

School Preparedness Now

Safer Schools For a Better Tomorrow Initiative

The goal is to increase district-level preparedness to improve continuity of learning for K-12 schools and minimize impact of school-related disruptions and emergencies.

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We're on the Web!
See us at:

www.state.nj.us/education/schools/security/task/

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School Preparedness Now is a newsletter that provides New Jersey school districts with relevant, up-to-date, and practical information on safety & preparedness for schools and local communities.

For more information contact the **Governor's School Security Task Force** at ssbt@doe.state.nj.us.

NJ In the News: How Safe is NJ?

From the tip of Cape May to the top of Sussex County, Commissioner of Education, Chris Cerf has designated over 100 school districts to receive direct technical assistance (TA) in the area of school safety & preparedness. This project is titled **Making Our School Safe (M.O.S.S.) Districts**. The aim is to provide guidance and resources to help districts improve school safety and security plans in accordance with

N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.1 which mandates all school districts have their school safety plans aligned with the new LEA Minimum Requirements released in August 2011.

This project is a key part of the initiative titled, *Safer Schools for a Better Tomorrow*, announced earlier this year by the Governor's School Security Task Force (SSTF) on behalf of Governor Chris Christie.

The Newtown, CT School Shooting on December 14, 2012 tragically reminds us that school violence is eminent and can happen anywhere. The M.O.S.S. Project is designed to work directly with districts to provide the resources, information, and programs that assist schools to train, exercise, and drill for emergencies. There is no one "thing" that can solve the issue of extreme school violence.

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Hot Topics: Intruders

Most of us would not consider schools to be a place that requires policing from threats. After all, schools are a place where **our children** learn and grow. Still, Homeland Security considers **school buildings** a "soft target". This means schools are vulnerable to all kinds of threats – from the angry parent to the active shooter. Most threats from *unwanted individuals* – **intruders** – can be minimized by a few easy, no cost strategies. These

strategies begin and end with your school's **Visitor Policy**. With the start of the school year, double-check that your visitor policy is clear, deterrent, and effective. Communicate your visitor policy to all staff, students, parents, vendors, and any other community member. Post your visitor policy visibly at the entrance of your door (s).

Things to Consider in Your Visitor Policy:

Who's Who? – Require ID from everyone, **even**

people you know. Set standards and follow procedures regardless of who it is. Be consistent and fair to your policy.

Stranger in My School – Give each visitor an identifier that let's staff and students know the person is a visitor and they have gone through your school's visitor process. Never walk by any stranger that does not have a "visitor's badge" without offering instructions or requiring identification, if possible.

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“Our aim is to get teachers back to teaching and students back to learning as quickly as possible after an emergency”

-Anthony Bland

NJ State Coordinator

“It is gratifying that the State DOE has assigned such a competent team to the Paterson School District to assist us with the M.O.S.S. initiative. It shows the seriousness of the State to ensure the safety of our children. I look forward to accomplishing our mutual goal”

-Captain Jim Smith

Paterson Director of Security



NJ In the News (...cont'd)

Still, we are charged with developing protocols, procedures, and trainings that increases our schools ability to respond and recover from crises as effectively and quickly as possible.

NJ boldly and aggressively works toward creating safer learning environments for all children. For this reason, we drill with students and staff more than any other

state in the U.S. We work collaboratively with law enforcement to coordinate safety & security efforts, and we develop plans in collaboration with stakeholders that offer varying expertise and knowledge to strengthen our district’s school security plans’ success.

Since the release of the LEA Minimum Requirements in August 2011, school districts have

had over a year to begin work on updating and revising their plans. The M.O.S.S. Project jumps in to answer any questions and attempts to assure that quality plans are developed for the safety of all NJ’s children in schools.

Hot Topics (...cont'd)

Are you still here? – Require everyone sign in **and** out. Always know who is *in* your building and who has *left* your building.

One-way, My Way – If possible, designate only one entrance for all visitors to enter. This may be different then the entrance for staff, vendors, etc.

Our Building Pledge – Create a pledge for staff,

students, and parents to agree and sign. This practice should recognize that school safety is top priority and all will agree to adhere to such things as 1) **Show ID**; 2) **Do Not Prop Doors Open**; 3) **Do Not Let Anyone in Through Side Doors**.

Most importantly, remember to remain consistent with your visitor policy. As faces become familiar and the school

year settles in, we tend to be less rigid with following protocols. However, it is when we are least vigilant, we are tested the most.

Promising Practices: Drilling Perfection

Schools are supposed to be safe havens for our children. They have been constructed to be open and welcoming.

But as we witness more and more tragedies affecting schools, we have to find ways to be proactive.

New Jersey is building promising practices to lead the nation in safety & preparedness. In 2010, NJ passed **The Drill Law** to make sure schools are rehearsed in how to respond during an emergency. All NJ schools, public and non-

public, are required to practice, at a minimum, the following **four (4)** drills **twice** throughout the school year:

- **Bomb Threat**
- **Active Shooter**
- **Non-Fire Evacuation**
- **Lockdown**

Promising Practices (...cont'd)

NJ is aggressive and bold when it comes to student education and safety first. That is why the Governor's School Security Task Force spearheaded the drill law initiative. This promising practice passed unanimously as a state law. In fact, NJ practices drills more frequently than any other state in the nation.

Drilling perfection takes time and practice. As districts continue to vet

their drills to test the infinite nuances that can happen during an unplanned incident remember to consider these four (4) ways schools can successfully put into practice the Drill Law:

1. Submit your drill schedule in advance to your County Office of Education
2. Invite law enforcement to observe your drills and provide feedback

3. Conduct a drill survey post your drills to receive feedback from staff and students

4. Get creative with your drill scenarios, the possibilities are endless!

For more information on the Drill Law, Drills Types, Exercises, and Definitions, visit:

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/schools/security/drill/>

It's been said that amateurs practice until they get it right, while professionals practice until they can't get it wrong.

A Special Message from the Director of the NJ Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness

My name is Ed Dickson and in my dual role as Director of the Office Homeland Security and Preparedness (OHSP) and as Co-Chair of the Governor's School Security Task Force (SSTF), it is clear to me that NJ schools are a critical infrastructure that require a comprehensive and coordinated approach to ensuring the safety and security of our children in their places of learning. Thus, the value of security training, exercising, and drilling so that schools know "what to do" and "when to do it" during any type of emergency is a top priority for my Office. Protecting our children is a responsibility that we do not take lightly.

Today, I reach out to you to remind you of a few simple, yet important reminders that can help strengthen our school communities' preparedness and security. In 2010, New Jersey enacted a comprehensive school security drills law requiring schools to practice procedures that respond to an array of emergencies.

As we translate this law into practice in our schools, remember the following:

- Drill during not-so "perfect" times: Drilling only when the weather is "nice" will leave our schools ill-prepared to respond to emergencies that occur during inopportune conditions. Further, it is important to drill during changes of class, lunch periods, start/dismissal of school day and other "hectic" times.
- All Clear: Properly and effectively ending an emergency response is just as important as initiating one.
- Don't forget your bathrooms: Make sure staff and students know what to do if an emergency begins while they are in or near one of the school's restrooms.
- Combo Schools: Schools on the same grounds or within 1,000 feet need to consider drilling collaboratively and planning for coordinated responses.
- Giving advance notice will hamper how students and staff will react – How you react to an emergency is going to look and feel different than if you know there is no real danger.

Smart and effective drilling will help you improve your response during emergencies, and most importantly, will enhance the safety and security of our children's learning environments.

OHSP, in partnership with the NJ Department of Education and other key state and local agencies, will continue to lead the State's commitment to improve the safety and security in our schools. I am committed to bolstering efforts around the Governor's *Safer Schools for a Better Tomorrow* Initiative. My door will always be open to your recommendations, concerns and challenges regarding how best to protect the people and property of New Jersey. I look forward to working with you.

Edward Dickson



Significant Incidents that Made an Impact on NJ Policies

April 20, 1999 – Columbine High School Massacre

Two high school students murdered 12 students and one teacher, injuring 21 additional students. The pair then committed suicide

September 1-3, 2004 – Beslan School Hostage Crises.

3-day hostage-siege in a school in Beslan, Russia; over 1100 people (777 children). Ending with the death of 380.

October 2, 2006 – West Nickel Mines School Shooting.

Gunman took hostages in one-room Amish schoolhouse. Shot 10 girls (6-13), killed 5 before committing suicide.



School Shootings

AT-A-GLANCE: School Shooting

Is an incident in which gun violence by either a student or intruder occurs at an educational institution. School shooting is a topic of intense interest in the United States. While it may be simplistic to assume a straightforward "profile", "The researchers found that killers do not 'snap'. They plan. Studies show their path toward public violence is deliberate, strategic, and "well-thought out". According to Princeton's Katherine Newman, she states "far from being "loners", the perpetrators are "joiners" whose attempts at social integration fail, and that they let their thinking and even their plans be known, sometimes frequently over long periods of time.

[Retrieved 9/17/12 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/School_shooting].

Did You Know? NJ Facts

590+ - The number of school districts and charter schools in NJ. **One size does not fit all, but one standard does hold us all accountable.**

19% - The number of all K-12 students in NJ that are Latinos. **¿Habla Español?** Are we responsibly and effectively communicating important information to all NJ residents?

1 – The number of **safety drills per month** each public and non-public school must conduct.

1 – The only state that includes K-12 as a sub-sector of the **Critical Infrastructure Advisory Group**.

1.35 – The estimated number of children (in millions) that are in **schools daily**.

1030 – The average people per sq. mi. in New Jersey. NJ has the **highest population density** in the U.S., 13 times the national average.



Academic success cannot be achieved if students do not have a safe learning environment. Research has proven students who are fearful do not learn well.

For this reason, New Jersey is one of the most aggressive states when it comes to protecting our nation's most vulnerable population – **CHILDREN**. New Jersey is serious about providing a top-notch education for all children, all communities *regardless of zip code*.

Prepárate Ahora: ¿Como Se Dice?

During summer 2011, NJ DOE hosted an 8 week course for state stakeholders on **Spanish as a Second Language** as part of the Planning for the Next Pandemic grant received to look at ways continuity of education could occur during emergencies. New Jersey recognizes the importance of linguistic and cultural competence in planning and implementing resources, as well as communicating and delivering messages across various mediums. In response to this growing need to better communicate across diverse populations, NJ is targeting key stakeholders that are integral during emergency planning, including state officials, law enforcement, administrators, and education personnel to enhance our state's linguistic competency. In this spirit, this newsletter will feature a Spanish Language Vocabulary Section.

Ayuda

--Help

Educación

--Education

Estudiante

--Student

Preparación

--Preparedness

Alarma

--Alarm

Emergencia

--Emergency

Gobernador

--Governor

Prepárate Ahora

--Prepare Now

¿Como se dice?

--How do you say?

Escuela

--School

Maestra/o

--Teacher

Seguridad

--Safety or Security

Your District in the Spotlight: Lakewood School District

Earlier this year, OSPEP Regional Planners visited **The Lakewood School District** to observe the first drill of the school year. Lakewood drilled a Lockdown scenario – one of the four mandatory drills – because of an ‘active shooter’ in the building. It was a great execution of the lockdown drill. Primarily, what attributed to the success of the drill were three (3) components:

1. **School administrators used plain language to announce** the drill. The school principal announced over the PA system – This is a Lockdown. There is an active shooter in the building. In addition, the word “drill” was not used. This suggests it could really be an actual situation.
2. **Faculty and staff were well aware of their roles & responsibilities.** Personnel quickly shifted from school role to emergency role; everyone was clear of what their task was during an emergency situation.
3. **Law enforcement participation and visibility increased coordination and collaboration.** Local police were active participants in the planning and practice of drills throughout the district. This collaboration increases communication and effectiveness during response time.

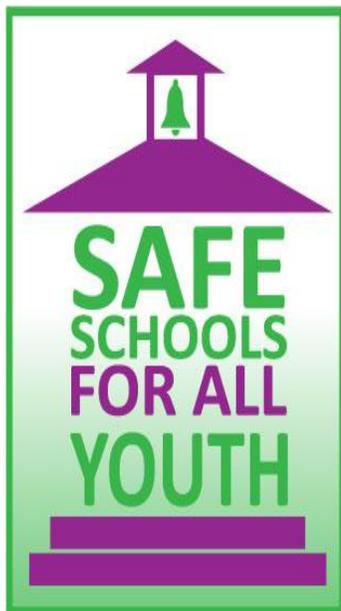
The drill was a success. Still, **two lessons learned** emerged from this practice:

1. Ensure substitute teachers are well trained on all drill procedures;
2. Vet drill procedures and protocols consistently; including how you signify an “all clear” to your staff to resume normalcy after a drill and/or actual event; and
3. Make sure all doors can be locked (when there are staff and students behind them) during a lockdown.

We applaud Lakewood School District on a job well done and for making school safety and preparedness a priority!

NEXT ISSUE

Highlights



- ✓ **Securing Our Schools Symposium Debrief**
- ✓ **No More Codes**
- ✓ **Target Hardening**
- ✓ **Next Steps of SSBT**



Want to be featured in our next issue? Have a topic you want us to address?

Send us comments, promising practices, featured school districts, or an incident you have dealt with to:

ssbt@doe.state.nj.us

About ... The Governor's School Security Task Force

The mission of the School Security Task Force is to further enhance the safety and security of New Jersey's public and nonpublic school students and, to the extent possible, develop standard benchmarks for education and law enforcement officials to help maintain consistency in school security protocols across a wide variety of safety and security challenges.

