S A F E R
SCHOOLS

PREPARING FOR AND DEALING WITH ARMED INTRUDERS

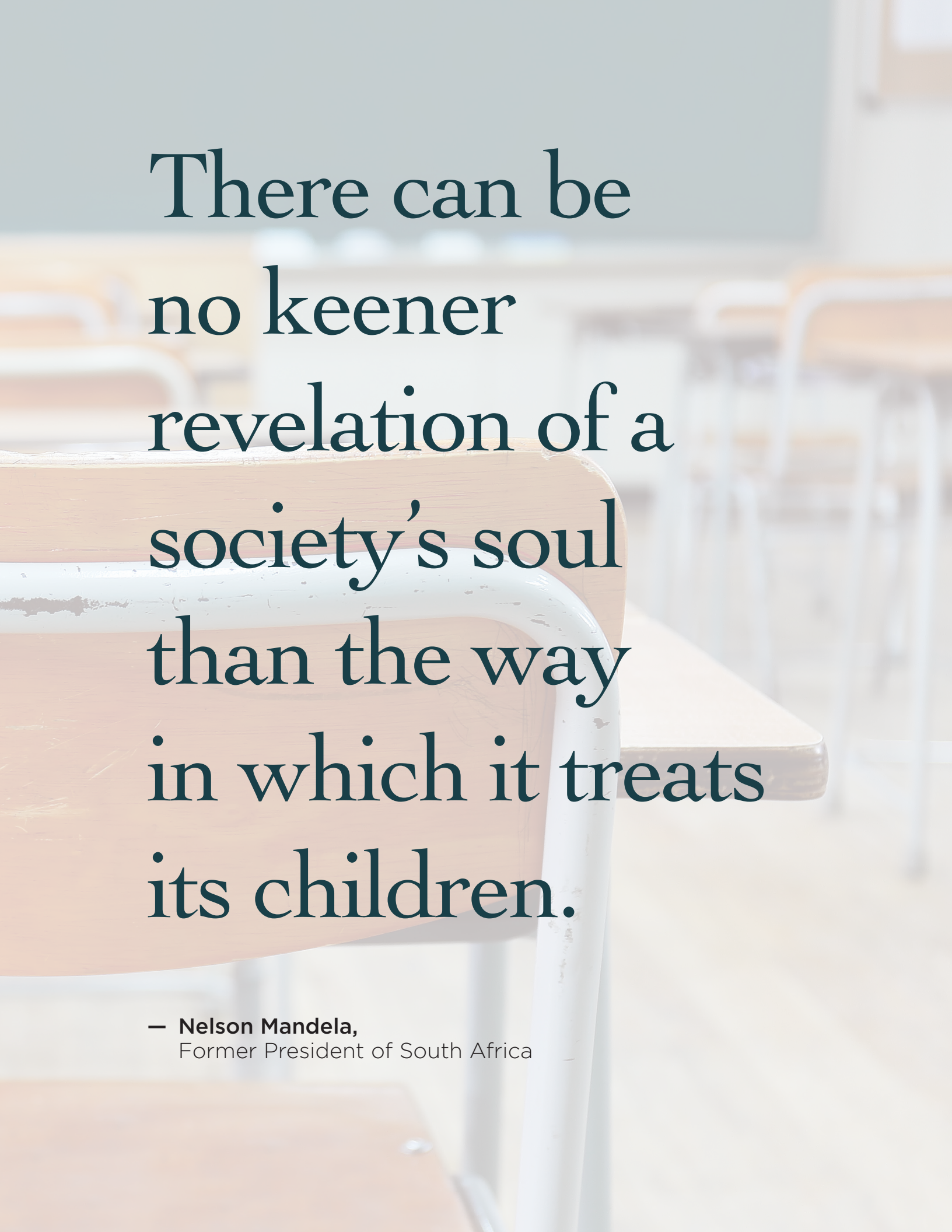

A WHITE PAPER PRESENTED BY THE NEW YORK SCHOOLS INSURANCE RECIPROCAL

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There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children.

— **Nelson Mandela,**
Former President of South Africa

Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Shooting

Robert Bambino
Executive Vice President, Risk Management, NYSIR

The 2018 Valentine's Day school shooting in Parkland, Florida, was the twenty-fifth fatal school shooting since a similarly tragic incident at Columbine High School in 1999.

The authorities are still releasing information, so a complete and accurate version of the shooting is not yet in place. Based on the information we have at this time, it seems that the actions of the suspect depict a different approach than that usually taken by an active shooter, including the fact that he had firsthand knowledge and operational details about his target. NYSIR subscribers need to review that new pattern to determine if a similar attack is addressed in their emergency management plans.

Here are some details from the Parkland shooting to consider:

> **Based on the information we have at this time, it seems that the actions of the suspect depict a different approach than that usually taken by an active shooter, including the fact that he had firsthand knowledge and operational details about his target.**

1. As a former student, the suspect was familiar with the building's emergency response plans, including sheltering and evacuation protocol. The fact that he fired from hallways through classroom walls and windows supports that idea.

2. Expelled and barred from the school last year, the alleged shooter may have been recognized by staff members unaware of the restrictions, who may have unwittingly allowed him access to the campus and building. Reports indicate he was wearing a Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shirt when he arrived at the school.

3. Pulling the fire alarm forced an evacuation from classrooms and the building, placing more students in hallways, increasing the number of targets.

4. The suspect entered the building after 2:00 p.m., close to the end of the last school period. Anticipating dismissal, security may have been relaxed at that point in the day.

NYSIR subscribers are encouraged to incorporate similar threat scenarios into their existing plans. It's critical that every security officer has an accurate list of students and others who are not allowed in school buildings or on campus.

THE SUSPECT'S ACTIONS IN LIGHT OF INFORMATION FROM THE FBI'S *THE SCHOOL SHOOTER: A QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE*

The School Shooter: A Quick Reference Guide contains information compiled from different reports and studies published by the U.S. Secret Service, Department of Education and other sources. It lists many characteristics of school shooters and school shootings; questions for threat assessments; possible motives; and relevant statistics and warning signs. While the Parkland suspect's behavior may not completely match the information contained in the guide, there are many similarities that make the information worth studying. For instance:

- His actions were planned and did not appear to be spontaneous.
- He did not direct threats at his targets before the attack.
- The shooting appears to exhibit elements of retaliation (the suspect was expelled the year before).
- Like other offenders, he experienced a significant personal loss – in this case, he lost his adoptive mother in November of 2017.
- According to reports, his digital footprint was threatening and violent.
- The attack occurred during the school day.
  - The alleged shooter had a known history of weapons use.
  - He acquired his weapon from his own home.
  - He also engaged in behavior that caused others to be concerned.

Staff and students at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School had, in fact, received purposeful training and preparation, and responded appropriately on the day of the shooting.

Staff and students at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School had, in fact, received purposeful training and preparation, and responded appropriately on the day of the shooting. Safeguards included building security, a school resource officer, limited building entry and locked classrooms.

In spite of that training and preparation, precious lives were lost, and the only reasonable conclusion is that more – much more – needs to be done.

Identifying Warning Signs to Prevent School Violence and Creating A Culture of Safety

Michael Drance, ARM
Manager of Risk Services, NYSIR

In almost all school shootings, the shooter makes his intentions known in one form or another well before the day of the event.

There are many early warning signs and risk factors that indicate an individual is in need of help, one or more of which may increase the risk of violent or dangerous behavior. Here are some to consider:

There are many early warning signs and risk factors that indicate an individual is in need of help, one or more of which may increase the risk of violent or dangerous behavior.

- Past violent or aggressive behavior (including uncontrollable angry outbursts)
- Access to guns or other weapons, and pictures of weapons on social media
- Bringing a weapon to school
- Past suicide attempts or threats
- A family history of violent behavior or suicide attempts
- Blaming others and being unwilling to accept responsibility for one's own actions
- A recent incident of humiliation, shame, loss or rejection
- Bullying or intimidating peers or younger children
- A pattern of threats

- Being a victim of abuse or neglect (physical, sexual or emotional)
- Witnessing abuse or violence in the home
- Themes of death or depression repeatedly evident in conversation, written expressions, reading selections or artwork
- Preoccupation with themes and acts of violence in TV shows, movies, music, magazines, comics, books, video games and Internet sites
- Mental illness, such as depression, mania, psychosis or bipolar disorder
- Use of alcohol or illicit drugs
- Disciplinary problems at school or in the community (delinquent behavior)
- Past destruction of property or vandalism
- Cruelty to animals
- Fire-setting behavior
- Poor peer relationships or social isolation
- Involvement with cults or gangs
- Little or no supervision or support from parents or other caring adults

Follow up when necessary. If one of these topics appears to be affecting a student, follow up with him or her and be sure they're aware of available support resources.

THE NEED TO ACT NOW

Educators also should be aware of imminent warning signs that an individual is very close to behaving violently and is in need of immediate intervention:

- Serious physical fighting with peers or family members
- Actual destruction or threats of destruction of property
- Severe rage for seemingly minor reasons
- Threatening to hurt or kill someone
- Threatening to commit suicide

Immediate intervention should be made by a qualified individual at the school (e.g., psychologist, guidance counselor, or someone who has been designated to handle such situations), and parents/guardians should be immediately notified.

If it is determined that the student is at risk and fails to respond appropriately, immediate arrangements should be made for an evaluation by a qualified mental health professional experienced in evaluating children and adolescents.

If it is determined that the student is at risk and fails to respond appropriately, immediate arrangements should be made for an evaluation by a qualified mental health professional experienced in evaluating children and adolescents. If it is determined that the student poses an impending risk to himself or others, law enforcement should be summoned.

The school's student handbook or code of conduct should clearly outline what behaviors are considered unacceptable or a potential threat, and the appropriate school response should also be clearly stated. Particular care should be made not to stigmatize the student or to exclude, isolate or inappropriately punish him or her.

STAYING SAFE

In the long run, creating a culture of safety and responsibility is the best way to ensure the welfare of all who enter a school building.

In September of 2010, New York's Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) was signed into law with the goal of providing students with a safe and supportive environment. The same methods and techniques can be used as part of a more comprehensive school safety plan to keep all students and adults safe from violent acts.

Just as DASA mandates the reporting of incidents of discrimination, intimidation, taunting, harassment and bullying, the reporting of potential threats or other warning signs of potential violence could also be required. Under DASA, all schools are required to provide training for staff and students to guard against discriminatory and bullying behaviors, so the mechanisms for training and awareness are already in place. They could be expanded to include awareness of other potentially dangerous student behaviors that could lead to violence.

Here are some general guidelines for creating a culture of safety:

- Establish a culture of inclusion that welcomes all students with school-wide behavioral expectations, caring school climate programs, positive interventions and supports and psychological counseling services.
- Enlist the help of all students and school staff, including custodial, maintenance and cafeteria staff, to keep their eyes and ears open at all times for warning signs and threats. If you see or hear something, say something!
- Create anonymous reporting systems, including telephone hotlines, suggestion boxes or a similar adult reporting system.
- Encourage students to be involved in safety planning for their school.
- Hold regular assemblies and incorporate classroom instruction about creating a culture of inclusion and anti-violence.

Providing a safe school environment is a multi-faceted endeavor that requires the efforts of all people in the school community – parents, community leaders, teachers, counselors, administration, coaches, other school staff and students themselves. Together with a heightened sense of awareness, empathy and compassion, a safer school environment can be created and maintained.

> **Providing a safe school environment is a multi-faceted endeavor that requires the efforts of all people in the school community – parents, community leaders, teachers, counselors, administration, coaches, other school staff and students themselves.**

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Building Security Checkup

J. Brett Carruthers, CSP, RSSP
NYSIR Director of Risk Management

Sound fundamentals are the backbone of a strong school security program, and in the wake of the latest school shooting tragedy, now is the time to review those fundamentals, referred to by NYSIR risk management professionals as "the six 'R's."

Here they are:
- Reaffirm your relationship with law enforcement
- Revisit access control systems
- Recommit to knowing visitors
- Review/Revise safety and security policies
- Review your security systems
- Rehearse by conducting regular drills

REAFFIRM

Reach out to the local law enforcement agencies that respond to emergencies at your district or BOCES. Ensure they have access to school buildings and are familiar with your facilities.

Reach out to the local law enforcement agencies that respond to emergencies at your district or BOCES. Ensure they have access to school buildings and are familiar with your facilities. Invite them to stop by, come inside and have a cup of coffee. Provide a weekly schedule of evening events and invite them to stop in and visit. That kind of increased visibility sends a strong message to the community about your commitment to school security and enhances your school security program. If your district or BOCES has a school resource officer (SRO), ensure they are visible and engaged with students. Have them patrol buildings and the campus in unpredictable patterns; it will increase their effectiveness.

REVISIT

What does your access control system (ACS) actually do? What are its limitations? Ensure ACS are operating correctly. Try to implement SPE[2] – Single Point of Entry, Single Point of Exit – which will greatly impact visitor accountability. Controlling access means controlling your perimeter. Do all doors (internal and external) latch securely? Are doors propped open? Are robust key and ID controls in place? Are restricted areas (boiler and electric utility rooms, server rooms and other mission critical equipment areas) secured?

RECOMMIT

Require staff to wear ID badges that are visible and not turned backwards. Ensure that visitors follow sign-in

and sign-out procedures and openly display their own badges. Create a culture in which staff questions anyone who is not wearing a badge. Ensure that substitute teachers and contractors have badges, too. Tighten up policies for delivery personnel, including vendors who deliver food and flowers.

REVIEW/REVISE

Review your building-level and district-wide emergency and security plans. What has changed since the last revision? Are all contacts current? Are off-site evacuation centers accessible? Have those locations been visited? Has training been conducted? Are school security policies current? Do they reflect reality? What needs to be updated? Review procedures for issuing ID badges and handling lost IDs. Review visitor management policies and ensure they're being followed. Review your code of conduct and suspension policies, as well as child abuse reporting procedures.

Remember: Security isn't a matter of convenience. It involves the entire school community. Make sure to involve all of your stakeholders.

REVIEW SECURITY

Revisit the elements of your school security system. Is everything operational? Look at your buildings. Is perimeter lighting adequate? Are timers properly programmed? Are all cameras and recording equipment operational? Is video footage recorded and reviewed regularly? Is video evidence properly preserved? Do classrooms have motion-controlled lighting? Are good key controls in place?

REHEARSE

Conduct regular drills for the security-related parts of your emergency plan. Lockdown drills are now required in each school.

Work with local emergency responders and plan drills involving active shooter scenarios. Your emergency responders will assist with the planning. Critique each drill and develop plans to address deficiencies.

Remember: Security isn't a matter of convenience. It involves the entire school community. Make sure to involve all of your stakeholders.

School Access Controls

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Perhaps the most proactive security measures administrators can have in place for their school facilities are comprehensive access controls, which may include a variety of technologies, hardware and equipment.

The day-to-day maintenance of those safeguards and the prevention of unauthorized access to schools during the school day, with the ultimate goal of ensuring the safety of the students, staff and visitors, are the chief responsibilities of school administrators, including principals, superintendents and facility operators.

If a person has targeted a school building to carry out an attack, you may not know of his or her intentions and may not be able to stop them from coming, but you can prepare for the possibility of the event and determine where and how you intervene.

If a person has targeted a school building to carry out an attack, you may not know of his or her intentions and may not be able to stop them from coming, but you can prepare for the possibility of the event and determine where and how you intervene. Will it occur in the parking lot or at the front entrance to the school? Will you permit access through a side or rear exterior door, at the main office, or through a hallway or classroom door? Preparing for such an event, as uncomfortable as it may be, could provide you the time and opportunity to protect the school population from serious harm.

Access control deals with limiting and regulating entrances to reduce the opportunities for unauthorized access by outsiders, safeguard against crimes and allow for more efficient screening of persons entering your school facility. More than just locks and keys at the front entrance, access controls can take the form of various components, from perimeter fencing to high-tech smart keys. And while they don't guarantee the absolute prevention of forced entry by persons wishing to do harm, their presence can create a delay that provides staff time to contact authorities and implement emergency procedures.

MANAGING VISITORS

Any discussion about school facility access control has to begin with the implementation of strong visitor management protocols. It should now be standard practice for all school buildings to have visitor controls that include stringent identification based on 1) a driver's license or

other government-issued personal identification card, 2) a passport, or 3) a current employee identification card from a local or federal government agency or private entity.

Registration should occur at the main office or other approved location, such as a front reception desk. Following an inquiry into their purpose, visitors should be issued a badge and sign a school visitor log, which can be structured to accommodate name, employer, purpose, the name of the person they are visiting, times of entry and departure, and badge number.

ID badges are usually printed on a plastic card with the name and picture of a student or staff member on the front. The name should be in a large, bold font and the picture should be current to make it easy to identify the wearer. Most districts and BOCES incorporate their logos and school colors, as well, to make their badges unique and recognizable.

Badges should be attached to the wearer's clothing by a clip, break-away lanyard or retractable reel, and personal information that appears on them should be limited, just in case they get lost or stolen. For additional information, districts and BOCES should review the state Education Department's Commissioner Regulation Section 155.18, which specifically discusses the wearing of identification badges by district staff members.

To further enhance a school's sign-in procedure, many districts and BOCES are implementing visitor management systems, which check visitors against a number of databases and print badges that include a photo of the individual. Such systems can help prevent sex offenders, banned individuals and convicted felons from gaining access.

MORE THAN A PICTURE

A host of functions can be tied to an ID badge based on barcodes, magnetic strips or RFID chips (access cards). They can be used, for instance, to record attendance and the presence of district bus riders; gain access to a school building or campus area; buy meals in the cafeteria; access computers; check out library books and print paper copies. During emergencies, badges also can assist with accounting for staff and students.

Visitors should be instructed to display their badges at all times while on school premises; upon exiting the building, they should return their badges at the sign-in point and sign out on the visitor log.

To further enhance a school's sign-in procedure, many districts and BOCES are implementing visitor management systems, which check visitors against a number of databases and print badges that include a photo of the individual. Such systems can help prevent sex offenders, banned individuals and convicted felons from gaining access.

ID badges also can be programmed to alert district staff if a suspended student attempts to gain access. Programmable cards (such as RFID chip cards) can be coded to allow access during specified days and times – useful technology for coaches, club sponsors and others who may need access to a school during evenings or off hours. Some districts are replacing door keys with readers tied to their ID badges, allowing staff to access classroom

doors and other authorized areas while keeping them out of restricted areas.

Such systems record all swipes or attempts to gain access to particular areas, and studying them in terms of denied-access swipes can help identify vulnerabilities in a school's security system.

STAFF VIGILANCE

Staff members should not be reluctant to ask individuals who don't have a visitor's badge if they need help, and at the same time inquire about the purpose of the visit. Any concerns should be immediately relayed to building administrators or security personnel so appropriate action may be taken.

It has become increasingly important, as well, for parents and guardians picking up students to be checked against official lists before a student is released into their custody. In that regard, staff, teachers and security personnel need to be extra vigilant about monitoring and understanding custodial agreements involving specific students.

Perhaps no other tool implemented in the past several years improves school security as much as single-point entry and egress. A majority of schools have gone so far as to make construction improvements that require all visitors to enter through

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one regulated point that's protected in a variety of ways. The key is make certain all other doors into the school are locked and secured throughout the school day.

A single-point entry usually consists of an exterior (or vestibule) entry device (buzz-in, call-box, communication to authorized staff) that initially screens for each visitor's purpose at the school, after which a lock-release system permits authorized persons to enter. Upon entry, visitors are again questioned at a regulated point by personnel responsible for security and safety. Those individuals may include main office personnel, reception staff or someone else who confirms the visitor's purpose, signs them in and issues a badge.

Ideally, all persons attempting entry into the school would be stopped at all locked exterior doors, with only the main entrance being accessible. Even then, the main entrance will remain locked until a school-designated person permits entry.

A single-point entry may include a vestibule/double-door entry, whereby visitors are permitted free access through a main entrance door into a limited vestibule with doors that remain secured. Upon entering the vestibule, visitors may encounter a secured communication channel to the main office or a greeter, whose job is to question the visitor about their business at the school and, upon acceptance, permit entry. Additional controls implemented

in conjunction with such an access point might include bullet-resistant glass at secondary entry doors and windows into the main office or any other occupied area visible from the vestibule.

Single-point entry systems also could include video intercoms, camera-audio systems that allow main office staff to see and talk with anyone requesting entry into the building.

> A crucial part of an effective access control system is the assurance that all exterior doors other than the main entrance are kept secured throughout the school day – a responsibility that all staff must diligently carry out.

LOCKED TIGHT

As mentioned earlier, a crucial part of an effective access control system is the assurance that all exterior doors other than the main entrance are kept secured throughout the school day – a responsibility that all staff must diligently carry out. The installation of electronic access devices on some or all of those doors can help to ensure security. Such devices consist of an electronic door lock in combination with a verification device (key fob, swipe card, smart-keys, number pad) that permits limited access to specific, pre-approved personnel. Electronic access devices permit the issuance of limited access rights to individual staff members (i.e., only specific doors for staff to access during specific days or hours of access), as well as the recording of all entries for reference. Additionally, any lost verification devices can be easily voided and reissued, so lost keys are no longer a security breach concern.

Another school security issue identified as part of an overall security assessment is the amount of glass or number of windows that might permit unauthorized access through the use of force. Windows accessible from the ground should be evaluated for the potential of unauthorized, forced entry. Perhaps the best improvement to be made in such cases is the installation of bullet-resistant products.

Lastly, no security access system is complete without the installation and maintenance of sturdy, resilient exterior doors. Once overlooked as part of school security, strong exterior doors, well maintained and functioning, can go a long way to preventing unauthorized access. Exterior doors should be included in routine maintenance programs and inspected daily by custodial staff – usually as part of an evening perimeter check. Any damaged doors and hardware, including door frames, center mullions, closure devices, door locks, panic hardware, headers and thresholds, should be corrected as quickly as possible.

Your school building can be evaluated for a variety of access control measures; implementing those that work best for each facility is vital to the safety and security of school staff, students and members of the community.

The Role of Security Guards in Schools

Susan Ciervo-Boyle, ARM, ACLM, CPSI
Senior Risk Control Specialist, NYSIR

The purpose of security guards is to provide for the safety and welfare of students, staff and visitors by minimizing the frequency and severity of harmful incidents.

Security guards should be well-versed in school policies and enforcement procedures, since they're expected to intervene in potential conflicts to help minimize injuries and school disruptions; at the same time, they need to establish a supportive rapport with students, staff and community members.

An important part of both those requirements is a thorough understanding of New York's Dignity for All Students Act (DASA), which can be attained through training provided by the district or BOCES. A working knowledge of DASA can help security officers personalize interactions with students and be more effective in discerning signs of bullying and threatening behavior. In that regard, they can act as a link between students and district staff responsible for investigating

and taking appropriate action to remedy disruptive and potentially dangerous situations.

High visibility in school buildings and on school grounds is essential for security officers to deter damage and prevent personal injury. They should be vigilant, with highly developed natural senses (sight, hearing, smell) and intuition, so they can quickly react to various situations and know when to contact law enforcement.

Additionally, school security officers should have a good working relationship with local emergency response agencies and should be available to participate in security drills on a routine basis. Those drills should address threats of violence, various emergency scenarios, medical incidents and auto/bus accidents on campus.

TAILORED PROCEDURES

Due to unique building floor plans and grounds, districts have to customize security procedures for every school. Depending on the

> High visibility in school buildings and on school grounds is essential for security officers to deter damage and prevent personal injury. They should be vigilant, with highly developed natural senses (sight, hearing, smell) and intuition, so they can quickly react to various situations and know when to contact law enforcement.

school, guards may have to monitor access to the school campus, as well. They may have to direct traffic, check vehicles for proper parking permits and determine if vehicles are in restricted areas. Inside the school, guards frequently check doors to ensure they are locked, patrol hallways, check passes and identification, and monitor security surveillance equipment.

Guards can be particularly helpful during unstructured times of the school day, such as arrival and dismissal times, in-between class periods and when students visit the cafeteria or restrooms. Those are the times when student behavior may need to be regulated. Additionally, guards may need to assist with classroom disturbances and acts of defiance by students. If there's

an incident, a guard is expected to complete written records and ensure that proper school district policies and procedures are followed.

The key to success in utilizing a security officer is a clear communication of expectations, and those expectations should be part of a district's contract with any security firm.

NYSIR Risk Management can assist in reviewing indemnification and insurance specifications related to those contracts.

Making Drills Realistic While Not Causing Panic

Connie Wallis, ARM, CPSI
Senior Risk Control Specialist, NYSIR

New York State mandates that schools conduct eight emergency evacuation drills and four lock-down drills annually, and that eight of those 12 drills be completed within the first half of the school year, by Dec. 31.

The idea, of course, is that with practice, responses in a real emergency become second-nature.

To best utilize time spent during drills, and to work out any kinks in the system, many schools elect to involve emergency responders as part of the activity, including law enforcement, fire fighters and emergency medical technicians. With the assistance of emergency response partners, schools can create a variety of scenarios and use them as effective learning experiences, even as responders become more familiar with plans, buildings and campuses.

REALISTIC... BUT NOT REAL

"The more realistic the better," says Scott Wells, former director of security for Denver Public Schools. "Make sure that when doing the drill, the school is in the exact state of security that it would be if the drill were a real occurrence. For example, if the school is doing a lockdown drill, make sure the school is, in fact locked down." Another idea, Wells suggests, is to place signs in each exterior door stating the school is in lockdown and no one will be admitted.

One potential drawback of coordinated drills is that emergency responders and their vehicles will appear at schools and BOCES, likely causing concern if the community is not aware of what's happening. With that in mind, districts may want to consider ways of notifying the public that the situation is a drill and not a true emergency. Email and text blasts, website notifications and mailers are all effective ways to contact the public, as are suitable signs.

New York's Hannibal Central School District, for instance, came up with an effective way to help alert passers-by that what they are seeing is indeed a drill, and not a true emergency. School officials purchased a plastic a-frame sign and had "Emergency Drill in Progress" printed on both sides. The sign is placed in front of the building where the drill is being conducted to reassure the public that there's not an actual emergency.

Such efforts can help alleviate undue stress and worry, and at the same time free main-office staff to practice their roles instead of answering phone calls.

NYSIR Risk Management Team Members

The NYSIR risk management team stands ready to answer your questions and assist district staff with your unique school security challenges. Please contact Brett Carruthers or your NYSIR risk management professional for further assistance.

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