Fayette County Public Schools
District Safety Advisory Council
Trends and Best Practices in School Safety
03.01.18
Meeting Notes


Special guests/Subject matter experts of the meeting were Jon Akers, executive director of the KY Center for School Safety and former principal of Dunbar High School, and Bill Modzeleski, senior consultant on school safety and co-author of the Safe School Initiative.

Bill referenced the quote "Those who do not know history are doomed to repeat it." He then provided a historical overview of lessons learned and progressive changes of school violence going back to the 1700's. He posed the question "Are schools safer now than they were 20 years ago?" Statistically, the answer is yes. He emphasized that education is more of a state and local issue than a federal one. Federal involvement was more at the civil rights level. However, he also acknowledged that there is no quality research on safety as it is difficult to measure. He separated school violence into 3 time periods:

- **Vegas (1635-1986):** Schools were isolated. Principals would take knives from students and simply put into their desk. There was very little information/data about this period. Alcohol/Drugs were more prevalent than violence. The Cuban Missile Crisis led to more emergency management drills.
- **Just Do It (1986-1996):** There was much emphasis on delivery of government funds to the schools toward drug/violence prevention. Not much emphasis on "Does it work?" There was an increase in targeted violence, as was the case in Columbine shooting. In 1995. The Oklahoma City terrorist attack was an eye opener that we needed more community partnerships. Schools need help from clergy, law enforcement, health, mental health to treat trauma, depression and drugs.
- **Shock Phase (1997-present): Issues continued to increase, while funding decreased**. Columbine led to innovation. Spent $13B over the years on task forces, security equipment, laws and training at all levels.

Lessons learned:
- School violence is preventable if we do the right thing (**comprehensive program)**
- Every school is doing something but is it the right thing?
- Throwing kids out of school has devastating short-term and long-term repercussions.
- Schools cannot create a safe environment alone. It must be a priority for the community.
- **Social Media is a major issue.** Parents need to get involved in monitoring phones.

Problems noted:
- Opiod use
- Bullying
- Social Media used to harass/intimidate
- Educators being asked to do more with less

At this point, a parent interrupted stating that this talk was not helpful. She brought up the incident at Henry Clay that very day. Molly informed them that this wasn't a town hall forum discussion and to please respect our speaker. Superintendent Manny Caulk advised Bill to continue. Other angry parents and students continued to state that this wasn't relevant.

Bill continued to discuss this is not a 21st Century problem. After a traumatic event, it becomes a priority, but how do we keep it a priority?
- We need funding.
- We need community involvement.
- We need less suspension/expulsion, hold students accountable for education
- Move away from untrained law enforcement (although they are trained in Fayette Co.)
- Should teachers be armed (unanimously "no" on the panel)
- We must modify our EOP (Emergency Operating Plan) more often than annually
- Get social media used for good, not false messages

**Must have partnerships between students, parents, community.**
**Connectivity!**
- Need programs to forge better connections between students and adults.
- "Know me. Know my name."
- Kids shouldn't feel anonymous
- Attachment gives them value
- Peer Mentoring and tip lines part of comprehensive strategy.

Per John Akers, when there has been an incident, the top 3major issues people tend to focus on are: Metal detectors, book bag checks, armed staffers.   While well-meaning individuals, we need to look at whole picture for a comprehensive strategy.

Social Media; What can be done? Cell phones should be charged in parents' room at night. We need to use social media for good to gather information, knock down rumors, talk about events. We need to educate parents and teachers on how to use social media.

Kids don't have a real feel for the sanctity of life, partially due to video games. We need monitoring outside the walls of the schools.

Families need to TALK to one another without cell phones.

When he was principal he had a "**Principal's Advisory Council**" made up of students and parents to keep an eye on things and report. Every school should also have a "Threat Assessment Team" made up of staff and students.

Panel participant feedback
- Most teachers don't have active shooter training
- Zero hour-no police presence before and after school
- Red tape method; mark unseen parts of the room from the hall

- Kids learn before parents 90%+ the tips come from kids. We need a good relationship with students. The kids don't' want to be implicated.
- 10% students/parents engaged, 10% are troubled, so get much staff attention, but how do we engage the other 80%? We need to hear every voice.

Akers discussed the problem with measuring success of prevention practices because how do you measure data of something that never happened? He said that if he could do it all over again and had unlimited funds, he would spend more resources on his counselors. He would have them do less minutia and more listening. He said ideally he would want two counselors who would sit in rocking chairs and just say "What's going on?" Humans first, Tests second.

Discussion of threats: there is a correlation between increased number of threats after an incident. Copycat effect is "squishy," hard to measure. Was it science or coincidence? We can track IP addresses with Snapchat and these threats will be punishable. Get the word out..

All staff and maybe students should be wearing ID's, just like law enforcement.

Emphasis on character development; teaching empathy and creating amazing human beings.

**Bottom Line: We need student-driven programs that work toward connectedness.**

3 best practices from Bill Modzeleski:
- Provide alternatives to expulsion and suspension
- Connectedness
- Develop an environment conducive to learning, without bullying or harassment. Increased acceptance.

3 best practices from John Akers:
- Treat kids with dignity and respect.  Do not lose your cool.
- Communicate with law enforcement on what we can do better.
- Look at programs holistically.

Directly from Bill Modzeleski PowerPoint presentation
**Safe Schools:  Lessons (we should have) Learned**
March 1, 2018
Fayette County Public Schools

**Findings about targeted attacks.**
1. School-based attacks are rarely sudden, impulsive acts.
2. Prior to the attacks, others usually knew of attacker's idea/plan.
3. Most attackers did not threaten their targets directly prior to the attack.
4. There is no accurate or useful profile of the "school shooter."
5. Most attackers had seriously concerned others in their lives prior to the attack
6. In many cases others were involved.
7. Many felt bullied, persecuted, or injured by others prior to the attack.
8. Most attackers had significant difficulties with losses/failures. Many were suicidal.
9. Most attackers had access to weapons – and had used weapons -- prior to the attack.
10. Most incident were brief and were stopped by means other than law enforcement

*Changes Needed to Ensure Our Schools Remain Safe and Orderly*

1. **Need to Move FROM:** viewing school safety as a secondary or part-time priority [priority diminishes after significant event], something that is not considered an essential component for teaching and learning or not considered critical enough to spend time or resources on.

   **TO:** a time and place where school safety is recognized as a primary responsibility of society, something that is considered all the time, not just after a significant event, and something that is afforded sufficient funds and attention.

   **What Will It Take?**

   - Marking strategy that "sells" school safety.
   - Proof that safe schools are essential for learning.
   - Measurable goals [what is a safe school? (data collection)

2. **Need to Move FROM:** the practice of "Just Do It!" Believing doing something/anything to respond to a problem, is better than nothing, even if we don't have a good idea of whether it works.

   **TO:** a policy that only programs, policies, and practices that have demonstrated that they are effective and that they don't harm students should be supported.

   **What Will It Take?**
   - Willingness to regularly "weed the garden," that is eliminate programs found to be ineffective or no longer a priority despite their popularity.
   - Additional "consumer oriented" research on "what works"
   - Willingness to use savings on effective programs.

3. **Need To Move FROM:** pushing students out of school [suspension/expulsion] for minor offenses.
   **TO** one that continues to hold students accountable for their actions but does so in a manner that is fair and equitable and takes into account "educational harm" when rendering a sanction.

   **What Will It Take?**
   - Demonstration that alternatives to suspension are in best interests of student, faculty, family, community.
   - Support of staff/ training of staff on use of options.
   - Have range of options other than suspension available.

4. **Need to Move FROM:** placing law enforcement officers in schools without training and without establishing clear guidelines on how they are to operate.

   **TO:** one where all officers are trained prior to being assigned to a school and where the community, including faculty, staff, parents, and students, have input into appropriate role for law enforcement. Further, community should endeavor to design metrics by which to measure the effectiveness of law enforcement.

   **What Will It Take?**
   - Perseverance [may be difficult to change existing practice]
   - Alternatives [if not law enforcement, what?].

- Review of research.

5. **Need to Move FROM:** letting others take on issues related to FIREARMS!

   TO: having educators [all levels and all positions] actively engage in the issue of gun safety. The issue of gun safety cannot be relegated to a few!

   **What Will It Take?**
   - Open mind, combined with great deal of flexibility.
   - Obtaining well researched data/information on issue of guns.
   - Identifying variety of roles individuals can take.
   - Funding! Leadership!

6. **Need to Move FROM:** focusing school safety on issues that currently confront the school/school district.

   **TO:** looking down the road and addressing issues that are just over the horizon [human trafficking, violent extremism, legalization of marijuana and its effects on students]

   **What Will It Take?**
   - Moving out of one's comfort zone**.**
   - Identification of staff person(s) that has responsibility for tracking incidents that "may" have effect on schools.
   - Communication with broader range of partners, such as Fusion Centers, FBI, Homeland Security.

7. **Need to Move FROM:** believing that an Emergency Operations Plan [EOP], and its various annexes is a set document, that is one that once developed doesn't need to be reviewed or revised.

   **TO** ensuring that EOPs are reviewed/revised regularly, to ensure that it addresses host of natural / man-made events that could disrupt teaching/learning AND that practices such as Active Shooter drills [Run Hide Fight] are reviewed to ensure they are relevant for a specific age group and that they "do no harm."

   **What Will It Take?**
   - Additional research into the most effective way to deal with issues such as Active Shooter.
   - District has person dedicated to Emergency Management

8. **Need to Move FROM:** shying away from using social media to push information out to parents and students AND to identify /track students who make threats against others or who engage in inappropriate behaviors.

   **TO:** To embracing social media as a tool that should be used to assist in connecting with youth AS WELL As in the identification of youth who threaten others or are on pathway to violence.

**What Will It Take:**
- Person(s) that have expertise in all facets of social media.
- Support of School Board, parents, faculty, and students.
- Additional training.
- Review of studies, research from different field of study.

9. **Need to Move FROM:** having a handful of outside partners to assist school in creating and maintaining a safe school.

   **TO:** broadening one's base of partners to ensure that as many partners as possible are available to provide assistance to the school. Schools cannot be successful on their own. Goal should be one where school/district is continuously adding to its inventory of high quality outside services.

   **What Will It Take:**
   - Thinking "outside the box." Wider more diverse group of groups/individuals should be sought as partners.
   - Need to work out issue of information sharing, accountability & compensation.

10. **Need to Move FROM:** assuming that every student is in some way connected to an adult or that forging connections between youth and adults is not important or not the responsibility of educators.

    **TO:** ensuring that every student is connected with a responsible adult someone that he/she could connect with/ talk to/seek guidance of AND that the environment is changed so that every student feels it is OK to tell a responsible person when they see, hear, or feel threatened or when they think someone is threating others or themselves.

    **What Will it Take?**
    - Willingness to recognize that a few simple actions on leaderships part can result in safer learning environments.