

CHAPTER 1

History and Overview of Approaches to Safety, School Discipline, and Mental Health Support in Schools

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- Define school safety and its dimensions
- Describe the contents of this book and its updates from the first edition
- Provide background and outline the history of school safety in the United States
- Review the major campaigns and policy advances addressing school safety and youth violence since the 1990s
- Describe the major approaches to achieving safe schools, including school climate, screening and threat assessment, school security, and preventing and responding to bullying and harassment

WHAT IS SCHOOL SAFETY?

Readers interested in school safety and violence prevention will have different perspectives and understandings about what constitutes a safe school. This book offers details to describe and explain the many facets of this most pressing issue for schools and communities. There is no universally accepted definition of school safety or school violence. Definitions of school safety are often conflated to include bullying victimization, interpersonal violence (including homicide) and feelings of personal safety (including school climate)

(Benbenishty & Astor, 2019). The National Center on Safe and Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSE) defines school safety as “schools and school-related activities where students are safe from violence, bullying, harassment, and substance use” (<https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/topic-research/safety>). Attempts to define school safety quickly move to intervention.

Safe schools promote the protection of students from violence, exposure to weapons and threats, theft, bullying, and the sale or use of illegal substances on school grounds. In the recent report of the Federal Commission on School Safety (2018), a three-part approach to responding to school violence was presented: (1) prevent school violence, (2) protect and mitigate (protecting students and teachers and mitigating the effects of violence), and (3) respond and recover (responding to and recovering from attacks; www2.ed.gov/documents/school-safety/school-safety-report.pdf). This book focuses primarily on prevention.

BACKGROUND AND CONTENTS OF THIS BOOK

This book aims to provide an overview of the historical and current landscape of school safety in the United States with recommended approaches to screening, needs assessment for planning and evaluation, and intervention. Since the onset of mass school shootings in the mid- to late 1990s, there have been a number of policy advances aimed at changing the landscape of school safety, and our first edition was among the few focused on prevention of school violence, as opposed to responding to the attack and follow up after the crisis (Fennelly & Perry, 2014). There are edited scholarly treatments of school safety (Jimerson, Nickerson, Mayer, & Furlong, 2012; Mayer & Jimerson, 2019), which provide excellent research reviews, and yet few books focus on practical implementation for school personnel. The first edition, published in 2005 (OSEP; Sprague & Walker, 2005), reflected the state of knowledge about school safety prevention strategies at that time. This new edition is substantially updated to reflect new knowledge and initiatives since the publication of that volume. This edition highlights modern behavioral screening methodologies and contrasts those practices with threat assessment (Cornell, Maeng, Burnette, et al., 2018). The chapter on school safety planning gives an updated and fuller understanding of the role and limitations of security measures such as police in schools and technological approaches. The landscape and understanding of the role of universal prevention approaches has also expanded and our treatment of this topic is dramatically updated. Bullying and harassment remain one of the most intractable challenges in schools, and the emergence of cyberbullying is a national concern. Two chapters describe causes and treatments for bullying and harassment, a major factor contributing to school safety. The final chapter outlines the latest of what is known about intervention for antisocial and potentially violent youth.

The structure of the book is outlined below. Some of the chapters include case study descriptions of school safety innovation. We identify and describe recently developed school safety innovations that are feasible and hold substantial promise for improving school safety and security.

Chapter 1. History and Overview of Approaches to Safety, School Discipline, and Mental Health in Schools. This chapter provides an overview of the history of school safety and the major campaigns addressing school violence since the early 1990s. The importance of discriminating targeted violence from more prevalent forms such as bullying and harassment is emphasized to discuss how strategies will be different.

Chapter 2. Assessing and Planning for School Safety: Developing a Comprehensive School Safety and Prevention Plan. This chapter outlines a strategy that moves from comprehensive needs assessment to intervention selection to program evaluation. Recommended assessment tools and a framework for intervention selection are presented.

Chapter 3. Proactive Screening, Identifying Behaviorally At-Risk Students, and Threat Assessment: Purposes, Approaches, Outcomes, and Cautions. This chapter frames the critical issues and characterizes the landscape around early risk factors and the warning signs of potential violence. We describe recommended screening approaches in this area for use by school personnel. Access to this knowledge base is essential for every adult working in today's schools.

Chapter 4. Improving School Climate, Safety, and Student Health via Prevention. Here we describe an integrated, sustainable system for implementing positive behavior intervention and support methods at the schoolwide level that is the foundation for all school safety approaches. We will describe the procedures and considerations for integrating approaches such as School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWP-BIS), social-emotional learning (SEL), restorative practices (RP), and trauma-informed care (TIC).

Chapter 5. Bullying and Peer Harassment in Schools: The Current Landscape, Influencing Factors, and Screening-Identification Methods. This chapter reviews the general characteristics, dynamics, and prevalence of the bully/victim problem in today's schools. It discusses legal and policy implications as well as methods for identifying students who bully and their victims.

Chapter 6. Solutions for Bullying and Peer Harassment in the School Setting. This chapter outlines strategies for preventing, ameliorating, and remediating the growing problem of bullying and peer harassment in our schools. Recommendations are provided for school personnel responsible for addressing bullying and harassment.

Chapter 7. Supporting Antisocial and Potentially Violent Youth. Students who engage in antisocial and potentially violent behavior in school and other settings have complex and diverse support needs. These students often live amid circumstances known to predict life-course juvenile delinquency: for example, poverty, poor parental supervision, and crime-ridden neighborhoods. When not in school, these youth lack supervision and affiliate with other at-risk or already delinquent peers—circumstances that can easily lead to their involvement in juvenile crime. Given these circumstances, it is easy to understand why many behaviorally at-risk students experience serious adjustment problems that demand

significant administrative time, disrupt regular classroom instruction, fail to respond to traditional school discipline, and, in some cases, pose a serious threat to the safety of other students or school staff. This chapter outlines a recommended approach for schools that is feasible and based on the best intervention research.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF SCHOOL SAFETY

Efforts to improve school discipline, safety, and child and adolescent mental health adjustment have been expressed in a series of programmatic and policy campaigns since the early 1990s, each of which continues to shape and define the critical issues facing policymakers, school personnel, families, and researchers. These advances, which overlap and blend together, include (1) attempts to prevent and respond to youth violence and mass school shootings, (2) implementation of universal prevention initiatives in schools, (3) efforts to address child and youth mental health issues, with schools as the center of intervention, and (4) calls to reduce or eliminate reliance upon use of exclusionary discipline such as out-of-school suspension or expulsion.

Preventing and Responding to Youth Violence and Mass School Shootings

Over the past 30 years, the number of children and families displaying antisocial behavior patterns and impaired parenting has increased and remains high (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2009; Reid, Patterson, & Snyder, 2002). Although violent juvenile crime in the United States peaked in 1992 and has since declined, concerns remain about the number of antisocial and violent youth in today's schools and communities (Dinkes, Cataldi, & Lin-Kelly, 2007; Mayer & Jimerson, 2019). Rates of incarceration of adults and youth in the United States, per the U.S. population size, are among the highest in the world and clearly represent an ineffective response to this growing problem (Sickmund & Puzanchera, 2014).

In the mid- to late 1990s, the United States and its public schools were stunned by a series of mass school shootings that changed the landscape of school security and destroyed, perhaps forever, the sense of relative safety that students, families, and educators traditionally held about the schooling experience. Even though schools remain one of the safest places, in an actuarial sense, for children and youth, compared with other social settings, Americans no longer regard schools as safe havens, in which students are free to develop academically and socially, unburdened by concern for their personal safety (Sprague & Walker, 2010). Recent mass shootings in schools have further strengthened this change in perspective (Mayer & Jimerson, 2019).

In the wake of school shootings in the mid- to late 1990s and exacerbated by rampages in Las Vegas and Orlando where a total of 109 adults were killed, students and parents have

been traumatized on a broad scale by fears of school tragedies and concerns about lack of adequate school security. The mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in 2012 was the worst massacre in U.S. history in an elementary school and resulted in a wave of new funding (Now Is the Time) at federal and state levels to address school safety (<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/issues/preventing-gun-violence>). Since the Sandy Hook tragedy, there have been more than 400 school shootings nationwide. The pattern of mass school shootings has persisted, and even spiked, in recent years, punctuated by shootings in Parkland, Florida, and Santa Fe High School in Texas (www.chds.us/ssdb). The number of school shooting events remains highly variable from year to year, ranging from 11 to 116 (www.chds.us/ssdb/category/shooting-incidents), and the rate of school shootings has generally increased since 2003, with 2018 recording the highest number of school-related shootings. The most recent school shootings have sparked a national, student-led movement to engage politically on this issue, prompted in part by the large number of killed and wounded students in the Parkland tragedy. This movement reflects a sea change in how today's students view school shootings and the inadequate efforts to address them.

These events have resulted in the development of new school safety initiatives by federal agencies and professional organizations. Three of the most well known are by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). Their initiatives are, respectively, the Comprehensive School Safety Initiative, the Safe Schools/Healthy Schools Initiative, and the Framework for Safe and Successful Schools. In addition, a number of state-level universities and institutes have developed centers of excellence in school safety and security (www.ncpc.org/programs/be-safe-and-sound-in-school/state-school-safety-centers). A primary goal of this book is to review, synthesize, and make accessible to professionals the important takeaway lessons from all these efforts.

Analyses of the characteristics of school shooters by the U.S. Secret Service and a threat assessment protocol developed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) have provided especially valuable information and tools for helping school personnel assess the level of risk presented by student threats (Cornell & Sheras, 2006; Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modzeleski, 2002). These actions have raised awareness of the factors that may contribute to a lack of school safety and have stimulated a broad range of protective activities by schools and communities including the use of threat assessment protocols.

Events following the September 11, 2001, World Trade Center attacks spurred the federal government to coordinate efforts between the Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools and the Office of Homeland Security. The establishment of the Rapid Emergency Management Systems (REMS) Technical Assistance Center (<https://rems.ed.gov>) represents the ongoing federal efforts to organize state school safety centers and provide resources for states and school districts to prepare and secure school sites during and after a crisis. This site is primarily focused on emergency management and provides some information about cybersecurity. The REMS TA Center also offers Site Assess (<https://rems.ed.gov/SITEASSESS.aspx>), a mobile app designed specifically for education agencies, and allows personnel to

walk around buildings and grounds and examine their safety, security, accessibility, and emergency preparedness. Finally, the K–12 School Shooting Database has been established (www.chds.us/ssdb) and is housed in the Naval Postgraduate School, providing up-to-date reports and databases that can be accessed and analyzed. Chapter 2 of this book provides a detailed description of how to use these resources to develop a comprehensive school safety plan.

Implementing Universal Prevention Initiatives in Schools

To buffer students from negative outcomes, school personnel can implement prevention approaches that work to enhance school climate and individuals' social and emotional skills. For example, school personnel have recognized the power of structured school and classroom environments as well as supportive, positive daily interactions with students. These aspects of prevention have been expressed best in the national initiatives to promote schoolwide positive behavior supports and the social–emotional learning (SEL) approach (SWPBIS; www.pbis.org; Horner & Sugai, 2015; Sugai & Horner, 2002), funded by the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs (Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010) (SEL; www.casel.org). Other approaches are also being adopted in U.S. schools. These include restorative practice (RP) (Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 2010) and trauma-informed care (TIC) (Souers & Hall, 2016; Willis & Nagel, 2015). Each of these approaches will be reviewed in greater detail, along with recommendations for integrating and aligning them, in Chapter 4.

A reported advantage of approaches such as SWPBIS, SEL, RP, and TIC is that they aim to establish a positive school climate and culture where (1) students are more likely to take pride and ownership in their school, (2) conflicts between school staff members and students are reduced, (3) students are more likely to report on concerning situations or individuals (Cornell et al., 2018), and (4) antisocial behavior patterns and disciplinary referrals are reduced (Horner & Sugai, 2015). While not prerequisites for school safety, these conditions make it far easier to secure a school than if they are not in evidence.

Adoption and Integration of Mental Health Supports in Schools

Mental health conditions that directly interfere with students' ability to meet the academic expectations of schools certainly contribute to an increased risk of academic and social failure and can sometimes develop into antisocial behavior and school violence. Students whose mental health and trauma support needs are unidentified or inadequately addressed are at increased risk of juvenile delinquency and involvement in the criminal justice or mental health systems as young adults (Bradshaw, Bottiani, Osher, & Sugai, 2014; Hoagwood et al., 2007; Souers & Hall, 2016).

The landmark 1999 surgeon general's report on mental health reported that 3–5% of school-age children were diagnosed with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, 5% of youth age 9–17 were diagnosed with major depression, and the combined prevalence of

various anxiety disorders for children ages 9–17 was 13%. Recent studies suggest about one-fifth of the children and adolescents in the United States experience signs and symptoms of a mental health adjustment problem in any school year (Ghandour et al., 2019). Membership in a racial/ethnic minority group increases this prevalence. It is important to note that depression and anxiety disorders tend to increase as children age, while behavioral disorders decrease somewhat. Figure 1.1 illustrates this pattern.

Although these data suggest that a substantial percentage of students manifest conditions that negatively affect their mental health, many who have such needs are not identified (Bradshaw et al., 2014; Hoagwood et al., 2007; U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020; Swain-Bradway, Johnson, Eber, Barrett, & Weist, 2014). Atkins and colleagues (Atkins, Hoagwood, Kutash, & Seidman, 2010) argued that 75% of students' services for their mental health needs are provided by schools that provide only meager services due to costs and logistical difficulties. The failure to adequately address students' mental health adjustment as dynamic, or changing, may be related to a lack of proper screening and identification practices; that is, much of the available knowledge is based on discrete points in time for a child or a context for behavior, rather than accounting for the changes that occur in children's social and emotional development and mental health over time (Lane & Walker, 2015; Mash & Dozois, 2003). Chapter 3 will address the topic and practices of behavioral screening and threat assessment in detail.

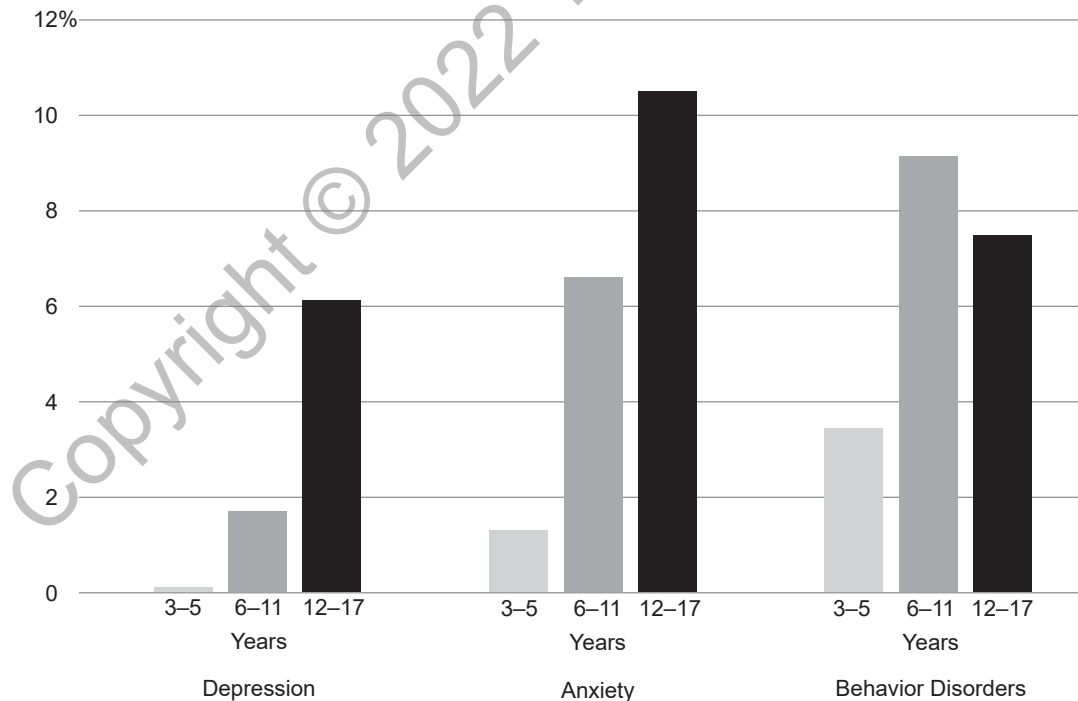


FIGURE 1.1. Prevalence of depression, anxiety, and behavior disorders by age in the United States. From www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/data.html.

Whereas school professionals rarely have adequate social and emotional screening and identification practices in place, they are most often, as noted above, the individuals who provide mental health support to youth once problems occur. Such services are often provided after a student has already demonstrated a clear pattern of escalated or dysregulated behavior and social and emotional support is indicated (Bradshaw et al., 2014; Lane & Walker, 2015). Given the increasing needs of students in today's schools, school counselors and psychologists are unable to meet the needs of everyone sufficiently if they are the only professionals providing services. Given the ongoing concerns about school safety and the rising mental health and trauma support needs of students, educators have been called to collaborate in providing social and emotional supports (Swain-Bradway et al., 2014). This book will outline a comprehensive screening system in Chapter 3 and present recommendations for supporting at-risk students in Chapter 7.

Reducing or Eliminating Out-of-School Suspension and Expulsion

An early significant response to school shooting tragedies was the passage of the Gun Free Schools Act of 1994 (Cerrone, 1999), which required that any child or youth possessing a weapon in school be expelled for 1 calendar year (subject to superintendent discretion). This act has resulted in a substantial increase in the number of suspensions and expulsions in schools, but little is known about the follow-up support or treatment of these youth (Cornell, 2006; Cornell et al., 2018; Losen & Martinez, 2013), and there is no evidence that these practices actually improve discipline or safety in schools (Fabelo et al., 2011). In fact, evidence suggests that excessive use of exclusionary discipline actually increases antisocial behavior and violence and is applied disproportionately to racial/ethnic minority students and students with disabilities (Losen & Martinez, 2013).

In addition to the negative effects of traditional exclusionary discipline (suspension and expulsion), these practices have invoked significant civil rights concerns due to racial/ethnic, disability, and gender-based disparities in their use (U.S. Department of Education, 2014; Fabelo et al., 2011; Skiba et al., 2014). This was highlighted in the U.S. Department of Education's 2014 report *Rethinking School Discipline* and in a series of additional guidance documents that offer recommendations to schools pertaining to school climate and school discipline. The 2014 document aimed to help schools not only consider how to build safe environments, but also how to best develop safe and healthy school communities. Grounded in the work of high-achieving and safe schools, and emerging research, three general principles are provided, and schools are given specific strategies for implementing them. Those recommendations are:

1. Create positive school climates and focus on prevention.
2. Develop clear, appropriate, and consistent expectations and consequences to address disruptive behaviors.
3. Build staff capacity and continuously evaluate the school's discipline policies and practices to ensure fairness and equity and promote achievement for all students.

Such recommendations are not new, having been highlighted earlier by others. For example, Bryk and Driscoll (1998) identified five features of the school “community” associated with the general effectiveness of schools: (1) a system of shared values about the purpose of the school, (2) clear expectations for students and staff, (3) high expectations for student learning, (4) a common agenda of activities designed to foster meaningful social interactions among school members, and (5) social relations marked by caring. Practices are more likely to be successfully implemented when teachers and administrators believe that they are effective, address a real problem, are worth the effort needed to implement, and have no adverse side effects in the teaching environment.

This historical review of school safety since the early 1970s provides a point of departure for our conceptualization of school safety, including the dimensions of school safety outcomes as well as sources of vulnerability to school safety, followed by a general overview of school safety intervention strategies.

CONCEPTUALIZING SCHOOL SAFETY

Dimensions of School Safety

Schools are highly vulnerable to interpersonal violence and gang activity. Morrison, Furlong, and Morrison (1994) framed the issue of school violence within a conceptual model of school safety that (1) included both developmental and educational concepts and (2) emphasized prevention and schooling effectiveness. These authors argue that effectively dealing with school violence requires careful attention to a broad range of considerations regarding school safety; for example, schools that are violence free are also effective at teaching and evince a caring, nurturing, inclusive, achieving, and accepting environment. The absence of violence is but one element among a larger constellation of positive factors that characterize safe schools.

While recognizing that no school can ever be made perfectly safe, we believe that school safety is best conceptualized as a continuum that ranges from unacceptable (lack of cohesion, stress, disorganization, poor structure, chaotic classrooms) to acceptable (effective structure and school organization, competent administrative practices, absence of violent incidents, and presence of nurturing, caring, and supportive behavioral and academic expectations). The dimensions of school safety should not be thought of in absolute terms such as safe *or* unsafe but rather as a continuum ranging from *less safe* to safer. It is the responsibility of school leaders to do all in their power to maximize the safety and security of their schools. As the social conditions (e.g., family and community environments) in the neighborhoods served by many individual schools continue to deteriorate, the challenge for educators of maintaining acceptable school safety levels grows ever more difficult and requires the investment of greater and greater resources that would otherwise be allocated to the positive social and academic development of students.

Figure 1.2 illustrates this conceptualization in a range from unsafe to safe. The relative safety of schools is represented in terms of the number and nature of the risk and

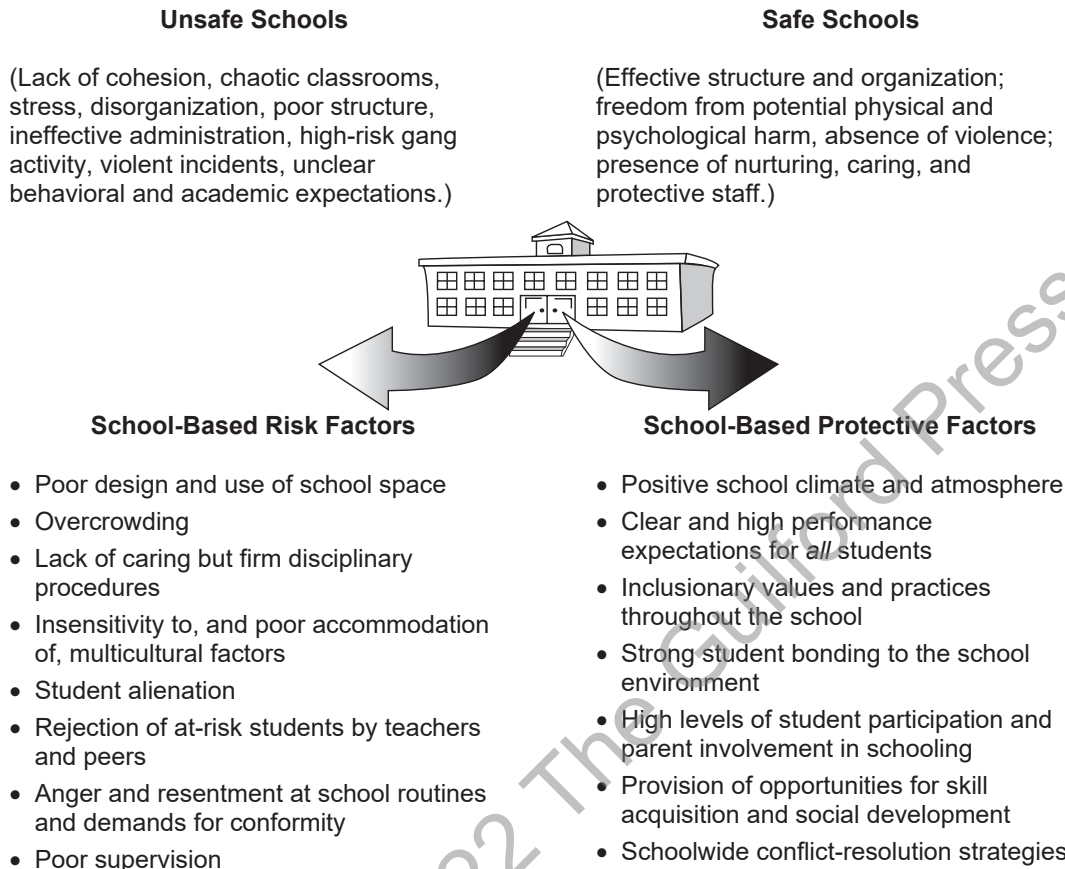


FIGURE 1.2. Bipolar dimensions and attributes of unsafe and safe schools, with associated risk and protective factors.

protective factors that are present. As with individuals, risk factors and their associated conditions move the school in the direction of less safety. The greater the number of risk factors/conditions, the more powerful are their effects; similarly, the longer they are in evidence, the greater their destructive impact on the school's safety. Protective factors, as listed in this figure, have the potential to buffer, offset, and reduce the destructive impact of risk conditions on the school's status and operation. Schools can be distributed along this dimension in terms of performance indicators that document how relatively safe or unsafe they are: for example, the number of victimization instances, levels of supervision, academic achievement levels, number of disciplinary referrals per student and for the whole school, the nature of the school's social climate, the presence or absence of gang activity, and so on. A reliable composite index of these measures has been developed and used to locate an individual school along this dimension. The Oregon School Safety Survey, presented in Chapter 2 (Sprague, Colvin, & Irvin, 1995), measures a school's status in this regard.

Sources of Vulnerability to School Safety

Major sources of vulnerability to school safety and security have been described and analyzed by Sprague et al. (2002). The following dimensions are potential vulnerabilities to the safety and security of schools: (1) the design, use, and supervision of school space, (2) the administrative and management practices of the school, (3) the nature of the neighborhood and community served by the school, and (4) the characteristics of the students enrolled. Figure 1.3 illustrates these four areas and provides indicators of each type of school safety vulnerability. If an individual school registers a positive profile across these dimensions, it is much more likely to experience acceptable levels of safety and security than if it registers a negative profile, where many risk factors are in evidence. Any comprehensive approach to ensuring a school's safety should evaluate and address these dimensions of risk. Chapter 2

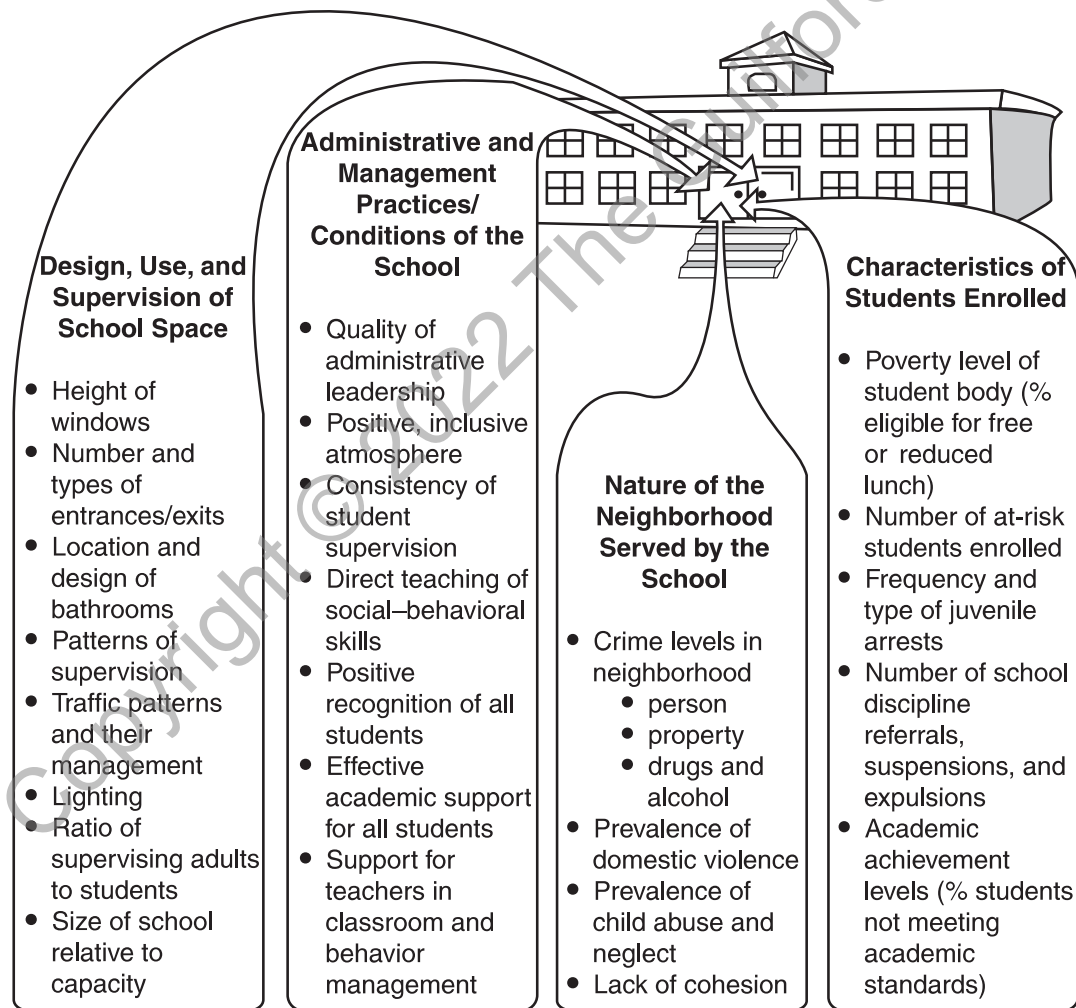


FIGURE 1.3. Four sources of vulnerability to school safety.

provides additional information regarding these four areas or potential sources of risk and recommends the use of specific assessment tools.

Architectural Design

The architectural design and operation of school space can be an important source of vulnerability to a school's overall safety. For example, the number of unlocked and unmonitored entrances to the school, the nature and amount of supervision available for low-traffic areas, the location of bathrooms, the ability of school personnel to easily provide "natural" surveillance of school grounds, and the size of hallways that are typically crowded with students during certain periods of the day—all are examples of areas vulnerable to threats to school safety. These areas, when found vulnerable, require architectural retrofitting and/or allocation of staff resources. The knowledge base relating to school design and retrofitting to enhance school safety comes from the important work of experts in Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) (Crowe, 2000). A thorough treatment of this topic for schools is contained in Schneider, Walker, and Sprague (2000) and the U.S. Department of Education Rapid Emergency Management for Schools Site Assess app (<https://rems.ed.gov/SITEASSESS.aspx>). This free, secure mobile app, designed specifically for education agencies, allows personnel to walk around buildings and grounds and examine their safety, security, accessibility, and emergency preparedness using CPTED principles and practices. Chapter 2 includes a description of key CPTED concepts and principles, the relevance of CPTED as a strategy for improving school safety and security, school-site CPTED evaluation procedures, case-study applications of CPTED principles, the role of architects in school design, and CPTED-based policy recommendations for consideration by school districts.

Administrative and Management Practices

The administrative and management practices of the school's leadership have a tremendous influence on the social climate of the school. As noted earlier, McEvoy and Welker (2000) reviewed the research on this important dimension and argue that school climate must be fully addressed to make schools safer and more academically effective. Research indicates that safer schools tend to be more effective schools academically, and vice versa (Jimerson et al., 2012). The analysis by McEvoy and Welker certainly confirms this finding. All students should perceive themselves as accepted and valued members of the school population and community; as fully able to participate in the extracurricular activities of the school; and as free from bullying, mean-spirited teasing, discrimination, or harassment. It is of critical importance that at-risk students who are socially marginalized and/or show signs of depression or other serious mental health problems receive the appropriate services and types of support. Students who leave school before graduating often indicate that they did not feel accepted in their school environment and that no one seemed to care about them or their problems (DeLuca & Rosenbaum, 2000).

Nature of the Neighborhood and Community

The neighborhoods and communities served by schools can, and usually do, have a direct influence on the nature of the school and its overall safety. Schools that serve neighborhoods with high frequencies of police calls, street crime, poverty, unsupervised youth, and deteriorating infrastructure and buildings are much more likely to be unsafe than those whose attendance areas do not have these characteristics. It has been shown that an individual school can be no safer than the neighborhoods and communities it serves (Hawkins & Catalano, 1992). This statement may or may not hold true, depending on the nature of the social and environmental conditions under which the school operates. For example, some schools located in chaotic and dangerous urban environs are fortress-like structures that do appear to be safer than their surrounding neighborhoods. Whenever possible, schools should be integrated into the communities they serve and be viewed as partners with the other local agencies that serve children, youth, and families. However, when violence and serious crime are common occurrences in proximal neighborhoods, realizing this goal may be difficult. In such situations, schools have very few options by which they can attempt to improve the safety of the neighborhoods and communities they serve.

Characteristics of Students

The fourth source of vulnerability in Figure 1.3 is the overall profile of the students who comprise the school's population: poverty level; proportion of at-risk students; dropout rate; frequency and type of juvenile arrests; number of school referrals, suspensions, and expulsions; and academic achievement levels. These dimensions determine, to a very large extent, how students behave in school and whether they display rule-governed forms of behavior (Lane & Walker, 2015). This vulnerability source provides the most direct avenue whereby the toxic conditions of our society infiltrate and disrupt the process of schooling. Students who come from highly at-risk backgrounds and experience chaos and family dysfunction daily typically reflect these influences in how they behave in the school context. Too often, the resulting consequences are negative for the individual as well as the school environment.

Most attempts to make schools safe have focused on the student population and its behavioral characteristics (H. M. Walker, Ramsey, & Gresham, 2004). Although student behavior can pose a major risk to school safety, it is important to be aware that any comprehensive and successful school safety effort also must address the other three sources of vulnerability.

SCHOOL SAFETY INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

A Three-Tiered Model of School Safety Strategies

In the 1990s, educators began to adopt the three-tiered prevention logic that was promoted by the public health community to conceptualize the “multi-tiered behavioral framework.” In this logic, as the intensity of problem behavior increases, so does the need for

(1) resources to address the problem, (2) enhancements to teaching and learning environments, (3) collecting and using data for decision making, (4) teaming and coordination, and (5) engagement with and feedback to students (Sprague & Walker, 2010; Walker et al., 1996). Prevention needs to be a high priority to maximize the impact of this intervention approach. This model is based on extensive research regarding different types of children, their characteristics, and their needs.

The three-tiered model depicted in Figure 1.4 defines the safety challenge for schools as one that addresses the needs of three relatively distinct groups of students. The goal is to link each of these groups to a different level of intervention—universal interventions (for *all* students), selected interventions (for some students), and targeted or indicated interventions (for a *few* students). One single discipline strategy designed to fit all students will not work for the entire school population (Domitrovich et al., 2010). Rather, schools need to consider using at least three different discipline systems (all, some, a few) in a coordinated fashion, as feasible.

Interventions for All

Our assumption is that most students (85–90%) will arrive at school already having learned important social and academic readiness skills. An important part of any school safety plan is to ensure that the skills of these students are embedded in the daily workings of the school. This can be accomplished through strategies aimed at *all* students. These interventions attempt to prevent problems before they start. The interventions must be efficient and low cost to deliver and can be provided to all students without extensive prior individual assessment.

Interventions for *all* elementary and secondary school students can take the form of direct social skills training; rules instruction for specific settings (e.g., playgrounds); positive reinforcement systems; consistent consequences; lessons to teach expected school behavior; or alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use prevention programs. Students must be “inoculated” against exposure to school, peer, and community risk factors and be able to model positive social skills for their at-risk peers. The foundation of all effective school safety efforts lies in attention to the universal training, adult modeling, monitoring, and reinforcement of expected social behavior for all students. Schools must closely monitor and teach *all* students, including those who currently are not engaging in problem behavior.

Interventions for Some

Not all students, however, respond well to universal approaches. Students with chronic patterns of problem behavior often require additional support or highly individualized and targeted assistance to be successful. The level and intensity of support is dictated by the level and complexity of the behavior problem. Interventions for *some* students (7–10%) may require support from counselors, special educators, school psychologists, and so forth, and focus additional resources on the needs of small groups of students. Programs involving



FIGURE 1.4. Three-tiered foundational systems and practices. From www.pbis.org/pbis/getting-started.

extra academic support, extra adult attention (school-based mentors), scheduling changes, self-management, and more frequent access to rewards can be used to improve the overall likelihood of school success and to reduce levels of problem behavior.

Interventions for a Few

For the *few* students (3–5%) who do not respond even to extra support, intensive, targeted intervention based on FBA (functional behavioral assessment) and other advanced procedures are usually required. These students will test the capacity of any school staff and will require intensive social skills training, individual behavior management plans, parent/caregiver training and collaboration, and multi-agency (wrap-around) services coordination (Bradshaw et al., 2014).

This book focuses on addressing each of the three tiers of behavior supports and on new and improved strategies for implementing them. A continuum of behavior support comprising three very different levels of intervention is needed in creating safer schools. The intensity of the intervention must match the intensity of the problem behavior and accommodate the complexity of the context in which problem behavior occurs. Interventions for *all* students focus on improving the overall level of appropriate behavior of most students but are not enough for some students and will have limited impact on the few students (3–5%) with chronic patterns of problem behavior. Thus, interventions are identified for the students needing more intensive interventions as well in this model. Chapter 4 of this book will address school- and community-wide prevention approaches and Chapter 7 outlines strategies for supporting students at tiers II and III.

THE GOAL OF THIS BOOK

Over the past several decades, a great deal of substantive knowledge has been developed that is relevant to improving the safety, security, and efficacy of schooling. The great challenge remaining in the field of school safety is to make this information accessible to school practitioners in a manner that is usable and allows for the potential efficacy of proven strategies to be realized. That is, we must solve school security problems rather than simply address them through administrative and crisis response actions.

This book is intended as a resource guide for school administrators, teachers, behavioral specialists, school psychologists, parents, and other school personnel (e.g., school resource officers). The material in the book is based on sound scientific research and is as much as possible free of jargon and technical language that can prevent effective use of such information. The book is written specifically for persons who have limited knowledge or training regarding school safety assessment, planning, intervention, and evaluation. The book's content includes practical information and strategies to guide school personnel ranging from assessment of important school safety dimensions to the selection and implementation of recommended school safety procedures and discipline methods. The main emphasis of the

book is on strategies for making the school safer and supportive of students, staff, and family members. The end goal or outcome of the book's adoption by school professionals would be to create a more positive school climate within a school setting that has carefully attended to the structural, procedural, and human variables that can function either as risk or protective factors for school safety.

The format of the book lends itself well to use as a resource manual and practice guide. Descriptions of specific interventions and strategies, as well as forms, are available for photocopying and use in planning, implementation, and evaluation. The book uses the conceptual framework of the "four sources of vulnerability to school safety" (Schneider et al., 2000; Sprague & Walker, 2010). Chapters address issues of assessment and intervention across each of the four sources. Special attention is given to physical and cyber forms of bullying and harassment in schools, and screening and identification of antisocial and potentially violent youth, including use of threat assessment procedures.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Collectively, we have extensive experience as researchers, consultants, program developers, staff trainers, and policy experts in school safety and prevention of antisocial behavior. The Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior (IVDB), in which we are principal investigators, was founded in 1994 at the University of Oregon to serve as a resource to school districts and other agencies around school safety. Currently, the IVDB maintains a diverse portfolio of school safety activities and is the administering unit for numerous competitively awarded federal and state grants to support these activities. The IVDB and its key personnel serve as a research unit on behalf of school districts and as a filter or evaluation vehicle to distinguish school safety information that is reliable and trustworthy from that which is not valid or even dangerous. The IVDB currently serves as the mandated Center for School Safety for the State of Oregon, as directed by the Oregon legislature, the state attorney general, and the governor, and as enacted in August 2001.