

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a schoolyard. In the foreground, there is a green lawn. A chain-link fence runs across the middle ground. Behind the fence, there are several large, leafy trees. In the far background, a school building with a light-colored facade and a dark roof is visible under a clear sky.

PREVENTING THE

WHAT YOUR SCHOOL CAN DO TO PROTECT

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CAUTION

UNTHINKABLE

ITSELF FROM SECURITY THREATS. BY DONNA DAVIS

Rahel Rosner had a real-time security issue on her hands. Georgetown Day School (GDS), where Rosner is Director of Finance and Operation, was on lock-in status, a precautionary response to shootings at the Navy Yard, 10 miles from the school in central Washington, DC.

On that Monday morning, September 16, 2013, Rosner answered Net Assets' questions about security audits and devices that the 1,100-student, multi-campus,

preschool-through-12th-grade school uses. At the same time, administrators stopped by her office, asking for status updates and conveying information.

The lock-in, which the school emergency team put in place after discussions with Washington, DC police, meant that students could not go outside until the crisis had passed. Different from a more drastic lockdown, the lock-in kept students sheltered, but faculty, staff and authorized visitors

CAUTION

CAUTION

could come and go as needed. At about 1:20 p.m., midway through her telephone conversation with Net Assets, Rosner got the word that the lock-in could end.

Except for a special pizza lunch delivered to students during the lock-in, “it was business as usual,” Rosner said once the all-clear decision came.

In the end, the Navy Yard shooter did not threaten GDS or other Washington, DC-area schools. However, when a gunman does target students and schools – from the Columbine High School shootings in 1999 to the Newtown, Connecticut school shootings in 2012 – educators tend to re-evaluate their security and safety measures, including their physical defenses.

Often, in the immediate, highly emotional hours following a tragedy, administrators rush to conduct those reassessments, looking at every aspect of their safety and security plans – and considering additions – in an effort to respond to their own worries and those of parents. Among the first things that receive scrutiny are the physical components of the school’s security system.

Administrators may also ask themselves if the school has enough cameras, if gates are in the right place or if the school needs more barriers, whether they should add better locks on the classroom doors, or if they should enhance the systems used to screen and admit visitors. Metal detectors and armed guards might be on the list of ideas, or even – as in the aftermath of Sandy Hook – some of the latest security gadgets that several military-gear companies are marketing to schools. The University of Maryland, for example, spent \$60,000 last year on anti-ballistic whiteboards designed to act as shields. Other schools and parents have purchased bulletproof backpacks, blankets and clipboards.

Ken Trump, President of National School Safety and Security Services, an Ohio-based consulting firm, criticizes those types of physical security devices, calling them “ridiculous extremes.” “These all meet the emotional security needs, but in reality will do little – and may even create a false sense of unrealistic security – to actually make kids, teachers and schools safer.”

THE PICTURE TODAY

Schools have accepted physical security devices as necessary to a safe environment. Eighty-four percent of high schools, 73 percent of middle schools and 51 percent of primary schools reported that they used security cameras to monitor their schools, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Indicators of School Crime and Safety 2012 report. In contrast, a lower percentage of high schools than middle schools and primary schools reported controlling access to buildings during school hours.

Students find the measures commonplace. In 2011, about 77 percent of students ages 12–18 reported observing one or more security cameras to monitor the school during the



day at their schools and 70 percent of students reported the presence of security guards and/or assigned police officers, the NCES report found.

Buckingham Browne & Nichols (BB&N) Director of Safety and Security Joe Griffin cautions schools not to over-invest in physical security devices they don’t need. Instead, Griffin – part of the administrative team that guided the Cambridge, Massachusetts school during the Boston Marathon bombings event (see related article, “Responding to the Boston Bombings” on page 22) – recommends concentrating on your people both inside and outside your school. Background checks on potential employees and others who do business with the school, as well as training, communication and enforcement of procedures will go far to improve security.

PHYSICAL SECURITY MEASURES

Security cameras are a staple of school security. Most schools don’t have the staff to monitor cameras constantly, but they can adopt ways to make the best use of these security devices. For example, have security staff monitor “hot” areas during key times, such as parking lots during morning drop-off, New Community Jewish High School (NCJHS) Business Manager David Marcus recommends.

Because they record 24/7, cameras are also useful investigative tools. “Whether the question is ‘Did someone go through a door 10 minutes ago?’ or ‘Who came in at 3 a.m.?’ cameras record and can be viewed at a later time,” Marcus says.

Cameras that pan, tilt and zoom can provide close-up details of a suspicious person or vehicle, and internet protocol cameras allow anyone with security access to view cameras from a laptop or other device. “Just what you want to do on vacation,” Marcus muses. The cameras can also provide critical information following an event.

Other useful physical security devices include fencing, poles or other barricades, and laser intrusion beams. (See sidebar, “How Secure is Your School Campus?” on page 20.)

Whatever physical security measures a school chooses,

administrators must communicate both the policies and procedures to faculty, staff and families and enforce the rules. In August 2013, an armed intruder slipped into an Atlanta-area school behind a parent who had been buzzed in through the locked door. "You can have buzzers, fences and barbed wire, but if you leave the door open for someone like that those devices won't help," says Amotz Brandes, Managing Partner at Chameleon Associates. The California-based company provides security training and consulting services to clients that include independent schools.

Similarly, while physical security can provide a tangible and visible barrier to intruders, security experts remind educators that some of their most effective security measures are invisible. Those include conducting background checks on potential employees and others who do business with the school, training and education of staff, and creating a security plan – and implementing it.

PEOPLE - YOUR BEST PHYSICAL SECURITY DEVICE

Security experts advise educators to invest as much – if not more – in their own people and in dedicating time to safety and preparedness planning as they do in physical security enhancements. "Too often," Trump says, "we see

as building floor plans, campus layout and possible staging areas.

"In the toolkit of things that business officers need to know about, this aspect is so important yet gets overlooked," Griffin says. "Early on in your tenure, go visit elected officials in town and have those conversations. At a minimum, you both put faces to names."

EXTEND YOUR PERIMETER

Take the next step and train your school's faculty and staff. While first responders familiar with your school are essential in handling a crisis, your own people can be your first line of defense in keeping a violent event from ever happening, Brandes says.

Schools need to extend their "security rings" outward. "The concept of lockdown is one thing – I call it the bunker effect," Brandes says. "You try to solve things by hiding inward but not extending outward." Security guards or fences are two visible ways to extend your perimeter of security. The object is to keep the intruder out.

Brandes cites the 1999 case of white supremacist Buford Furrow. Armed with an Uzi, he went in search of Jewish targets in the Los Angeles area. He wounded five people at a Jewish community center that had no visible security. Before



well-intended school leaders who will be quick to drop some dollars for physical security equipment they can point to when talking with parents, but they are much more guarded in releasing time for training school staff, diversifying their lockdown or evacuation drills, and doing meaningful, detailed planning with their first responders."

The time to get to know those first responders from your school community's police, fire and emergency management departments is well before a crisis happens. For independent schools, building those relationships may take some extra effort, BB&N's Griffin says. "For a lot of police departments, the private school is an anomaly. They might not feel welcome on your campus. The school needs to reach out and invite them in."

Administrators, including the business officer, can familiarize first responders with the school's crisis management plan, as well

the attack, Furrow had passed up three other sites because of security at the entrances.

Training your personnel in the art of security questioning can also help deter attacks. Brandes gives an example of an encounter between a staff person and a stranger in the parking lot. "Introduce yourself with your full name. It's required almost for the other person to introduce himself with his full name. Then ask, 'What is the nature of your business here today?,' not 'Can I help you?' That is a closed-end question. If you were a legitimate visitor, you would not have a problem answering [what the nature of your business is]. If you are a person with ill intent, you would find it very deterring to answer. You can ask all these questions with a smile, but the issue is what you ask."

Unfortunately, Brandes notes, most private security companies do not teach their personnel how to conduct security questioning. Instead, they focus on responding to an event – calling for backup, monitoring the situation, or reporting an unknown person on campus to the security supervisor or other superior.

Security questioning puts the guard between the intruder and the school. It forces a would-be attacker to rethink his plans since the "one thing an adversary hates most is being approached outside of the target," Brandes explains.

THE GUNMAN AT THE DOOR

The nightmare of every school administrator – and every parent – is an active shooter. Brandes begins his school security consultations with one question: What is the one risk you are not willing to take? “They don’t care if someone steals a laptop or even vandalizes the school. You can come in with fresh paint or have your insurance take care of that. But when it comes to someone hurting a child, that is the risk they are not willing to take.”

The next step involves deciding how to prevent that harm. If a school has put into place the physical deterrents and extended its perimeter, and a shooter still makes it through, administrators need to decide how to respond. The most effective response is armed response, Brandes says. The caveat, however, is that the person or persons who respond must have the mental and physical training to make that response.

About 20 percent of his independent school clients have elected to have armed security personnel. Others have opted for Brandes’ recommendation of setting up a “police room.” Schools set up a designated space for law enforcement officers where they can file reports, make phone calls or have a cup of coffee and a snack. The room gives officers a quiet place to work or relax and allows them to get to know the school and its community. And a patrol car parked outside the school is a strong visual deterrent to potential intruders.

Some schools may resist armed personnel as contrary to their culture. “You can have an open and very inviting culture but still have fences. It’s not contradictory,” Brandes says. “Security is about how your school looks [to the intruder], not the culture.”

THE RISK WITHIN

While all schools want to counter the external threat of an active shooter, internal threats pose a more frequent risk. Thirty-one school-associated violent deaths occurred in 2011, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Indicators of School Crime and Safety 2012 report.

In the same year, about 1.25 million students aged 12–18 were victims of non-fatal incidents. Nearly half were victims of violence, ranging from simple assault to serious violence, including rape, sexual assault and robbery. Those incidents are rising, going from 35 victimizations per 1,000 students in 2010 to 49 per 1,000 in 2011. A higher percentage of public school students, however, reported being victimized than did private school students – 4 percent versus 2 percent, according to the report.

For internal threats, physical security by itself is inefficient. Schools need a mechanism within the school community to identify the internal threat – a process that requires different training and questions designed to evaluate a person’s state

SECURITY CHECKLIST

How Secure is Your School Campus?

BY THOM GREENLAW

Most independent schools have developed crisis plans that provide detailed instructions on how to deal with school shootings and other serious safety threats. Drills that familiarize students, faculty and staff on how to find shelter during an event are common.

Less common, however, are basic security controls designed to prevent these tragic occurrences. This checklist can help you review basic security protocols that are already in place at your schools and some you may want to implement.

Your School: Evaluate your location and your concerns

Location: Urban/Suburban/Rural

Current Security Concerns

Human Risks: Who has access to your campus?

External

- ✓ Unaffiliated Persons
- ✓ Delivery and Service Personnel
- ✓ Temporary/Casual Staff

Internal

- ✓ Parents
- ✓ Faculty/Staff
- ✓ Students

Components of a Basic Security

System: The Five P’s

Physical

- ✓ Locks and Other Security Systems
- ✓ Lighting
- ✓ Cameras (external/internal)
- ✓ Gates and Barriers

Programmatic

- ✓ ID Badges for Faculty/Staff/Students
- ✓ Visitor Passes
- ✓ Designated Times to Lock Doors
- ✓ Parking Decals
- ✓ Keys and Access Control
- ✓ Devices

People

- ✓ Security Guards
- ✓ Receptionists
- ✓ Maintenance and Building Custodians
- ✓ Students/Faculty

Policies/Procedures

- ✓ Written Protocols
- ✓ Consideration of Outside Activities (field trips, athletics, independent study)
- ✓ Contingency/Emergency Plans



- ✓ Crisis Booklet
- ✓ Classroom Safety Guides

Practice

- ✓ Beyond Fire Drills
- ✓ Evacuation
- ✓ Shelter in Place
- ✓ Building Lockdown

When to Bring in the Experts:

- ✓ When You Feel Overwhelmed
- ✓ When You Lack On-Campus Experience
- ✓ When You Need Legal Counsel
- ✓ Consider Getting Advice from Local Police and Fire Departments

Conducting a Security Audit on Your Campus:

- ✓ Develop a Checklist
- ✓ Bring in “Untrained Eyes”
- ✓ Consider the Students’ Point of View

Assembling the Resources

- ✓ Budgets
- ✓ Capital Expenditures

Training and Education

- ✓ Have a Written Procedure Manual
- ✓ Train Your Staff
- ✓ Educate Your Community
- ✓ Understand the True Risks

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of mind. Brandes calls them “suspicion indicators,” which might include suicidal statements, black humor or excessive cynicism. “They are people who lose their center. They have no anchors or allegiance and are easily influenced by others or outside influences they are exposed to.”

SEEKING A SECURITY ASSESSMENT

Thom Greenlaw, Chief Operating Officer/Assistant Head of School for Strategic Initiatives at The Ethel Walker School in Simsbury, Connecticut, and former BB&N CFO, recommends that business officers and administrators who feel overwhelmed by security concerns call in outside help, starting with local law enforcement (see Security Checklist sidebar on page 20).

Security issues change constantly. That is one reason GDS’s Rosner works with a consulting group for periodic assessments. Contingency Management Consulting Group (CMCG) helps GDS develop emergency response plans, conduct tabletop drills, and train faculty and staff on lock-in and lockdown procedures as well as emergency communications. “You can’t say crisis management is a checkmark,” Rosner says. “We continue to work toward new goals.”

CMCG also has helped Rosner’s school evaluate physical

security measures. GDS has upgraded its lock and door-control systems and is developing a student accountability process that allows administrators to know who is in the building. The school is also examining the role of security personnel as security hardware and software evolve.

NCJHS’s Marcus, whose school works with Brandes’ firm on assessments and ongoing training of security personnel, believes security audits are essential to risk management even though schools may hesitate to budget for the extra expense.

“Usually good companies that do this really care about schools and education and understand that at times there are schools that need ‘financial aid’ so they can be better institutions,” he says. He suggests hiring firms that do not have a financial interest in personnel, device or technology enhancements.

Both Trump and Brandes were swamped with requests for security assessments following the Sandy Hook tragedy. While the renewed interest in keeping students and staff safe will help schools, administrators need to stay focused on security and safety – both visible and behind the scenes – at all times, not just when a crisis occurs. “Smart superintendents, principals and school boards recognize that proactive security and preparedness efforts are not only the right thing to do, but also a strong tool for strengthening school-community trust and confidence in their leadership,” Trump says. ■