School Safety Study

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School safety efforts have improved substantially over the last 15 years, however, research shows that more work is needed.

Review of School Related Events: How federal, state and local institutions have responded to school emergencies/crisis of the past to help reduce or prevent disruption in schools.

School Safety Study (funded by DHS): Describe the level of preparedness of schools for an emergency/crisis.
A Review of School Related Events

EVENTS

- Prior to 1986-random incidents of violence; drug use reaches epidemic proportions toward the end of the period
- 1987 to 1996-continued use of drugs and increasing interest in crime/violence in schools
- 1997 to 2000-high visibility targeted school shootings
- 2001 to Present-9/11, Beslan, Virginia Tech, NIU, Rita, Katrina, H1N1

RESPONSE

- Limited government involvement; Safe School Study Report to Congress 1977; acknowledgement of some violence and drug use toward the end of the period
- School district’s implemented programs/practices to prevent drug use & began focusing on crime/violence; Drug Free Schools and Communities Act; National Drug Strategy
- Recognized the need for violence prevention programming; Safe School Initiative; Safe Schools/Healthy Students; Threat Assessments; SCSS
- Emergency Management for Schools; Study on Terrorism in Schools; More partners (FEMA, DHS, CDC)

Modzeleski, 2009
Minimize School Disruption

- All hazards approach
- Four Phases of Emergency Management and Crisis Response promoted by OSDFS US Department of Education
  - Prevention/Mitigation
  - Preparedness
  - Response
  - Recovery
School Safety Study

Research Question

• What do U.S. school principals and district administrators think about their school’s/district’s level of preparedness and vulnerabilities for an emergency/crisis?
Method

- Web-based Survey of elementary & middle school principals and superintendents in the U.S.
- Stratified random sample of 2,800 school district superintendents and a randomly selected principal of one of the schools
  - Received funding to improve preparedness
  - Region
  - Geographic location
  - Size of the school district
Method

Fall 2007

- Researchers sent letters explaining the confidential study
- Incentives: $5 gift card to Starbucks for superintendent & $5 gift card to principal
- Emailed the link to the online survey to the superintendent in the district with their id & password along with instructions to forward the email to the principal of the selected school for completion of the survey.

Completed Surveys:

- 813 superintendents or emergency managers
- 656 principals
- Response rate 34% and 27%, respectively
Measures aspects of the four phases of emergency management and crisis response

- Prevention/Mitigation
- Preparedness
- Response
- Recovery
Primary Findings

**Response & Recovery Plans and Teams**

- More than 90% of school and district administrators reported having a crisis response plan and crisis response team compared to less than 40% that had a recover plan and recovery team.

**All hazards approach**

- Almost 65% of school and district administrators reported that it was “very true” that their emergency response plan followed an all hazards approach.
Primary Findings

- **Plans for a Pandemic:**
  - About half of school (50%) and district (30%) administrators reported that their plans did not include provisions for dealing with a pandemic.

- **Plans for Terrorist Attack:**
  - About one fourth of school (26%) and district (21%) administrators reported that their plans did not include planning for terrorist threats (such as chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive incidents).
Planning for Special Needs of Students:

- Only 57% of principals and 50% of district superintendents reported that their emergency plans included provisions for students with special needs had been “completely implemented.” And, only 52% of principals and 46% of superintendents reported that their emergency plans included provisions for students with medical needs had been “completely implemented.”
On average, school district administrators reported scores in the highest response category on a 4 point scale where they report having “completely implemented”:

- comprehensive emergency plan procedures, and
- crisis response team roles and responsibilities established.
Primary Findings: Strengths

On average, *school principals* reported scores in the highest response category on a 4 point scale (“very true”, “completely implemented”, or “always”) for having:

- *positive student teacher rapport*;
- *clearly defined policies regarding student behavior/code of conduct*;
- *supervision of students in important school settings*;
- *comprehensive emergency plan procedures*; and
- *crisis response team roles and responsibilities established*. 
Qualitative Analysis

- Obstacles to school safety
  - Financial resources
  - Training
  - Time
  - Isolated rural location
School safety efforts have improved, more work is still needed
Most prepared when it comes to having an emergency crisis plan
Areas needing improvement: recovery teams and plans, all hazards approach (pandemic and terrorists), planning for special needs
Areas of strength: positive student-teacher rapport; clearly defined policies regarding behavior; supervision of students, plan procedures, established crisis response roles and responsibilities
Contact Information

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