
Agenda for Workgroups Focused on Enhancing School Safety

As schools/districts/communities increase their focus on school safety, ad hoc groups are forming to assess what's in place and how to strengthen safety response and prevention.

Here is a concern and a suggestion sent to us from one superintendent :

Somehow, again, schools are not being asked about what we feel are the best recommendations for violence and gun shooting elimination. How about initiating an education study group to include first responders, mental health leaders, department of justice, homeland security and anyone else we feel could contribute. I was on a county superintendent of schools School threat assessment task force. School representatives met with first responders to discuss these very issues.

At a local level, ad hoc groups need to bring together those in the community who have specific expertise related to crises assistance and prevention and those from schools who have responsibility and expertise (e.g., school administrator, nurse, psychologist, social worker, counselor). In addition, there almost always are others who have special expertise and will be interested in participating (e.g., those with first aid and counseling training, those concerned with school climate and safety). Optimally, the agenda should focus not only on policy and procedural guidelines, but also on formulating specific plans for organizing and training a standing workgroup for crisis response and prevention and designated responders and for enhancing coordination of relevant district and community resources. And, if any schools cannot generate a standing crisis assistance and prevention workgroup, the district and neighboring schools should pool resources to ensure every school is covered.

From our perspective, the agenda for enhancing school safety needs to be broadened. Safety and crisis response and prevention need to be embedded into the broader concern about transforming student/learning supports. With this in mind, ad hoc groups formed in response to the recent shootings need to be expanded into a broad-based standing workgroup charged with (1) enhancing immediate safety measures and crisis response (including aftermath concerns) and (2) reducing future problems by transforming how schools provide a unified, comprehensive, and equitable approach to student/learning supports.

>In focusing on enhancing crisis response and prevention, see the framework and practices outlined in Crisis Assistance and Prevention – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/book/ch8crises.pdf> and in the self-study survey – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/toolsforpractice/crisissurvey.pdf>

Moving beyond a narrow focus on how to enhance safety involves enhancing how schools prevent and address learning, behavior, and emotional problems. This requires a standing workgroup with an agenda for transforming student/learning supports.

>The prototype for such a workgroup is a *Learning Supports Leadership Team* – see http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/resource_coord_team.pdf

>For guidance in transforming student/learning supports, see *Relaunching Student and Learning Supports* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/relaunch.pdf>

We are interested in how schools in your locale are increasing safety. Send what you can share to Ltaylor@ucla.edu