. 18A:37-7 through -12</u>	suspension; expulsion hearings
<u>N.J.S.A. 18A:37-7 through -12</u>	Zero Tolerance for Guns Act
<u>N.J.A.C. 6:29-10.1 et seq.</u>	Safe and drug free schools
<u>See particularly:</u>	
<u>N.J.A.C. 6:29-10.2, -10.4(b), -10.5</u>	

P.L. 103-382, Improving America's Schools Act of 1994

Section 1702, USPL 101-647 Prohibits possession or discharge of a firearm in a school zone

WEAPONS AND DANGEROUS INSTRUMENTS

Legal References (continued)

Attorney General's Executive Directive No. 1988-1, Memorandum of Agreement (revised, amended)

State in Interest of T.L.O., 94 N.J. 331, 346 (1983), rev'd 105 S. Ct. 733 (1985)

- Cross References:
- \*5114 Suspension and expulsion
  - \*5131 Conduct/discipline
  - \*5131.5 Vandalism/violence
  - \*5131.6 Drugs, alcohol, tobacco (substance abuse)
  - \*5145.11 Questioning and apprehension
  - \*5145.12 Search and seizure
  - \*6172 Alternative educational programs

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PLAINFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Plainfield, New Jersey 07060-1593  
Policy

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5114

SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION

While the board believes that positive approaches to acceptable behavior are usually more effective, it is sometimes necessary to penalize pupils for violations of school regulations to ensure the good order of the school and to teach pupils the consequences of disruptive behavior.

Pupils who indulge in disruptive behavior may be suspended or expelled. Disruptive behavior includes, but is not limited to:

- A. Continued and willful disobedience;
- B. Open defiance of the authority of any teacher or person having authority over a pupil;
- C. Actions that constitute a continuing danger to the physical well-being of other pupils;
- D. Physical assault upon another pupil, a teacher, or any school employee with or without a firearm or other weapon;
- E. Taking, or attempting to take, personal property or money from another pupil whether by force or fear;
- F. Willfully causing, or attempting to cause, substantial damage to school property;
- G. Taking part in any unauthorized occupancy of a district facility and refusing to leave promptly when directed to do so by a person in authority;
- H. Inciting others to take part in an unauthorized occupancy;
- I. Inciting other pupils to truancy;
- J. Truancy and class cutting; leaving school property without permission;
- K. Poor attendance and lateness;
- L. Use or possession of unsafe or illegal articles;

SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION (continued)

- M. Use of any tobacco product on school property;
- N. Use, possession or sale of a controlled dangerous substance, drug paraphernalia, anabolic steroids or alcohol;
- O. Use of profanity or abusive language;
- P. Turning in a false alarm;
- Q. Tampering with or damaging property of other pupils or staff members;
- R. Selling or buying lottery tickets or any other gambling paraphernalia on school property.
- S. Being convicted or adjudicated delinquent for possession of a firearm or a crime while armed with a firearm or found knowingly in possession of a firearm on any school property, on a school bus or at a school-sponsored function.

Any pupil who commits an assault (as defined by N.J.S.A. 2C:12-1) upon a board member, teacher, administrator or other employee of the board of education shall be suspended from school immediately according to procedural due process, and suspension or expulsion proceedings shall begin no later than 30 calendar days from the date of the pupil's suspension.

Any pupil who is convicted or adjudicated delinquent for possession of a firearm or a crime while armed with a firearm or found knowingly in possession of a firearm on any school property or on a school bus or at a school-sponsored function shall be immediately removed from the school's regular education program for a period of not less than one calendar year. The chief school administrator may modify this suspension on a case-by-case basis. Each pupil so removed shall be placed in an alternative educational program or on home instruction and shall be entitled to a hearing before the board. The hearing shall take place no later than 30 days following the day the pupil is removed from the regular education program and shall be closed to the public.

The principal shall be responsible for the removal of such students and shall immediately report them to the chief school administrator. The principal shall also notify the appropriate law enforcement agency of a possible violation of the New Jersey Code of Criminal Justice.

The chief school administrator shall determine at the end of the year whether the student is prepared to return to the regular education program, in accordance with procedures established by the Commissioner of Education.

In-school Suspension

The board directs the administration to arrange facilities for in-school suspension whenever possible. Pupils will be required to occupy themselves with school-related work during such suspensions. No socializing shall be permitted. Pupils shall be counted as present in school but absent (excused) from individual classes.

SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION (continued)

See also Commissioners' Decisions indexed under "Pupils—Punishment of" in Index to N.J. School Law Decisions

Manual for the Evaluation of Local School Districts (June 1993)

- Cross References:**
- \*5113 Absences and excuses
  - \*5124 Reporting to parents/guardians
  - \*5131 Conduct/discipline
  - \*5131.5 Vandalism/violence
  - \*5131.6 Drugs, alcohol, tobacco (substance abuse)
  - \*5131.7 Weapons and dangerous instruments
  - \*6154 Homework/makeup work
  - \*6164.2 Guidance services
  - \*6164.4 Child study team
  - \*6171.4 Special education
  - \*6172 Alternative educational programs
  - \*6173 Home instruction

SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION (continued)General

Pupils on home suspension shall be counted absent (excused) unless the duration of the suspension requires home instruction.

Except when special considerations warrant (at the discretion of the administration), every pupil will be given a written warning in the form of a disciplinary notice that subsequent violation of school regulations may result in his/her exclusion or suspension.

Pupils under suspension are prohibited from participating in or attending any school-regulated activity during the period of their suspension. They may not enter the school buildings or grounds of this district without the permission of the chief school administrator. Any pupil under suspension who enters the school buildings or grounds without the permission of the chief school administrator may have the period of his/her suspension extended. The right to continue the suspension or to expel is reserved to the board of education, acting upon the recommendation of the administration.

Serious violations of school regulations which create a dangerous or unsafe condition for other pupils shall cause a pupil to be suspended upon the first offense.

Making Up Missed Work

Pupils who are under suspension will be required to make up all assignments missed during the period of their suspension and will be given adequate opportunity to make up this work.

Upon their readmission, failure to complete the makeup assignments will result in a meeting with the parents/guardians. The chief school administrator will notify parents/guardians by telephone and send a letter regarding the telephone conversation immediately.

Procedures

The administration shall establish, and the board shall approve, specific procedures for dealing with suspension cases. Regulations ensuring due process to all pupils before a suspension is imposed shall be developed with the advice of the board attorney and shall include at least:

- A. Informing the pupil of the charges against him/her;
- B. Giving the pupil a chance to reply to them.

These regulations shall also include safeguards for the dismissal of pupils suspended from school, procedures for calling an immediate conference with parents/guardians, limitations on the length of suspensions, and specifics for the reinstatement of pupils.

Every effort shall be made to adjust each suspension promptly so that the pupil can be returned to school with a minimum loss of school time and school work.

SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION (continued)

When the chief school administrator imposes a suspension, he/she must report it to the board. No suspension may continue beyond the second regular meeting of the board following the suspension without board action. No suspension for assault may be continued beyond 30 days without board action. A suspended pupil may be reinstated by the chief school administrator before board action.

Each pupil shall be afforded an informal hearing before the suspension or, if circumstances prohibit, as soon as possible after the suspension except that, when extraordinary circumstances involving the health and safety of the pupil or others in the school require immediate exclusion, the hearing may be delayed to such time as circumstances permit.

Pupils suspended for a period of time longer than a short-term suspension shall be afforded a formal hearing before the board which shall take place not later than 30 days after the suspension occurs.

The board shall make a decision within five days of the close of the hearing. Any appeal of the board's decision shall be made to the Commissioner of Education within 90 days of the board's decision.

The board requires that such hearings shall be closed to the public, but should all parties thereto agree, the hearing may be publicly held. Each suspended pupil who has requested a formal hearing shall be restored to the regular educational program pending the outcome of the hearing, except when, in the opinion of the chief school administrator, the presence of the pupil in school poses such a danger to himself/herself or others as to warrant continued absence.

Each such pupil suspended from the schools of this district shall receive individual instruction commencing not later than two weeks after the suspension occurs, except that the board may, on the recommendation of the chief school administrator, assign the pupil to an alternate educational program to meet his/her particular needs (see policy #6172).

Expulsion

The board will consider expulsion only if:

- A. The chief school administrator with his/her staff have exhausted all means of bringing about a correction of repeated misconduct; or
- B. The nature of a single act presents such a clear possibility of danger to others that immediate definitive action is indicated.

The parents/guardians of the pupil shall be interviewed, if possible, and advised of the reasons why expulsion is being considered, of the rights of the pupil to a full hearing which will afford him/her procedural due process, and the right of parents/guardians to appeal to the chief school administrator.

SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION (continued)

The child shall remain out of school until either:

- A. An appeal made to the chief school administrator is decided in the child's favor; or
- B. The appeal (if made) has been denied and the board has met to hear the chief school administrator's recommendation.

If the board determines that the charges, if true, may warrant expulsion, the board will set a date for the hearing. The board attorney will arrange for the giving of legal notice to all parties concerned for the preparation and presentation of evidence in support of the charges at the hearing.

The pupil must receive:

- A. Notification of the charges against him/her;
- B. The names of the adverse witnesses;
- C. Copies of the statements and affidavits of those adverse witnesses;
- D. The opportunity to be heard in his/her own defense;
- E. The opportunity to present witnesses and evidence in his/her own defense;
- F. The opportunity to cross-examine adverse witnesses; and
- G. The opportunity to be represented by counsel.

Juvenile authorities and law enforcement agencies shall be notified or consulted if necessary.

If a pupil younger than 18 years of age is expelled, the board must continue to supply an educational program for him/her.

Implementation

The chief school administrator shall develop detailed written procedures to implement this policy. He/she shall ensure uniform and consistent application of the policy and shall report to the board as required on its effectiveness.

When an alternative educational program is provided for a pupil identified as disruptive but not educationally handicapped, the chief school administrator shall inform the board.

SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION (continued)

<u>Legal References:</u>	<u>N.J.S.A. 2C:12-1</u>	Definition of assault
	<u>N.J.S.A. 18A:11-1</u>	General mandatory powers and duties
	<u>N.J.S.A. 18A:37-1 et seq.</u>	Discipline of pupils
	<u>See particularly:</u>	
	<u>N.J.S.A. 18A:37-2.1</u> through -2.5, <u>18A:37-7</u> through -12	
	<u>N.J.S.A. 18A:40A-1 et seq.</u>	Substance abuse
	<u>See particularly:</u>	
	<u>N.J.S.A. 18A:40A-9, -10,</u> -11, -12	
	<u>N.J.S.A. 18A:54-20</u>	Powers of board (county vocational schools)
	<u>N.J.A.C. 6:8-1.1</u>	Words and terms defined
	<u>N.J.A.C. 6:8-4.10</u>	State and Federally mandated programs and services
	<u>N.J.A.C. 6:28-2.8</u>	Disciplinary action
	<u>N.J.A.C. 6:29-6.1 et seq.</u>	Substance abuse
	<u>See particularly:</u>	
	<u>N.J.A.C. 6:29-6.3(c)2,</u> -6.4(b)	

20 U.S.C.A. 1400 et seq. - Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

P.L. 103-382, Improving America's Schools Act of 1994

New Jersey State Board of Education Resolution, September 3, 1980,  
encourages development of local written policy on pupil conduct.

Goss v. Lopez, 419 U.S. 565, 581 (1975)

Tibbs v. Franklin Township Board of Education, 114 N.J. Super. 287 (App.  
Div.) aff'd 59 NJ 506 (1971)

R.R. v. Shore Reg. Board of Education, 109 N.J. Super. 337 (Ch. Div.  
1970)

H.A. v. Board of Education Warren Hills Regional, 1976 S.L.D. 336

82: July 28, C.F. v. Board of Education of the Upper Freehold Regional  
School District

**DISCIPLINARY REVIEW COMMITTEE**  
**INTERNAL CONTROL FORM**

STUDENT NAME:

ADDRESS:

GRADE:

SCHOOL:

OFFENSE:

DATE OF OFFENSE:

STATEMENTS OF WITNESSES:

OTHER ESSENTIAL REPORTS:

SUSPENSION DATE:

NOTIFICATION OF PARENT:

CERTIFIED NOTIFICATION DATE MAILED TO PARENT:

HAND DELIVERED NOTIFICATION:

NOTIFICATION OF SUPERINTENDENT BY ADMINISTRATOR:

NOTIFICATION OF BOARD SECRETARY:

DATE OF DISCIPLINARY REVIEW HEARING:

SUSPENSION DEADLINE:

DATE TO BEGIN HOME INSTRUCTION:

21 CALENDAR DAYS DEADLINE:

LETTER OF NOTIFICATION FOR EXPULSION HEARING:

EXPULSION HEARING DATE:

OTHER:

# Public Schools of Plainfield NEW JERSEY



Appendix D

DEPARTMENT OF PUPIL PERSONNEL SERVICES  
AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

EVERGREEN SCHOOL  
1033 Evergreen Avenue - 07060  
(908) 753-3299

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:  
As the Principal of \_\_\_\_\_ School, I have made the recommendation that you and your child have a hearing before the Disciplinary Review Committee because of the infraction listed on the Suspension Letter/Form of \_\_\_\_\_

The Disciplinary Review Committee is composed of School Administration and District Staff responsible for hearing the facts related to the infraction(s) and behavior of your child. The committee hearings will result in:

- (1) Referral to School Administration for appropriate action or
- (2) Recommendation to the Board of Education for possible expulsion.

We have attempted to establish a convenient time and date for your hearing. Home Instruction will be provided by Pupil Personnel Services to students on suspension after the 10<sup>th</sup> day. The Discipline Review Committee hearing date has been set for \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.

If you choose not to attend the Disciplinary Review Committee hearing, all recommendations will be valid including one made to the Board to hold a formal hearing to consider expulsion. We encourage your participation.

The Disciplinary Review Committee procedures are as follows:

- (1) Administration will present facts of the charge, suspension letter and witnesses.
- (2) Student and parent will present their case and may invite witnesses.
- (3) Guidance Counselor's Report.
- (4) Child Study Team Report (if appropriate).
- (5) Additional reports as required by Administration or parent.

A review of the student's record file by the Guidance Counselor and the Child Study Team will be completed by the time of the hearing.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please telephone me at \_\_\_\_\_.

Yours truly,

School Administrator

# Public Schools of Plainfield



Appendix E

DEPARTMENT OF PUPIL PERSONNEL SERVICES  
AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

EVERGREEN SCHOOL  
1033 Evergreen Avenue  
Plainfield, N.J. 07060  
(908) 753-3290

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Mr. Gary Ottmann  
Board Secretary

FROM:

RE: Arrangement of Expulsion Hearing

DATE:

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

As per our discussion on \_\_\_\_\_, the above named student was  
(Date)  
Suspended from school on \_\_\_\_\_. The Disciplinary Review  
(Date)  
Committee will convene a hearing on \_\_\_\_\_. We are  
(Date)  
requesting that you make contact with the Board Attorney in order that an  
expulsion hearing date can be held on/or before \_\_\_\_\_. The  
(Date)  
twenty-one day requirement for holding this hearing end on \_\_\_\_\_.  
(Date)

cc: Dr. Leverett  
Mr. Gary

2147

**Appendix G**

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

**PROCEDURE FOR HOLDING DISCIPLINARY HEARING**

1. Read Open Public Meetings Act Notice
2. Call the roll
3. Read resolution to go into Executive Session
4. Ask for a second on that resolution
5. Roll call vote on that resolution
6. Ask in student, parents, representative and principal
7. Introduce members of DRC and staff who are present
8. Read the following

I would like to explain to you what we are going to do this evening. You have been asked to appear with your child because he/she has been accused of violating one or more rules at \_\_\_\_\_ School. Because of the Nature of his/her misbehavior, a recommendation has been made that your child must appear before the Disciplinary Review Committee.

**EXPULSION FROM SCHOOL WOULD MEAN THAT YOUR RIGHT TO SEND YOUR CHILD TO THE PLAINFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS IS TERMINATED PERMANENTLY.**

In order to learn all there is to know about this case, the DRC will hold a hearing this evening to learn about both sides of the question. We will hear from the school administration and from you. In order to do this in an orderly fashion, both the administration and you will have the chance tonight to present witnesses and written materials and to make comments and to ask questions during the hearing.

The hearing will occur in two parts.

During the first part, the DRC will receive evidence from the administration and from you on the question of whether or not the offense or offenses took place. No other information will be received during this first half of the hearing.

Witnesses may be presented by the administration and asked questions. After the administration has asked all of its questions of a witness, you will have a chance to question the witness. When you are finished, DRC members may ask questions. The administration will also present to the DRC various letters and other papers. You may ask questions about them or the issue with the truth of each item.

When the administration has completed its presentation, you may make whatever presentation you choose on the question of whether the offense occurred.

You may present witnesses who may wish to make a statement or to ask further questions of the DRC. You may wish to have your child speak to the DRC to explain his/her version of what occurred.

Please understand that your child does not have to testify.

If your child does testify, members of the DRC may ask him/her questions with regard to his/her testimony. When you are finished with your witnesses, the DRC will temporarily close the hearing, excuse all of the parties in the room and will deliberate. When the DRC has finished deliberating and has made a decision, you will be called back in for the purpose of listening to the decision of the DRC.

The second half of the hearing will be devoted to receiving materials from the administration and from the parents to decide what disciplinary action is appropriate under the circumstances.

The administration will begin by presenting materials from the student's history folder, test results, grades, past disciplinary reports and reports from the Child Study team. You may ask questions on any or all of these items. When the administration has finished presenting its materials, you, the parents then have an opportunity to tell us what you think should be done by way of an appropriate disciplinary action against your child.

Please keep in mind that a recommendation has been made to expel your child from the public school system. During the second half of the hearing, we want to hear from you and any other individuals who may wish to talk on your behalf.

**ARE THERE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED THIS EVENING?**

**Testimony before the New Jersey State Legislature Assembly task force  
on Adolescent Violence**

**State House Annex, October 27, 1998 at 10:00 a.m. in Committee Room 11, 4<sup>th</sup>  
Floor, State House Annex, Trenton, New Jersey**

*Prepared by John E. Sills, Ed.D.; Vice Principal; Plainfield High School, Plainfield, NJ*

The Plainfield Board of Education states that safe schools are a necessary and fundamental part of education and are a prerequisite for accomplishing our goals. The Board expects the administration to ensure that all schools are continuing efforts to provide safe learning environments for all of Plainfield's children, by: 1) gathering data on the most pressing safety issues in our schools; 2) developing literacy skills so that children can learn alternatives to violence and constructive solutions to conflict; and 3) building the capacity of all staff to ensure that they can create safe learning environments in schools and classrooms.

Regarding classroom management, we have started training district-wide using the Lee Canter's New Assertive Discipline Program. In addition to using the Canter training materials for the high school, we will also use training materials from the Crisis Prevention Institute, Inc. for a selected population. This is a response to some teachers and security staff who have expressed some concerns about their personal safety as it relates to dealing with older, stronger high school individuals. Four staff members have been trained and certified as trainers by the Crisis Prevention Institute, Inc. of Brookfield, WI. Four of us are certified in the *Nonviolent Crisis Intervention* techniques and philosophy. I might add that those of us who are approved trainers in the Nonviolent Crisis Intervention process join over 17,000 persons in the USA and other countries that are certified to train others for providing **care, welfare,**

2.

**safety and security** for anyone involved in crisis intervention.

Our first series of classes will include: administrators, alliance leaders, and selected teachers. The first twelve hours of training are planned for early December, 1998. Early in February we will train others, including selected staff from the two middle schools. Within the twelve hours of training, there is a six-hour component that will be used for teachers. That training will have an emphasis on Nonviolent Crisis Intervention's verbal de-escalation. The security and administrators will get the full twelve hours that includes training in physical nonviolent intervention techniques. That will include personal safety and restraint techniques. Included in the training are specific intervention techniques for approaching and intervening in fights. They will have the framework to assess any violent situation and choose an appropriate intervention strategy to bring about the safest resolution possible.

The results of the training will include the following:

- Staff learns how to defuse potentially violent individuals before they become assertive.
- Decreases the number of physical interventions needed.
- Reduces staff injuries; resulting in fewer Workers' Compensation claims.
- Increases staff confidence and morale.
- Improves the overall safety of the facility.
- In-house programs permit flexible training for all shifts and new employees.
- Training provides a framework for developing emergency response policies and procedures.

We will be better prepared to operate with **care, welfare, safety and security** for any one involved in crisis intervention in Plainfield High School and the two middle schools.

I will entertain any questions about this program.

219 x

**For more information, contact:**

Substance Abuse Resources  
1806 Highway 35  
Oakhurst, NJ 07755

Phone: (732) 663-1800  
Fax: (732) 663-1698  
TDD: (732) 663-0080  
Email: sar@monmouth.com  
Web: www.subabuseresources.com

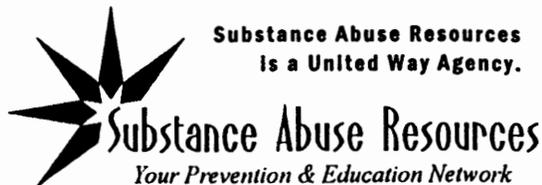
Substance Abuse Resources' Violence Prevention Services are provided in conjunction with the Prevention Policy Board and funded through:

- OFFICE OF JUVENILE JUSTICE AND DELINQUENCY PREVENTION
- MONMOUTH COUNTY YOUTH SERVICES COMMISSION
- MONMOUTH COUNTY BOARD OF CHOSEN FREEHOLDERS
- MONMOUTH COUNTY DIVISION OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE SERVICES
- HEALTHQUEST OF MONMOUTH COUNTY

Substance Abuse Resources is a private, not-for-profit health education agency whose mission is to execute programs and services to prevent and eliminate substance abuse in Monmouth County. This is accomplished through advocacy, collaboration, and education.

Other programs and services provided by Substance Abuse Resources include:

- BABES
- CADAC/CPS & Other Professional Training Classes
- Directory of Addiction Professionals
- Drug-Free Workplace
- Information and Referrals
- It's In The Cards!
- IDRC Program
- New Jersey Coalition on Disabilities and Addictions
- Prevention and Education Resource Center
- Strengthening Families Programs



Substance Abuse Resources  
is a United Way Agency.

Substance Abuse Resources



**VIOLENCE PREVENTION  
SERVICES**

**PETER Principle  
Project CARE  
Second Step  
Parent Outreach**

*A Communities That Care Program*

220 x

In partnership with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders, Youth Services Commission, and Substance Abuse Resources began the Monmouth County CARE Project in 1996 within four target communities: Asbury Park, Keansburg, Long Branch, and Neptune Township. Substance Abuse Resources has expanded to provide a comprehensive conflict resolution and violence prevention curriculum in these districts to students in grades two through eight.

### WHY VIOLENCE PREVENTION?

Young people are exposed to violence in many aspects of their lives – at home, in their communities, and through the media. Too often, they see violence as an acceptable way to handle conflict or gain peer status without learning peaceful alternatives.

### WHAT DO STUDENTS LEARN?

Students who participate will learn to solve problems constructively and practice strategies to resolve conflicts effectively through discussion, active learning, and hands-on experiences.

The mission of the program is to provide children and their families with the opportunities, skills, and recognition needed to develop behaviors reflecting healthy beliefs. This is accomplished in partnership with other youth-serving agencies within targeted communities.

### PETER PRINCIPLE CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The PETER Principle introduces second and third grade students to the basic steps of conflict resolution:

- P**articipate,
- E**xplain,
- T**hink,
- E**valuate, and
- R**esolve.

This program is presented in the classroom setting in six weekly lessons. Students are taught the dynamics underlying successful interactions, including:

- Identifying feelings and respecting differences;
- Verbal/ nonverbal communication,
- Identifying and controlling anger;
- Cooperation

### PARENT OUTREACH

Parents or guardians of Project CARE students will be presented current information pertinent to parenting needs, and are encouraged to attend a parent support group in their community.

Programs are staffed by a Certified Social Worker and teachers with training and experience in conflict resolution.

Project CARE is a program for middle school students and consists of six two-hour sessions held during after-school hours. The program offers young people an opportunity to learn life skills, teaching them to make appropriate choices and resist norms that promote violence. Participants will:

- Examine their attitudes about violence, drugs, and alcohol;
- Identify alternatives and healthy behaviors;
- Practice refusal skills to resist peer pressure;
- Demonstrate techniques for anger management and conflict resolution.

Students are referred to Project CARE by school personnel, parents, or community agencies.

### SECOND STEP CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The Second Step Program for fourth and fifth grades reinforces conflict resolution skills. The program is designed to reduce impulsive and aggressive behaviors, and increase students' level of social competence and consists of six 45-minute classes taught during the school day. Its participants learn to:

- Identify ways to handle conflict;
- Understand and respect the feelings of others;
- Recognize angry feelings and use anger management strategies;
- Solve problems constructively.

221x

Call Lori  
McCabe at 663-  
1800 ext. 13 to  
register.

# BEYOND BLAME!



## CHALLENGING VIOLENCE IN OUR SCHOOLS

SPONSORED BY  
MERIDIAN HEALTH SYSTEM  
AND  
SUBSTANCE ABUSE RESOURCES

Featured Speaker:  
Beverly Coleman-Miller, M.D.  
Nationally Known Expert  
On Violence Prevention  
\$35.00 \*

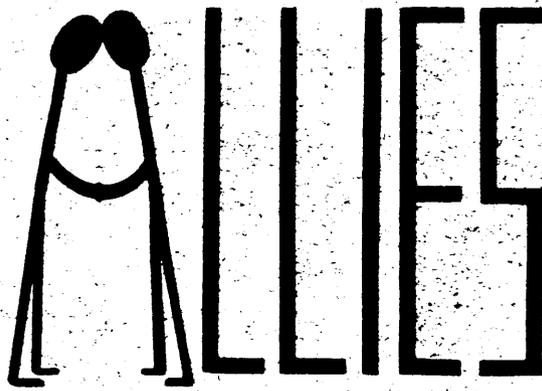
INCLUDES CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST, LUNCH,  
SERIALS, CADC RECERTIFICATION CREDITS

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4  
8:30 A.M. TO 3:00 P.M.  
JERSEY SHORE MEDICAL CENTER  
LANCE AUDITORIUM

CALL 663-1800 EXT. 13

LORI MCCABE - TO REGISTER

*222*



**ALLIES  
ADOLESCENT AND FAMILY  
SERVICES**

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**INTENSIVE OUTPATIENT TREATMENT  
PROGRAMS FOR ADOLESCENTS AND THEIR  
FAMILIES**

**CONSULTATION, TRAINING, AND LIAISON  
PROGRAMS FOR SCHOOL SYSTEMS AND  
OTHER ORGANIZATIONS**

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**ALLIES ADOLESCENT AND FAMILY SERVICES IS A SPECIALIZED  
DEPARTMENT OF THE RICHARD HALL COMMUNITY MENTAL  
HEALTH CENTER OF SOMERSET COUNTY**

**500 North Bridge Street and Vogt Drive**

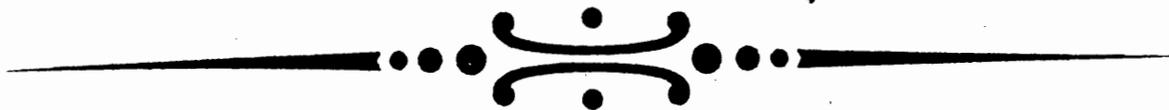
**P.O. Box 6877**

**Bridgewater, New Jersey 08807**

**(908) 253-3168**

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## **THE STRENGTHS OF ALLIES**

ALLIES is the specialized and comprehensive adolescent and family services department of the Richard Hall Community Mental Health Center.

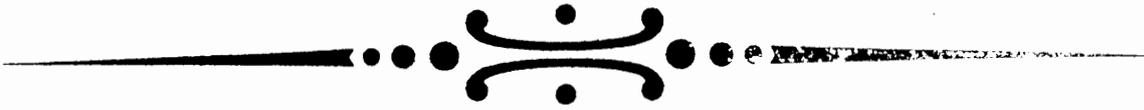
We offer a wide range of programs and services for troubled adolescents and their families.

Programs are carefully designed and implemented to meet the needs of families, schools and community organizations--based on the specific situations, identified problems, and realistic goals of participants.

Dedicated to solving problems and promoting health, we work with adolescents, families and groups from a systemic perspective.







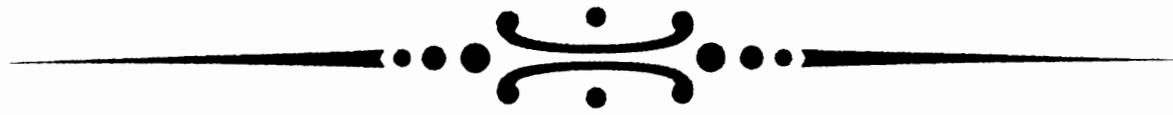
## ALLIES CLINIC-BASED PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

ALLIES clinic-based programs include the **AFTER-SCHOOL INTENSIVE GROUP TREATMENT MILIEU** and the **FAMILY THERAPY CLINIC**. Services are tailored to meet the needs of families with an adolescent member age 12 ½ to 18:

- who may be struggling with a range of developmental, social, emotional, behavioral and psychological difficulties;
- for whom less intensive individual-focused interventions have been unsuccessful at producing a meaningful change in functioning;
- or who may be at risk for psychiatric hospitalizations or educational placements which are restrictive, stigmatizing, and costly.

The mission of the ALLIES Clinical Treatment Team is to provide effective services--based on an accurate diagnosis of systems problems, goals and resources. Our resources include a range of specialized disciplines and treatment modalities which are utilized according to the therapeutic needs of families. Primary treatment modalities include family therapy, group therapy, art therapy, and individual therapy. Adjunctive treatments include parental support groups, life education seminars, and psychiatric medication services.

- The primary goal of the **AFTER-SCHOOL INTENSIVE GROUP TREATMENT MILIEU** is to provide successful experiences for troubled adolescents and families which facilitate the achievement of mutually agreed upon goals. If accepted into this program, adolescents participate in group treatment two afternoons/week, in addition to family therapy and individual therapy. Parents are required to participate in bi-weekly parental support groups, in addition to family therapy. Advantages of the therapeutic milieu include our team approach, our focus on peer group and inter-group relations (e.g., child-parent relations), and our utilization of family therapy. We believe this program is an effective intervention for adolescents and families who have not succeeded in less intensive programs. Our Milieu is open for work with clients from 3:45PM to 7:30PM on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.
- The primary goal of the **FAMILY THERAPY CLINIC** is to help families solve problems, decrease negative behaviors, improve interaction patterns in relationships, and achieve realistic goals. Our clinic is open for work with clients by appointment from 9AM to 9PM Monday-Thursday and 9AM to 5PM Friday.

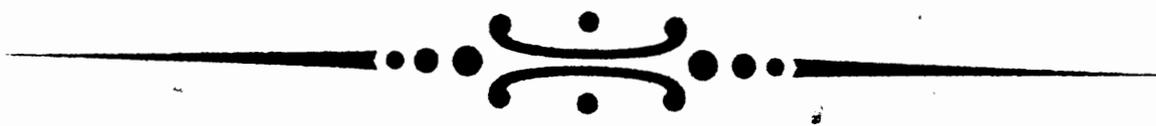


**ALLIES SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAM AND SERVICES**

ALLIES school-based programs include the **CRISIS MANAGEMENT TRAINING AND CONSULTATION PROGRAM**, and the **SCHOOL-BASED COLLABORATION PROGRAM WITH FAMILIES**. School-based services are tailored to meet the needs of students, families, and staff who depend on schools for education, prevention and problem solving (K-12).

The mission of the ALLIES School Liaison Team is to work with schools to design, implement and evaluate prevention and intervention programs. Because children spend a crucial part of their lives in schools, ALLIES has become increasingly committed to fostering effective collaborative partnerships between mental health systems and school systems. In addition to recognizing the power of family system, ALLIES recognizes that schools are extremely powerful systems which contain a large number of resources and individuals dedicated to improving the lives of children, adolescents and families.

- The **CRISIS MANAGEMENT TRAINING AND CONSULTATION PROGRAM** helps schools prevent, be prepared for and respond to crisis situations which disrupt the educational process. Crisis situations may include unexpected deaths, suicides, accidents, violence, natural disasters, and other events which may be traumatic and result in overwhelming, chaotic or insecure atmosphere. We offer basic and advanced training and consultation on the development of crisis management teams, crisis related policies, and crisis management services--including prevention, intervention, and postvention.
- The **SCHOOL-BASED COLLABORATION PROGRAM WITH FAMILIES** helps schools to understand eco-systemic thinking and to implement routine practices for preventing and solving specific educational, developmental, social, emotional, behavioral, and motivational problems. We offer basic and intensive training for staff, parents, and students, in addition to consultation on collaborative team interventions. Services are designed to promote the optimal functioning of students, schools, and family systems--and to prevent the need for educational placements or psychiatric hospitalizations which are more restrictive, stigmatizing, costly and often ineffective.



**CLINICAL TREATMENT SERVICES**

- Group Therapy
- Family Therapy
- Individual Therapy
- Art Therapy
- Parenting Support Group
- Psychoeducational Workshops
- Clinical Consultation
- Medication Clinic
- Psychiatric Emergency Screening Services (P.E.S.S.)

**SCHOOL LIAISON SERVICES**

- Training and Consultation for Faculty, Students, and Parents
- Crisis Management Training and Consultation
- School-Based Collaboration with Families
- Constructing School-Family-Agency Collaborative Partnerships That Work!



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## **THE COSTS AND BENEFITS OF ALLIES**

### **PROFESSIONAL FEES**

The Richard Hall Community Mental Health Center is a public, non-profit agency supported by Somerset County. Many insurance companies help defray the costs of our services. For clinic based services, a co-payment is set according to a sliding scale based on family income (subject to verification). The standard billing rate for clinic-based services is \$90.00 per hour (co-payments range from \$3.00 to \$90.00). Milieu clients pay on a per diem arrangement of \$75.00 for an entire program day, and are also eligible for the sliding scale co-payment. Out of county families are accepted in the milieu program, but are not eligible for the sliding scale. For school-based consultation and training services, fees are set according to agreements with schools, with the exception of postvention and crisis consultation. These fees will be waived. The standard billing rate for school-based services is \$120.00/hour.

### **ALLIES PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES**

ALLIES is staffed by a multi-disciplinary team of experienced professionals with post-graduate backgrounds in social work, psychology, art therapy, marriage and family therapy and adolescent psychiatry.

### **HOW CAN WE BECOME INVOLVED WITH ALLIES?**

An appointment with ALLIES can usually be scheduled within one week of formal application. In emergency situations, the 24-hour Psychiatric Emergency Screening Service (P.E.S.S.) may be contacted at Richard Hall/Somerset Medical Center at (908) 526-4100. Applications and referrals for ALLIES may be obtained directly by individuals, families, schools, hospitals, therapists or other community resources by contacting ALLIES at (908) 253-3168.

Funded by Somerset County  
Board of Chosen Freeholders

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT**

ALLIES Adolescent and Family Services at the Richard Hall Community Mental Health Center  
of Somerset County  
500 North Bridge Street and Vogt Drive  
Bridgewater, NJ 08807  
(908) 253-3168



# *Memorial Junior School*

HANOVER TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS

WHIPPANY, NEW JERSEY 07981

HARVEY N. ALTMAN  
PRINCIPAL  
TELEPHONE 515-2427

October 27, 1998

## INTRODUCTION

Good Morning.

My name is Harvey Altman. I am the Principal of Memorial Junior School in Hanover Township, which is located in Whippany, New Jersey. Memorial Junior School is a middle school in Morris County, composed of 440 sixth, seventh and eighth grade students.

### ***I. EXPERIENCES IN DEALING WITH YOUTH VIOLENCE INCLUDING USE OF WEAPONS AND THREATENING BEHAVIOR BY STUDENTS.***

A seventh grade boy (13 years old) was suspended from school from June 5<sup>th</sup> to June 15<sup>th</sup> for compiling a "hit list" of 18 students and 3 teachers entitled, "People to Get and Kill." I personally questioned this student regarding what he meant by "people to get and kill." I was convinced at that time, and continue to be convinced that he intended no harm. In fact, the psychological and psychiatric evaluations corroborated my belief of this child that he is not a danger to himself, or to other people. However, because of the title of the "hit list" - "People To Get And Kill," - and the recent national wave of school violence, we could not take any chances regarding the safety and welfare of our students and staff. The police and County Prosecutors' Office were contacted. The police conducted an investigation and found that the student did not violate any law.

I held several meetings to inform all of the parents about the incident and reassure them that their children were safe in school. Most parents were very supportive and pleased to hear about this incident within such a short period of time. However, several parents were very upset that such an incident could take place in our school. A few parents had difficulty separating our incident from the May 21<sup>st</sup> fatal shooting in Springfield, Oregon. Parents were fearful for the safety of their children. However, the parents who knew the writer of the "hit list" were secure in believing that this child would not hurt another person. Each of the parents of the students on the list, as well as the three teachers, were informed that their name was on "the list." I told them that I felt that there was never any intent by the writer to hurt anyone. Reassurance was given to the students, parents and faculty that our school was safe and secure.

The press swooped down on us as if they were vultures after prey, all in their quest for a story. It was most disconcerting to have 11 and 12 year old children questioned by the media for newspaper, radio and television reports, especially without having factual information. I have a

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number of concerns regarding how to handle the media. Why is the media allowed to question students on school grounds? Why does the media misquote people, misrepresent the facts, and make a school issue bigger than it really is? One response from a reporter was, "It's freedom of the press."

The parents of the boy involved hired a lawyer in an effort to have their son placed in another school. However, after a court hearing and a week of deliberations, the judge ordered the student back to our school. He returned to school on September 28<sup>th</sup> and his return has been successful.

Memorial Junior School had previously been fortunate not to have acts of violence or violations of the law. Our community and our school district provide many effective services, including excellent educational opportunities.

## **II. Programs designed to prevent and curb youth violence and promote safe schools**

*I believe that most young people that commit violent acts or break the law are people that have poor self-esteem, and/or are products of families that have poor parenting skills.* My experiences as an educator during the last 36 years have provided me with numerous interactions with young people and their families. I spent 17 years as a vice principal of a middle school. My major role during those years was as a disciplinarian. The students who were sent to my office for disciplinary reasons seemed to be those students having low self-esteem, and/or had lived in households with a parent or parents that exhibited poor skills in raising their children. Young people need to feel good about themselves in the eyes of their peers, within their family structure, and at school. Young people desperately need to feel loved, safe, cared for, and respected. Young people need to be supervised. They need to be praised for their good efforts, encouraged, and coached in becoming contributing young citizens. Parents need to instill courage and self-worth in their children. Parents need to develop good communication techniques when talking and listening to their children. Parents need to help their children become responsible for their actions. Parents need to talk to their children regarding values and encourage them to make healthy choices in life. Parents also need to set reasonable limits on behavior and enforce logical consequences for violations of rules. Parents need to help their children develop mutual respect within the family hierarchy and display respect for authority in the community. Parents need to be good role models. Unfortunately, some children do not have the benefit of parents who possess good parenting skills.

Therefore, I have helped to design and implement the following:

### **a) Evening parenting workshops:**

All parents, especially those parents with children that display behavior problems, need to develop parenting skills. Our guidance counselors have taught the "Active Parenting of Teens" program in our middle school, which is a video based program for parents of teens, written by Dr. Michael Popkin. The "Active Parenting of Teens" program provides training and support for families experiencing the dynamic changes in teenage development. The workshop

sessions address: desirable parenting styles; drugs, sexuality, and violence; courage (there's nothing you can't do) and self-esteem; teen behavior and problem solving; responsibility and discipline; cooperation and communication; and the problem solving family in action.

1. Parents need to learn and develop effective parenting skills.
2. Parents need to teach their children to be responsible for their actions.
3. Parents must be consistent regarding addressing negative, as well as positive behaviors.
4. Parents need to make reasonable goals.
5. Parents need to serve as positive role models.

b) **Regularly scheduled guidance classes for all students.** Guidance counselors see all of our children in their classes. Therefore, they can instruct students and develop critically important life skills. Guidance counselors readily recognize troubled students and provide one-on-one counseling and/or additional services as needed.

Grade 6 - Developing Self-Esteem  
- Meeting, Making, and Keeping Friends  
- Peer Pressure  
- Ways of Expressing Anger  
- School Survival and Success  
- Conflict Resolution

Grade 7 - Orientation/Communication  
- Respect  
- Know Yourself  
- Self-Esteem  
- Communication Overview  
- Group Skills  
- Relationships  
- Suicide  
- Conflict Resolution  
- Career Skills  
Thinking Skills – the ability to learn, to examine thoughts carefully, to think creatively, to make decisions, and to appropriately solve problems

Personal Qualities – individual responsibility, self-esteem and self management, sociability, integrity and honesty

Grade 8 - Orientation/Ice Breakers (review appropriate behaviors; get acquainted; and share values)  
- Self-awareness  
- Self-Esteem  
- Communication Stoppers  
- Parent/Teacher Consequences

- Substance Abuse
- Conflict Resolution
- Career skills

c) **Weekly team meetings with teachers, counselors, and administrators to discuss student needs.** Plans of action are developed and implemented to insure positive student progress.

d) **Good communication between students, teachers, and parents**

e) **Monthly newsletters to parents and teachers** that highlight student achievements, and provide useful information regarding the educational, emotional, social and physical development of children. Schools need to take every opportunity to appropriately praise student achievement, as well as to educate and provide parents with information and parenting skills that make a positive impact on their child's development.

f) **Strong parent involvement in the school**

g) **A clear, fair, and enforced code of behavior**

h) **Student training in conflict resolution**

The programs that I have described serve as a proactive approach in preventing school violence and promoting a safe school environment. Students need to be taught life skills. Counselors, teachers, parents, and social agencies need to be ready and willing to provide appropriate and effective assistance for students in need of additional support. Schools can educate and also serve as a "clearing house." to insure that no student "falls through the cracks." resulting in acts that are harmful to other people.

### **III. What schools can do in dealing with youth violence**

- a) Have a fair and clear Code of Conduct that students, teachers and parents cooperatively develop. The school community must understand the Code of Conduct and support it.
- b) Provide a safe school environment and an instructional program that is appropriate and meaningful. The curriculum needs to be made relevant to the everyday lives of the students. Students need to be able to apply what they have learned.
- c) Insure adequate guidance counselors in all schools. Counselors need to teach about self-esteem and develop conflict resolution skills. Students need to feel good about themselves in the eyes of their peers. Students need to feel good about themselves within their family structure.

- d) Provide and encourage parents who are most in need to attend parenting classes at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.
- e) Train teachers in conflict resolution.
- f) Provide effective leadership and effective supervision in the schools

**IV. What the Legislature can do to promote safe schools**

- a) State in no uncertain terms that violence, weapons, and threatening behavior by students is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. The courts need to hold parents more responsible for their children's actions. Parents of students that violate the law should attend regularly scheduled parenting classes ordered by the court.
- b) Use the media, in a proactive manner, to educate parents regarding parenting skills.
- c) Provide funding for guidance counselors and parenting courses in all school districts.
- d) Provide leadership. Provide funds for community initiatives to promote safe schools.
  - 1) DARE Officers are providing outstanding services.
  - 2) Local juvenile committees need more support in helping parents.
  - 3) Funding for after school supervised activities.
  - 4) Encourage communities to involve children in local civic volunteer work.
  - 5) Encourage communities, and provide funding where necessary for supervised recreational activities when school is not in session.
  - 6) Provide work opportunities for adolescents to develop skills, self-responsibility and pride.
  - 7) Take a leadership role in promoting positive role models for young people.

**New Jersey State Assembly Task Force  
on Adolescent Violence  
October 27, 1998**

My name is Mary James Edwards and I speak to you today as the Site Coordinator for the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP) in South Orange-Maplewood, New Jersey. I am delighted to have the opportunity to talk to you today about one of the greatest challenges we will face in this next decade how to reclaim our schools, homes, and communities as violence—free growing zones for our children so our children feel so cared for that they never wish to do harm to anyone. We have all been affected by a moral tumor growing on the American soul---our acquiescence to the level of violence that has so pervaded our culture.

Over the past year we watched and listened to the horror of kids killing kids in our schools. These incidents were described as “isolated incidents”. When we look at the severity of those crimes as they were presented--some believed it to be true. The simple truth is that we as a society are faced with the results of our cumulative indifference exploding rates of drug abuse, teen suicide and the highest homicide rate of any country in the world.

An American child is reported abused or neglected every 11 seconds; is arrested for a violent crime every four minutes; and in a country which claims to value its children, every 98 minutes a child is killed by a gun on the streets of this country. On an average day, over 135,000 young people bring weapons to school because they don't feel safe. Never have our children been exposed so early and so relentlessly to the violence that surrounds them. From the killing fields of our streets; to the

arguments in our homes; to the hopelessness so many of our young people feel; these are the problems to which schools can no longer be bystanders.

And so today, I also bring you greetings from 150,000 young people and 5,000 teachers in the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program who are courteously and furiously waging peace in our public schools throughout this country. Their weapons are not one of the 135,000 guns that are brought to school on a typical day. Their weapons are weapons of the spirit, caring, communicating, loving kindness, and nonviolent conflict resolutions.

They are **all** part of a new vision of education which recognize that to be a well educated person there has to be an education of the heart along with the mind. It is a vision of education which recognizes that the ability to manage our emotions, resolve conflict, and interrupt bias are fundamental skills—skills that can and must be taught.

This new vision of schooling requires

- (a) shifts in how we think about teaching, starting with a commitment to educate the whole child, and
- (b) the application of new standards for social and emotional development that are as full and explicit as those for intellectual development.

It demands that we become more aware of what lessons are modeled in schools, for they are often more powerful than anything that is taught directly. It means that we must become more attuned to young people's social and emotional needs in order to create learning environments that evoke positive emotions, lead to more productive learning, and encourage students to make meaningful decisions and positive contributions both within schools and in the larger world.

The Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP) began in 1985 as a collaboration of the New York City Public Schools and Educators for Social Responsibility's (ESR) New York City chapter. ESR National established the RCCP National Center in 1993 to support replication efforts nation-wide. RCCP has been cited as one of the most successful school models by the U.S. Department of Education, the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, and the Harvard School of Public Health. At last week's conference on youth violence hosted by Janet Reno, Attorney General at the White House the RCCP program was the only program highlighted as being an effective program. After an exhaustive review of school-based programs across the country, the National Institute of Justice selected RCCP for presentation in a report, *Building the Peace: The Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (1994)*.

RCCP's goals are achieved by reaching young people through the adults who relate to them on a daily basis in school, at home, and in their communities. RCCP gives participants social and emotional competence through developing problem-solving and communication skills that can be used to de-escalate conflict. More specifically, RCCP teaches techniques in active listening, assertiveness, expression of feelings, perspective taking, cooperation and negotiation, and overcoming prejudice.

One of the program's greatest strengths is that it changes the culture within entire schools. We work with the adults in young people's lives—including their family, teachers, and administrators—who in turn incorporate these skills and principles of creative, nonviolent conflict resolution as part of the regular kindergarten through Grade 12 school curriculum.

Currently, RCCP serves 5,000 teachers and 150,000 young people in 350 schools nationwide, including the New York City public schools and nine other diverse school systems that are in various stages of implementation.

- Atlanta public schools
- New Orleans public schools
- Vista Unified School District in southern California
- South Orange-Maplewood and West Orange public schools in New Jersey
- Lawrence public schools in New York
- Anchorage School District and Dillingham City schools in Alaska
- Lincoln County School District in Oregon
- Boston public schools—the newest school district to join our family

In addition, RCCP has been adapted for other educational settings. RCCP's curriculum and parent components are in place at the 30 summer Freedom Schools of the Children's Defense Fund and are being used by the Harlem Peacemakers, an initiative directed by Dr. Geoffrey Canada of the Rheedien Centers for children and Families, a community-based organization.

### **DOES IT WORK**

RCCP is one of the few programs of its kind that has been extensively evaluated. An independent evaluation conducted by Metis Associates, released in 1990, found that more than 90% of the teachers rated the overall implementation of RCCP as very good or excellent. Fully 87% of teachers said that RCCP was having a positive impact on their students. They reported the following changes: children

spontaneously using conflict resolution skills, less violence in the classrooms, increased self-esteem and sense of empowerment, increased awareness of feelings and verbalizing of those feelings, more caring behavior, and more acceptance of differences (Metis, 1990).

More evaluations of the program are under way. For example, data collection has been completed in a 3-year intensive evaluation of RCCP in New York City, funded in part by a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This study used a sample of more than 8,000 students in 15 schools, and it is one of the most ambitious evaluations of a school-based conflict-resolution program ever attempted. The principle investigator, Dr. J. Lawrence Aber, is director of the National Center for Children in Poverty at Columbus University's School of Public Health. The results obtained so far, based on Year 1 data, suggest that children's participation in RCCP significantly slows growth of aggressive cognitions and behaviors that predict later adolescent violence and antisocial behavior (National Center for Children Poverty, present).

In our work, we hope to inspire everyone to play an activist role in shaping our society's future. We want young people and adults to feel as though they can change the world through their individual actions. The peaceable classroom and schools we work to create are more than refuges from harm; they are interdependent and interconnected models for the larger community.

Hello and good \_\_\_\_\_ to the Committee members. Thank you for letting me speak to the Committee on my experiences with violence in the public school system and how the system does not properly deal with situations and does not prevent such actions from occurring.

My name is George DeCarlo and I live in Berkeley Heights in Union County. I worked as a substitute teacher at Watchung Hills Regional High School District located in Warren in Somerset County from 1992 through 1994. I am a Gay man who also happens to be a legal second class citizen of the State of New Jersey. As a Gay man I do not enjoy all the rights and privileges of citizenship and residency in the State of New Jersey. Of those rights and privileges I am at liberty to pursue and exercise with other Gays and Lesbians, we are not free from discrimination, bigotry and violence. All Gays and Lesbians share this circumstance, homophobia, in all aspects of our society and within each of our communities.

I have come here to share with you a particularly sensitive and important area in which this is most notable. New Jersey's public school system does not demonstrate equality for its Gay and Lesbian administrators, staff, teachers, and the reason for its existence, its students. Gay and Lesbian students are

ignored by the public school system as far as positive reinforcement that supports and enhances their self-esteem.

And how is positive self-esteem accomplished? Students need people such as myself who were teachers and substitute teachers treated in a verbally violent and discriminatory manner to tell their story and act as role models. I was the recipient of verbal violence from students regarding my sexual orientation. Then the school, Watchung Hills Regional High School District, in Warren in Somerset County, compounded this negative behavior in the form of discriminatory action and reprisal as determined by a Finding of Probable Cause from the Division on Civil Rights under New Jersey's Department of Law and Public Safety.

This situation originated after my reporting of the verbally discriminatory remarks and gesture. Additionally, verbal violence was directed at me by a student calling me a "fucking faggot" and a "fag." These actions show a total lack of prevention by the public school system. Adolescents are not taught that; Being Gay or Lesbian is Not a Choice; Gay People Are Mentally Healthy; Being Gay or Lesbian is Natural; Being Gay or Lesbian is Not a "Lifestyle" (as I was told by a school administrator and Board Member), It's

a Life; Gay Men and Lesbians Constitute Families; and, Some of the Most Talented People Are or Were Gay or Lesbian.

Prevention comes in many forms. For instance, the nondiscrimination statement had not been updated since the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination was amended in 1992 to include affectional or sexual orientation. Without this update what is the community to think? At the very least, the school system will be viewed as defying the law. So it is not surprising that such defiance manifests itself inciting students and administrators to discriminate and violate another person.

What else does this tell students on how to treat each other and those outside of their group? A process of profiling develops leading to prejudice and xenophobia. Of course, these attitudes are not only fostered at school. Family and religious organizations teach youth to love but with conditions. These conditions are not founded on science but on taboos based on ignorance and hate. But, it is up to the public school system along with the New Jersey Department of Education to teach correct etiquette in the greater society. Punishment on a case-by-case basis is insufficient. Public schools may consider organizing committees of students, teachers and parents to

arbitrate acts of prejudice, bigotry and discriminatory behavior on the part of students in order to stop the violence.

The New Jersey Department of Education does not have powers of enforcement unless specifically granted such authority by the Legislature. Therefore, the Department of Education may only advise, consult and observe. In my case, a suggestion was made that due to my youthful looks, I should consider teaching in elementary school. The issue of discriminatory and reprisal actions were pushed aside and ignored. My youthful looks are now the object to be discriminated against. I suppose those teaching master and doctoral level studies need to look ancient in order to communicate with their students. States of sexual orientation whether they be Gay, Lesbian or Bisexual generates odd, irrational, pitiful and disappointing action even from state officials. The need to bury and obfuscate the problem becomes a paramount objective.

I cannot but wonder if public school administrators know about violence and put it aside. Are the parents prohibiting the enforcement of the Law Against Discrimination via school boards? These two propositions need investigation.

I am not the only person that has faced such actions. Many in the public school system will not come forward due to the fear of reprisal. Of those that have bravely come forward are Eileen Argenbright, a music and arts teacher. Students from the Upper Saddle River middle school formed a hate group in opposition to her being a Lesbian. Administrators did not want to deal with the violence and the students were known to have demonstrated such behavior in the past. Also in north Jersey is Robert MacDonald, formerly a student at Jefferson High School in Newton in Sussex County. He suffered violent actions from fellow students. The reason for the violence was that he is a Gay male.

Finally, some Facts About Gay Youth:

- \* 80% of Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual youth report verbal abuse (1)
- \* 44% of Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual youth report threats of attack (1)
- \* 17% of Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual youth have been assaulted (1)
- \* 66.7% of Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual youth were threatened/injured with a weapon at school in the past year (2)
- \* 20.1% of Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual youth skipped school in the past month because of feeling unsafe on route to or at school (2)
- \* 62.3% of Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual youth were in a physical fight in the past year (2)

These statistics are from Pennsylvania State University and the Massachusetts Youth Risk Survey conducted by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

NOTES:

- (1) AR D'Augelli, HDFS, Pennsylvania State, University Park, PA 16802.
- (2) Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 1995. Conducted by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

I thank the Task Force on Adolescent Violence for allowing me to speak and ask that all necessary efforts be made to stop anti-Gay and Lesbian violence in all its forms within New Jersey's public school districts. Remember, only a handful of the 612 school districts include affectional or sexual orientation in their nondiscrimination policies.

# George DeCarlo

Email address: [alexdn@ix.netcom.com](mailto:alexdn@ix.netcom.com)

Residence: **Berkeley Heights nestled in the Watchung Hills**

State: **New Jersey, a nondiscriminating state**

Country: **USA**

## Position Missing:

A suit ref. has been filed against Watchung Hills Regional High School District in New Jersey's Somerset County Superior Court. They had also been found by a "Finding of Probable Cause" ref. from the New Jersey Division on Civil Rights to have violated the nondiscrimination provision protecting affectional or sexual orientation and reprisal. If you would like a copy of the full packet of information, please write. Text formats of the various documents and information are also available on diskette. An audio cassette or video of an investigative news report aired on UPN Network WWOR-TV Channel 9 (NJ) are also available upon request. In addition, an Action ALERT for distribution via email and newsgroups can be obtained through the above address.

## TRIAL DATE AND COURT ADDRESS



Watchung Hills Regional High School in Warren, NJ had been given a Blue-Ribbon award by the US Department of Education. According to the investigator from the US Department of Education they should have disclosed this information since it may have affected the outcome. ref.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled against Colorado's Amendment 2 ref. on the basis of the "equal protection clause" of the U.S. Constitution. A federal appeals court has also ruled that on the basis of the "equal protection clause" a student who was persecuted due to his sexual orientation ref. would be able to bring claims in federal court. The Blue-Ribbon Award included abiding by the provision in order to be considered. The "equal protection clause" ref. was not adhered to by the federal Department of Education.

## Gays Educating:



Mailing Lists:

[schools@critpath.org](mailto:schools@critpath.org) In order to subscribe send a message with the words "subscribe schools."

[glstn@glstn.org](mailto:glstn@glstn.org) Write to receive mailings concerning GLSTN and its educational aims.

## SiteNeXions:



Please click other pages at this site. YOUR comments and suggestions are necessary.

- [Suit, the Civil Action](#)
- [Finding of Probable Cause](#)
- [Blue Ribbon Award & Other News Articles](#)
- [NJ Division on Civil Rights NOTICE](#)
- [XIV Amendment's Equal Protection Clause](#)

### WebNeXions:

1. [The PERSON Project \(Gay Youth.Org\)](#)
2. [GLSTN \(The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Teachers Network\)](#)
3. [Constitution of South Africa - 1st Bill of Rights to include SEXUAL ORIENTATION](#)



Pages are added and adjusted with ongoing developments. Please visit the

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avoiding the surf of discovery.

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***YOUR comments and suggestions are necessary! alexdn@ix.netcom.com***

War. Rape. Murder. Poverty. Equal rights for gays.  
Guess which the Southern Baptist Convention is protesting?

# Sacred Artist Eileen Argenbright

Email address: [angels@sunlink.net](mailto:angels@sunlink.net)

Residence: Bushkill in the Pocono's

State: Pennsylvania

Country: USA



## About the Artist:

The Arts always came easy to her such as subjects in music and art. Sacred Artist, Eileen Ann Argenbright, was born in Philadelphia, PA, raised in Maple Shade, NJ, and graduated from one of New Jersey's finest higher education facilities, Rowan University, with both Bachelor and Masters of Art. Artist Argenbright became an Interdisciplinary Music Teacher, NJ certified/licensed for Voice, Piano, Chorus, Orchestra, Band, Guitar, Instrumental, Musicals, Drama, Composition, Theory and General Music K-12 in 1967. And, Artist Argenbright, became an Art Teacher and Master Craftsperson, NJ certified/licensed for Graphic Arts, Staging, Lighting and Set Designs in 1979.

Extensive travel across America and Europe with a Summer spent studying at Germany's prestigious Werdenfels College, enriched Argenbright's ideas for enhancing creativity in young students. Later in 1988, Argenbright would combine the Waldorf School's holistic approach to education into her teaching style.

Earlier in 1963 as the Viet Nam Conflict was quickly turning into a War, Argenbright, a high school senior, painted the Second Coming of Christ. The Christ

art work was inspired by a book given by her mother, Lena. Time passed by along with thousands of students and pieces of art and then, in 1994, Argenbright experienced a renewal of prayer in her life. One day while appealing for guidance to the Universal Creative Power-called God by some, she began to see colors vibrate and take form. Argenbright, working with colored paper, started to fashion angels. The angels looked human and were doing human activities. As a result, Argenbright called them ANGELS IN ACTION.

Today, Argenbright, called a Sacred Artist, has brought great joy into the lives of many people. Her Angels can be found on roller blades, motorcycles, playing with dolphins, wearing Tibetan Lama robes, playing the piano or participating in most any activity under the Sun.

"I learned from pleasant experience that at the most despairing crisis, when all looked sour beyond words, some delightful "break" was apt to lurk just around the corner." from Eileen Argenbright's cousin Amelia Earhart

**"Former teacher accuses district of job bias. Ousted because of age, sexual orientation, suit says." THE RECORD 8/8/97**

**NJ Arts Teacher Civil Action:**

About the Case:

SUPERIOR COURT OF NEW JERSEY LAW DIVISION, BERGEN COUNTY, Docket No. 743597, states, EILEEN ARGENBRIGHT, Plaintiff vs. UPPER SADDLE RIVER BOARD OF EDUCATION; NATHAN PARKER, ED.D. (Superintendent), GENE ISENBERG (Principal), and KAREN WETHERELL (Assistant Principal), Emil A. Cavallini Middle School, Upper Saddle River School System, Defendants.



