



2019 School SAFETY

The recent shootings in Parkland, FL, and Santa Fe, TX, have refocused educators, school boards, and communities on the question of how to best protect children in our schools. While school districts must prioritize safety for all children, schools cannot prevent gun violence by themselves. Educators, parents, community/state leaders, and legislators all have a critical role in this discussion. These recent tragic events demonstrate that more attention and more resources focused on improving school safety must be considered.

AAEA recommends the following:

1. Each district should have policies in place indicating individual school and building safety plans, as well as district-wide safety plans. These well-defined and practiced plans should serve as a guide to address the various safety needs in the school such as lockdown procedures, evacuations, drills and safety protocols, and personnel assignments.
2. Every district should conduct regular audits to evaluate and analyze the effectiveness of their school safety and security plans. First-responders, local law enforcement and the entire school community should be engaged in this process.
3. Every district should communicate with parents and community members about the school-level emergency preparedness protocols to the greatest extent possible.
4. Before schools can truly be safe, we need to understand how our schools make students feel, both physically and emotionally. Students want and deserve a voice in school safety. They know their fellow classmates better than anyone. Promote initiatives such as "see something, say something."
5. Every district should provide regular training for all school employees on the district's school emergency management systems and protocols.
6. Every district should work to create partnerships between schools, local law enforcement and appropriate community agencies (such as mental health providers) to prevent and reduce school violence.
7. Each district should have the authority to arm employees if the school and community determine that such action is an appropriate safety measure for their community. However, arming employees should not be mandated. These decisions should be carefully considered and decided upon locally on a case-by-case basis.
8. The state should provide funds, possibly via matching grants, for security equipment, security assessments, and additional school resource officers. Appropriate training should be provided for SROs so they are more than compliance officers. They need to be able to interact with students, build trust, and develop positive relationships.
9. Additional funding should be provided by the state for mental health counselors and services in schools. Access to these services is a crucial component of any prevention efforts and emergency responses.
10. The state should provide funds for districts to upgrade their facilities if internal or external safety audits warrant improvements.

Talking Points:

- Arming district employees should be a decision determined locally. It should not be a state mandate.
- Safety audits, either by the district or state, are essential in determining needed security upgrades in school facilities and determining needed changes in procedures, programs, and personnel to address student safety. Funds should be provided by the state to assist with identified needs based on priority and the district's ability to fund the facility upgrades and other changes.
- Give students a "voice" in determining school safety measures. They know their fellow classmates better than anyone.
- Mental health services are a crucial component of proactive preventive measures. It is essential that schools be adequately funded to provide these services.
- Matching grants from the state would be a great way for districts to upgrade security measures, conduct security assessments, and for additional school resource officers, including training for SROs in developing positive relationships and building trust with students.

