

2. School Environment Changes and School Safety Strategies

- a. *Westerly School District (RI)*: This school district went from having 100 Office of Civil Rights violations to becoming a model program for students who are receiving a continuum of support services for behavioral problems. Policies were restructured to emphasize both prevention and intervention. Over a 4-year period, behavioral problems were reduced, self-contained classrooms for students with emotional and behavioral problems were reduced from 13 in 1990 to only 2 in 1994, and the schools became safer and more productive for all students, at all levels: elementary, middle and high schools. Compared to other Rhode Island districts, when one divides the total number of suspensions by the total student enrollment, Westerly's index is .038, compared to the state index of .232. Similarly, the index for disciplinary incidents in Westerly is .05 compared to .09 and .31 for other Rhode Island districts similar to Westerly in size and demographics

For more information, see:

Keenan, S., McLaughlin, S., & Denton, M. (1995). *Planning for inclusion: Program elements that support teachers and students with emotional/behavioral disorders*. Highlights from the Second Working Forum on Inclusion. Reston, VA: Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders.

Quinn, M. M., Osher, D., Hoffman, C. C., & Hanley, T. V. (1998). *Safe, drug-free, and effective schools for ALL students: What works!* Washington, DC: Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice, American Institutes for Research.

For project information, contact:

Mark Hawk, Director of Special Education, Westerly Public Schools, 44 Park Ave, Westerly, RI 02891-2297, (401) 596-0315.

- b. *Center for the Prevention of School Violence (CPSV)*: According to the CPSV, preventing school violence through assessing physical design and, if necessary, using technology (like metal detectors or cameras) offers a strategy that enables school officials to provide safe and secure learning environments in which students can achieve and succeed. The CPSV conducted a telephone survey of all high schools in North Carolina during Spring, 1997, to determine which safety and security strategies are being used in these schools. Almost 74% of schools participating in the survey have performed assessments of their physical layouts. In addition to controlling access to school, 80% implement some kind of parking lot security. In terms of maintaining control, various types of policies exist with hall monitoring, occurring at 88% of the schools, and campus identification tags and book-bag policies, newer forms, in place at 19% of the schools. 60% of the schools have metal detectors with 64% using one or two of them. Of the schools with metal detectors, 90% have portable ones, 16% have stationary ones located at the entrances of football stadiums. The frequency of use varies with 4% using them daily and 62% using them randomly. 12% have them but never use them. Most schools do not have surveillance cameras; only 24% use such cameras. Other technologies applied to make schools safe and secure include two-way radios, identified by 22% of the schools, and alarm systems, identified by 10% (These numbers may be low given that the other technologies were not specifically asked about.). Two schools indicated that they have Breathalysers. Using a seven-point scale with "one" representing a perceived highest level of effectiveness and "seven" a perceived lowest level, improving safety through changes in the physical design of the school and use of technology was rated by respondents. About 36% of

technology a "one" or "two" (high effectiveness) with reference to this strategy. About 16% rated it "six" or "seven" (low effectiveness). Out of six safe school strategies surveyed (including peer mediation & conflict management, S.A.V.E., law-related education, teen/student court, and having a school resource officer), implementing changes in the physical school environment and/or utilizing technology was rated as the second highest effective strategy. Having a school resource officer was listed as the most effective strategy.

For more information, contact:

Center for the Prevention of School Violence, Dr. Pamela L. Riley, Executive Director, 20 Enterprise Street, 2, Raleigh, North Carolina 27607-7375, 1-800-299-6054 or 919-515-9397, Fax: 919-515-9561 or download a summary from www.ncsu.edu/cpsv/

- c. *Playground Safety Studies*: A multifaceted community intervention (starting in 1989) in Central Harlem and Washington Heights included repair of all playgrounds major capital improvements in 5 playgrounds and parks, painting of building murals, development of recreational programs for target age group, traffic safety programs and bicycle helmet promotion. Results reported indicated a decrease in the risk of all injuries in the target age group (compared to a younger, non-targeted group). However, there was no decrease in outdoor fall injuries in the target age group.

For more information, see:

Davidson, L.L., Durkin, M.S., Kuhn, L., O'Connor, P., Barlow, B., & Heagarty, M.C. (1994). The impact of the Safe Kids/Health Neighborhoods Injury Prevention Program in Harlem, 1988 through 1991. *American Journal of Public Health, 84*, 580-586.

National SAFE KIDS Campaign reports that protective surfacing under and around playground equipment can reduce the severity of and even prevent playground fall-related injuries. In addition, protective equipment, safe play conditions (e.g., field surfacing, maintenance) and development and enforcement of safety rules help reduce the number and severity of sports and recreation-related injuries.

For more information, contact:

The National SAFE KIDS Campaign, 1301 Pennsylvania Ave, NW, Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20004-1707, (202)662-0600, (202) 393-2072 Fax, <http://www.safekids.org>, info@safekids.org

- d. *PeaceBuilders*: This is a K-5 program of Heartsprings, Inc. in Tucson, AZ. It emphasizes praising others, avoiding negative comments, being aware of injustices, righting wrongs and seeking out "wise people." The program offers classroom management suggestions, particularly for handling discipline and "unruly" kids. It includes an intensive peace building program for especially disruptive students, a family program, playground program, planning guides for teachers, a leadership guide for administrators, manuals for school staff, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, etc. Preliminary post-test results from an ongoing CDC evaluation indicate significant reductions in fighting-related injury visits to school nurse by students.

For more information see:

Safe Schools. Safe Students: A Guide to Violence Prevention Strategies. (1998). Drug Strategies, Washington, D.C.

School Health Starter Kit, Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, 1275 K. St, NW, Suite 800, Washington, DC 20005. (202)371-9090.